

East Asia PhoNographic Mornings #05/25

Each Morning of the World #08

Shinheungsa Temple (신흥사) ~ Seoraksan (설악산) ~ South Korea

38°07'30"N 128°24'58"E

« Korean Temple Dawn »

Diane Hope

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It's 4am. In South Korea; only 40km south of the border with North Korea. In a deep valley below the towering peaks of Seoraksan, overnight rain has subsided and water drips from the eaves of Shinheungsa Temple, in a delicate cascade of watery tinkling. A special dawn ceremony is beginning for the induction of a new monk. The knocking of a temple wood block punctuates the chanting. This soundscape was recorded in immersive binaural stereo, a technique that simulates how humans hear. I was wearing the mics on my ears – so if you listen with (good) headphones ... it's the next best thing to being there yourself.

Traditional Korean buildings like this temple are surrounded by courtyards of fine gravel – designed to let you hear an assassin coming – and hence impossible to walk on silently. So, this soundscape is a composite put together from recordings made in several different locations around the temple during the course of the early morning ceremony. The crickets are not layered in – they are exactly as heard in the field – at times chiming in with the monks. A harmonious blending of humanity and nature. The soundscape closes with a monk striking the giant temple bell. Let yourself being drawn into meditative silence as the deep metallic tones shimmer, resonantly, into the swirling mists of the breaking mountain dawn.

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Diane Hope

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Diane Hope PhD is a sound recordist, audio producer, writer and ecologist. She produces sound-rich documentaries, podcasts and audio guides. You can hear more of her work here:

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