

People & Places

Music

Swift gives surprise act

Kim deeply moved by K-pop stars 'concert'

SEOUL, April 2, (Agencies): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un smiled, clapped and said he was "deeply moved" by a rare performance by South Korean K-pop stars in Pyongyang, state media reported Monday.

The high profile appearance of Kim and his wife, former singer Ri Sol Ju, at the concert was unusual as his authoritarian regime typically struggles to prevent any infiltration of the South's pop culture among his isolated people.

Kim, the first North Korean leader ever to attend a show by entertainers from the South, shook hands with the performers and "expressed his deep thanks to them," the North's official KCNA news agency reported.

"He said that he was deeply moved to see our people sincerely acclaiming the performance, deepening the understanding of the popular art of the South's side," KCNA said.

The visit by the South's entertainers, seen as part of a cultural charm offensive by Seoul, comes as a diplomatic thaw gathers pace on the peninsula ahead of a landmark inter-Korean summit later this month.

Kim said he was likely to be busy "because of his complicated political program early in April," so he was glad to make it to the concert which he credited with bringing the "spring of peace".

The 120-member South Korean group — 11 musical acts as well as dancers, technicians and martial artists — gave one concert on Sunday with another set for Tuesday.

Kim and his wife were seen clapping their hands during the two-hour Sunday event, which was also attended by Kim's younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, and the North's ceremonial head of state Kim Yong Nam.

The concert at the elaborately decorated 1,500-seat East Pyongyang Grand Theatre ended with a standing ovation by the packed audience after a finale featuring all the stars singing a song about unification.

Popular

One of the most closely watched acts was Red Velvet, part of the South's hugely popular K-pop phenomenon that has taken audiences in Asia and beyond by storm.

Even leader Kim acknowledged that there had been "so much interest in whether I'd come to see Red Velvet or not".

The five-member girlband — known for its signature K-pop mix of upbeat electronic music and high-voltage choreography — performed two of their hits, "Bad Boy" and "Red Flavour".

"The North's audience applauded our performance much louder than we expected and even sang along to our songs... it was a big relief," band member Yeri told reporters.

The ongoing rapprochement was triggered by the South's Winter Olympics, to which the North's leader Kim Jong Un sent athletes, cheerleaders and his sister as an envoy.

Kim followed up by agreeing to a summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, and offering a face-to-face meet with US President Donald Trump. Kim also met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing last week during his first overseas trip.

The inter-Korean summit, the third such event after meetings in 2000 and 2007, will be held on April 27. No date has been set for the US-North Korean summit although it is expected before the end of May.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Taylor Swift made a surprise appearance at Nashville's Bluebird Cafe on Saturday night, sitting in with singer-songwriter Craig Wiseman, an old friend whom she met Swift at a charity show when she was a teenager. Swift received a standing ovation.

"I wanted to say a big thank you to the Bluebird Cafe," Swift said, seated beside Wiseman, according to a report in the Tennessee. "I think any songwriter in town would echo my sentiments and say that this is kind of the only place where this exists — this particular place where you get to come and hear the writer's take on the songs they've put out into the world."

She said one of her earliest lessons was that all a song needed was three chords and simplicity.

"If there's truth in it, don't overthink it," she said. "It can be the same three chords over and over again." To illustrate her point, she then performed "Shake It Off."

"When I would play writers nights ... I didn't have the experience of a writer writing something and then it going out into the world and you earing it from someone else's perspective until recently," Swift said, referring to the song. "Little Big Town gave me the opportunity to feel that way ... to be at the Bluebird and play a song you've maybe heard on the radio. I will always be forever grateful to them for that."

Swift recalled inviting Wiseman to co-write a song when she was 17, which he declined. "I couldn't stop thinking about the idea," Swift said. "I thought there was something to it. I really liked it. This is the song I almost wrote with Craig Wiseman," she said. "It's called 'Love Story.'"

CLEVELAND: The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland will receive \$4.1 million over five years to help expand its youth education programs and community activities.

