

Acceptance speech

18 June 2026

Un Suk Chin, awardee in the Music and Opera category (18th edition)

A composer speaks through their work, not through manifestos or declarations. Therefore, you can gain insight into my music – fortunately – not through my words, but through Alban Gerhardt and the Basque National Orchestra at the Frontiers of Knowledge Awards gala concert, conducted by Lucas Macías. Alban is the dedicatee of my Cello Concerto, and has played the work countless times since its premiere in 2009.

Now, collaboration with performers is vital for composers. After all, composing is a very lonely enterprise.

The very existence of an independent composer is owed to three things:

- first, the interaction with musicians whose interpretations bring the scores to life;
- second, funding structures that allow music to be created that disregard immediate profit and thus have no place in the economic system;
- third, the work of those who draw attention to new works by programming them or writing about them.

Without this advocacy, the phenomenon known as new classical art music cannot exist.

Therefore, we can pose the question: what value does society today place on art that is not functional, not readily consumable? An art that, by its nature, cannot be subject to considerations of utility or majority decisions.

There is a paradox in today's consumer society with its constant media overstimulation on one hand, and the disappearance of biodiversity on the other.

The music scene is often caught between Scylla and Charybdis: on one side, raw market interests; on the other, culture wars and tribalism instead of cooperation.

This brings me to another point: the search for dialogue. As a composer of our time, I have always been interested in what transcends a national level.

The concept of autonomous art has been and remains essential for me in this regard. As well as the utopia of seeking an individual personal style in every work, but always in dialogue with the globally available state of musical material.

Over the years, it has become important to me not only to study the tradition and modernity of so-called "Western" classical music, but also to engage with the traditional music of various cultures. Thanks in part to my work with electroacoustic music, I have hoped to explore the essence and "inner" nature of sound and an organic development of musical form from the natural properties of sonic matter.

The good fortune of working with numerous outstanding performers, as well as the opportunity to curate music festivals, has repeatedly brought me into contact with the energy and reality of music-making and performing, all of which provides a necessary contrast to the lonely process of composing.

Receiving the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award today fills me with immense gratitude. When I look at the list of wonderful past recipients of the award, I see cosmopolitans.

At home in different cultures, they helped to overcome the borders between the traditional music circles and those of contemporary music.

I am convinced that this building of bridges is more important than ever.

A musical life in which only quality and curiosity matter and where there is no discrimination or preferential treatment based on nationality, appearance, skin color, gender, or aesthetic differences.

Thank you.