

October 28, 2003

IN MEMORIAM
MARGARET "MARNIE" W. DILLING
PROFESSOR OF MUSIC
1939 - 1997

Marnie Dilling -- ethnomusicologist, educator, advocate of adventurous music and member of the music faculty of the University of California, San Diego -- died in May 1997 after a lengthy battle with cancer.

After teaching at Sacred Heart Schools in El Cajon, Menlo Park and San Francisco, Professor Dilling joined the UCSD Department of Music in 1990. Even a cursory review of Professor Dilling's academic credentials reveals a life of accomplished musical scholarship and a love of Korean music. Professor Dilling earned her Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from the University of California, Berkeley and held Master's degrees in English from Lone Mountain College and in Piano Performance from Yale University.

Professor Dilling's scholarship, particularly in the years after her arrival at UCSD, revolved around the study of music within its cultural contexts. She specialized in Korean music, especially its rhythmic system and the contemporary transformations of genres rooted in Korean folk practices, such as *nongak* and *sinawi*. At UCSD she taught courses in world music, the music of East Asia, and ethnomusicology. She fostered not only the scholarship of world music but worked also toward creating a rich interface between these musical traditions and contemporary composition and performance practice.

Among her lasting contributions to UCSD was her practice of locally oriented ethnomusicology. For Professor Dilling's students, the study of world music did not necessarily mean work with remote and unreachable traditions. For her, ethnomusicology was something you also did in your backyard. Her study of the UCSD Gospel Choir and its relationship to both the student body and the greater San Diego community was scholarship with sharp edges. It provided first-rate ethnomusicological evaluations of a vocal tradition central to African-American music and it showed a richness of cultural interaction and transformation in the world we inhabit. In a NEA-funded study of Korean-American youth culture clubs, she advanced the understanding of the creative impulse in Korean music as it flourished among Korean immigrants to the United States. And, by dealing with the ideas of transformation and cultural transplantation, she also turned the magnifying glass of meaningful scholarship back on herself and her students.

In addition to studying African-American music and the music of Korean youth culture clubs, Dr. Dilling's diverse research involving a variety of ethnic groups in the United States included work with Cambodian musicians and dancers for which she was awarded a California Arts Council Grant. Professor Dilling served on the council of the Society for Ethnomusicology and she was a founding officer of the association for Korean Music Research. Her writings on Korean and American music have been published in *Ethnomusicology*, *Asian Music*, *Korean Culture*, *Olympic Message*, *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, and *College Music Symposium*. The Korea Foundation provided a fellowship at the Center for Korean Studies at the University of California, Berkeley to write a book, *Stories Inside Stories: Music in the Making of Korean Olympic Ceremonies* which she had recently finished and delivered to press at the time of her death.

Professor Dilling turned UCSD into a center and clearinghouse for information on local practitioners of World Music traditions. Her last project was the creation of an annotated directory of local artists and resources. Her work, "The World Music and Dance Scene in San Diego: A Users Guide" was pure Marnie. It was researched, assembled and written by means of sheer individual determination and a small team of students who learned ethnomusicology in the most significant way imaginable, by doing it. The "Users Guide" was published through the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture in 1999.

Indeed, Professor Dilling was an able scholar and an insightful teacher. But, what a biography or these few paragraphs can never capture is the spark with which she engaged everyone she touched. An otherwise lifeless faculty meeting is suddenly transformed as Marnie, preferring the language of music, rises and sings a Korean melody. Students, from the greenest undergraduate to the most seasoned doctoral student, emerge equally wide-eyed and invigorated from one of her lectures or office hours. Admirable scholarship and great teaching, yes, but above all, a body of work alive to the world which we shared with her. Marnie's spark linked her music to life as it links us now, inextinguishably, to her memory.

George Lewis
 Jann C. Pasler
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