The Rock Hall announced this week that PNC Bank has pledged \$3.75 million to support free events, interactive exhibit storytelling and live music. The PNC Foundation pledged another \$375,000 to help underwrite the youth education program Toddler Rock.

"There's no limit to what can be accomplished when the power of rock and roll is combined with education," Greg Harris, the Rock Hall's CEO, said in a statement.

Paul Clark, regional president of PNC Bank, Cleveland, said music has the power to transcend boundaries of age, time and background, WKYC-TV reported.

"That power can be transformed into an educational and entertainment conductor that will bring the community together to create a stronger, more vibrant region," Clark said.

The Plain Dealer in Cleveland reported the Rock Hall also is partnering with others to bring a music festival downtown this summer.

The inaugural InCuya festival on Aug 25-26 will be presented by concert promoter AEG Presents in partnership with the Rock Hall, the city of Cleveland and Destination Cleveland. The cross-genre and multi-generational festival will feature national and local musicians. The full lineup and ticket prices for the festival have not been announced.



This April 1, 2018 picture released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on April 2 shows Pyongyang residents enjoying a rare concert by South Korean musicians at the 1,500-seat East Pyongyang Grand Theatre in Pyongyang. (Inset): In this photo provided by the North Korean government,

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (center right), and his wife Ri Sol Ju (left), sit on their seats during performance by members of the South Korean artistic group, including the South's pop legends and popular girl band Red Velvet, at East Pyongyang Grand Theater in Pyongyang, North Korea on April 1. (AFP/AP)

Obituary

'He changed television forever'

'NYPD Blue' creator Bochco dies

LOS ANGELES, April 2, (RTRS): Steven Bochco, a producer whose boundary-pushing series such as "Hill Street Blues" and "NYPD Blue" helped define the modern TV drama, has died. He was 74.

Bochco had been battling a rare form of leukemia for several years. He had a transplant in late 2014 that was credited with prolonging his life. A family spokesman told the Associated Press that he died in his sleep on Sunday after a battle with cancer, but did not release details of a memorial service.

Working with different collaborators, Bochco co-created some of TV's most popular series for more than 20 years while helping to create the template for modern hourlongs featuring large ensemble casts, serialized storylines and edgy content.

The recipient of numerous industry awards, including the Humanitas Prize and Peabody honors, Bochco was nominated for an Emmy 30 times in his capacities as producer and writer, winning 10.

On "NYPD Blue," he consciously set out to expand the parameters of what was acceptable on broadcast television, and he recalled sitting with then-ABC Entertainment chief Robert Iger — who went on to become CEO of the Walt Disney Co. — drawing naked figures, determining exactly how much of the body could be shown.

Bochco launched such series as "Hill Street Blues" — a groundbreaking, Emmy-winning cop show — and "LA Law" for NBC before entering into a landmark 10-series deal with ABC in the late 1980s. The relationship produced some clear hits ("NYPD Blue," "Doogie Howser, MD") and notable failures, including the musical police drama "Cop Rock" and the serialized courtroom drama "Murder One," which followed a single murder trial over an entire season. As virtual proof the latter was ahead of its time, Bochco essentially revived it in 2014, under the title "Murder in the First," for TNT, where it ran for three years.

Asked how he could risk gambling

on a musical like "Cop Rock" given the richness of his ABC pact, Bochco once joked, "With my deal, how could I not?"

Bochco wasn't above engaging in public spat and power struggles, from complaining about his treatment by network executives to tussling with recalcitrant stars. In one of the highest-profile tiffs, his rift with David Caruso during the first season of "NYPD Blue" led to the actor's exit, a considerable gamble for a series in its first season. Bochco replaced him with former "LA Law" co-star Jimmy Smits, and the program went on to run for 11 years.

Although Bochco often consciously pressed against boundaries and seemed to delight in testing censors, he recalled that the breakthrough storytelling style of "Hill Street" was born more out of necessity than design.

