

My Way: The Musical and Educational Journey of Lee Ah-kyung



Lee Ah-kyung's 30th Anniversary Concert
Courtesy of Lee Ah-kyung

To Lee, music is more than a stage—it is a way to connect with others, across generations, and into the future.

Shin, Na-ri

Reporter
jk12073@khu.ac.kr

On March 25, Lee Ah-kyung celebrated the 30th anniversary of her career with a concert titled “My Way” at the Seoul Arts Center’s Concert Hall. Lee is a globally recognized vocalist who achieved the unprecedented feat of winning first place in six international vocal competitions. She currently balances roles as an educator at Kyung Hee University (KHU) and an active vocalist.

30th Anniversary Concert “My Way”

The performance was structured based on the theme of expressing life through the four seasons—spring, summer, fall, and winter—each paired with arias and songs. Spring featured songs she had never before performed on stage, representing the early days of hope as a young vocalist. Summer reflected a passionate and glamorous period, fall expressed her current maturity, and winter symbolized the twilight of life and a turning point toward a new chapter.

The recent concert took on a

distinct tone compared to her 20th anniversary concert. Lee said, “The 20th anniversary concert was like a family celebration with colleagues and students, while the 30th was a conversation with myself, a stage that encapsulated my musical philosophy, life values, and beliefs as an educator.” She added that the experience allowed her to reflect deeply on the road she had walked and how she wants her music to be remembered.

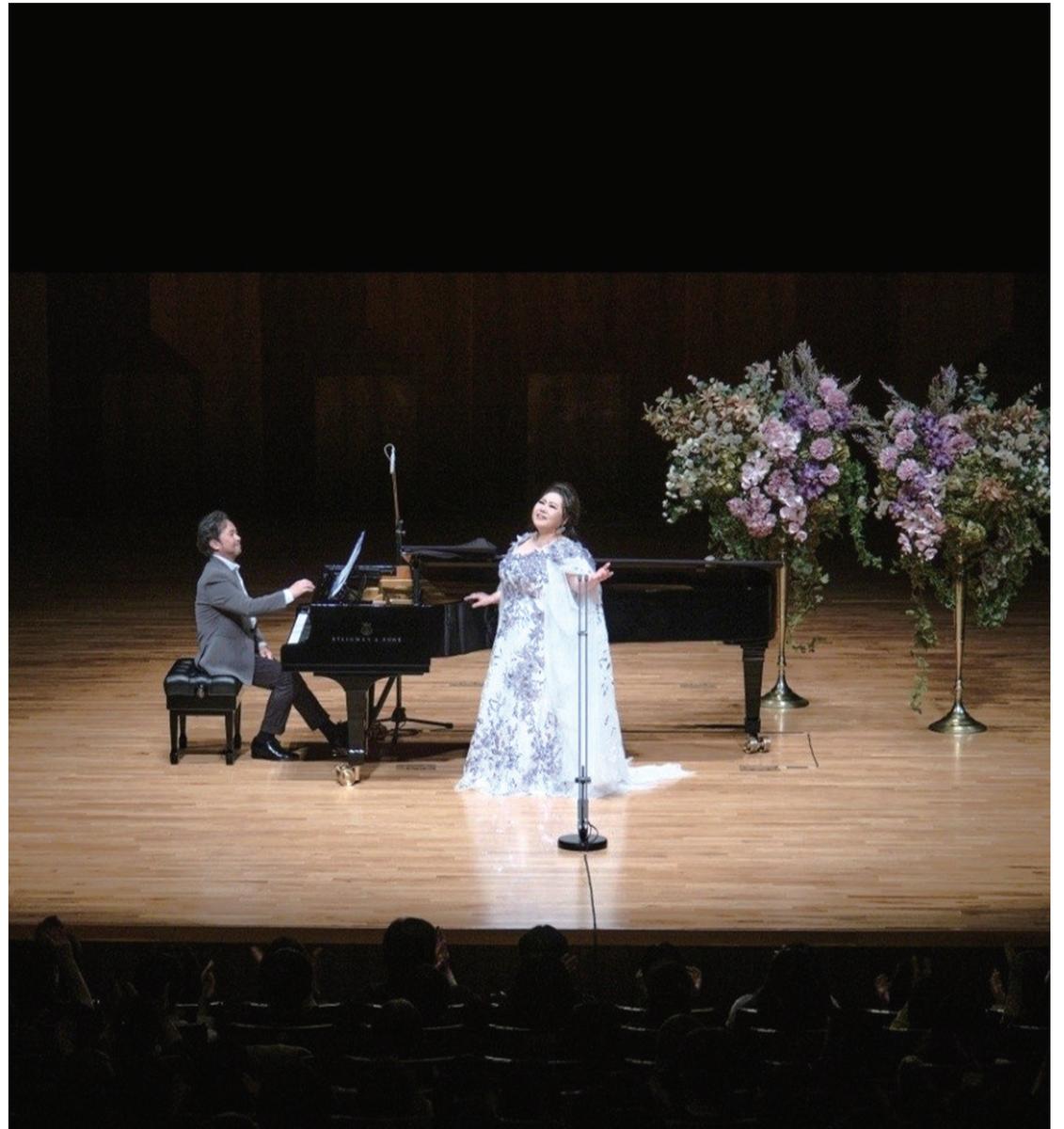
Lee Ah-kyung’s Journey: Life as a Mezzo-soprano

