

# 2026 CKS Colloquium

## MUSICAL POPULISM: FROM THE KOREAN DIVISION TO NORTH KOREAN STATE MUSIC

*Talk by Dr. Peter Moody*

April 2 (Thur), 3:30PM

Wang Center Lecture Hall I



### ABOUT THE COLLOQUIUM

In 1945, after thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule, Korean musicians faced new opportunities to compose music that connected with ordinary people. However, soon after Korea's liberation came national division, which brought new restrictions on artistic freedom—including in the south, where authorities cracked down on musicians linked with opposition movements. This led several prominent musicians in the South to migrate northward. While these artists initially gained influence and recognition in what became North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK), many later came under strict scrutiny for perceived disloyalty, especially during the Korean War (1950–1953). This lecture will follow the journeys of these “crossing-to-the-North musicians,” examining their populist ideas in their writings and musical compositions. It will also explore how the North Korean state adopted some of their conceptions and merged them with Soviet socialist principles, creating official guidelines that continue to shape North Korean music today.

### ABOUT THE SPEAKER

**Peter G. Moody** is a historian of modern Korea and professorial lecturer at the George Washington University. His research focuses on the industrialization, mass media, and cultural politics of the Korean peninsula, as well as current trends in both North and South Korean culture and politics. He has been interviewed by news outlets, including BBC World News and The Wall Street Journal, and has occasionally contributed to NK News. Dr. Moody is currently working on a book manuscript titled *Music and the Mobilization of North Korea*, which traces the DPRK's “total music society” through the perspectives of North Korean musicians. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia University.