Lee did not choose the path of a vocalist from the beginning. Rather, she grew into one through various experiences and opportunities.

Although she loved singing as a child, she first enrolled in a ballet academy and even received the Prime Minister’s Award in the solo ballet category at the Busan International Dance Festival. After quitting ballet, she began learning piano but felt more drawn to singing. Instead of entering a piano competition, she participated in the Jinhae *Gunhangje* Festival as a vocalist and won an award, which led her to study vocal music.

After entering university, she joined a choir and was discovered by Park Soo-gil, former head of the Korea National Opera, who happened to hear her singing. He cast her in the lead role of Menotti’s *The Medium*, making her official debut with the Korea National Opera at the age of 25.

In 2001, she studied in Italy and won first place in several international vocal competitions. Her win at the 2003 Bellini International Competition was especially meaningful to her. She said it made her reflect on “why I must do music” and



Lee Ah-kyung performing on stage

Courtesy of Lee Ah-kyung

“what can be achieved through it.” During her time abroad, she watched a documentary about her senior’s child battling cancer. After watching the documentary, she decided to use the prize money to help him. With that goal in mind, she entered the competition and eventually won first place, enabling her to offer support to her senior’s child. “I realized that the music I create can have an impact on others,” she said. “It made me

think about the kind of music I want to do.”

Lee Ah-kyung’s Journey: Life as an Educator

Lee is now in her fourth year as the dean of the College of Music at KHU. As her educator role expanded beyond the stage, she began paying attention to the nuances of language, the depth of breath, body movement, and resonance.

Hoping to naturally integrate people’s lives through music, she found herself walking the path of an educator. She enjoyed seeing others grow through her knowledge, and this joy gradually led her to embrace education. She believes that music is not just an art but a means of understanding and connection.

While sending students abroad and fostering world-class musicians is meaningful, she places greater value on the immersive and comfortable relationships she builds with them. Rather than just teaching singing, she leads courses that

include performance planning, marketing, and analysis of social impact through music. She stated, “I can not guide students by the hand and lead them down a specific path after graduation, but I do try to listen to their struggles and offer advice.”

She offers this advice to her juniors: “Even if you are late, even if it is slow, walk your path steadily.” She added, “Do not get distracted by others. Those who walk silently and steadily until the results come are the ones who succeed. I hope they continue without regret once they have chosen a path.”

Currently, she is planning concerts with fellow professors and vocalists, aiming to create performances in which she can breathe and harmonize with the future leaders of the music world. Her goal is to create musical spaces that embrace multiple generations and grow together with broader audiences. To Lee, music is more than just a stage—it is a way to connect with others, across generations, and into the future.



Lee Ah-kyung

Photo: KHU (khu.ac.kr)