Realized

"We had so many characters that we realized we couldn't service 10 or 11 characters within the confines of a single episode, so the only way that we could really do justice to the size of the world was by creating storylines that spilled over the margins," he told the New York Times.

The producer also had a way of celebrating even his failures. When "Cop Rock" came to an end after a mere 11 episodes, what turned out to be the final episode incorporated a musical sequence where a fat lady literally sang, signaling its cancellation.

Bochco also appeared to relish netting his critics, saying that the pressure campaign waged against "NYPD Blue" — which helped prompt dozens of stations not to air the show when it premiered — ultimately helped promote the series and turned it into a hit.

Steven Ronald Bochco was born in New York, the son of a violin virtuoso (which inspired his production company's onscreen logo). He attended NYU and subsequently Carnegie Institute of Technology, receiving a degree in theater.

He started his writing career in the 1960s. Credits included "Columbo," with an episode directed by Steven

Spielberg, who also came up through the ranks at Universal Television.

Bochco wrote such features as "The Movie Maker" and "Silent Running" before he began to steadfastly focus on television and create his own shows, including "Delvecchio," a drama starring Judd Hirsch. Later came "Bay City Blues," about a baseball team, which didn't last.

With "Hill Street Blues," Bochco and co-creator Michael Kozoll broke the dramatic mold, featuring a huge ensemble cast and gritty narrative while juggling various subplots. NBC was in the ratings cellar at the time, but its patience with prestige programs like "Hill Street" and "Cheers" was rewarded after "The Cosby Show" premiered in 1984, turning its Thursday lineup into a ratings juggernaut.

Beyond his own career, Bochco helped shepherd along those of several other prominent writers, hiring David Milch on "Hill Street" and enlisting David E. Kelley — then a Boston lawyer — to work on "L.A. Law."

When the Producers Guild of America honored Bochco with its David Susskind lifetime achievement award in 1999, his track record of quality programs was cited as "the standard all television producers strive for."

Longtime friends and colleagues such as Steven Spielberg hailed Bochco's long run and legacy in the industry.

"Steve was a friend and a colleague starting with the first episode of 'Columbo' that he wrote and I directed," Spielberg said in a statement. "We have supported and inspired each other ever since and through many deep mutual friendships we have stayed connected for 47 years. I will miss Steve terribly."

Other entertainment biz figures took to social media to pay tribute.

"He was an amazing talent," wrote Mark Altman, co-executive producer of "The Librarians." "He changed television forever."

Showrunner Marti Noxon had kind words for Bochco, recalling that her surprise when he reached out to her after she made a break with ABC.



In this Aug 17, 2016 file photo, television writer/producer Steven Bochco poses for a portrait at his office in Santa Monica, Calif. Bochco, a writer and producer known for creating 'Hill Street Blues' has died. (AP)



Cosby



Wap

Variety

PHILADELPHIA: Jury selection is set to get underway in Bill Cosby's sexual assault retrial in a cultural landscape changed by the #MeToo movement, posing new challenges for both the defense and the prosecution. Experts say the movement could cut both ways for the comedian, making some potential jurors more hostile toward him and others more likely to think men are being unfairly accused.

"We really have had this explosion of awareness since that last trial and it has changed the entire environment," said Richard Gabriel, a jury consultant who has worked on over 1,000 trials. "It is a huge challenge for the defense, but it could also provide an avenue and open up the topic." (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Swiss filmmaker Ursula Meier is set to preside over the Camera d'or jury whose mission will be to select the best first film presented in either Cannes Film Festival's Official Selection, Critics' Week or Directors' Fortnight.

Meier is best known for directing "Home," her feature debut, and "Sister" which won the Silver Bear at Berlin Film Festival in 2012.

"Radical and poetic, the first ('Home') is a fable shot with pale light and warm photography. The second ('Sister') is a modern tale in the form of a sober and poignant family chronicle," said Cannes Film Festival, adding that "since 1994, Ursula Meier has compiled a bold cinematography that emphasizes the complexity of the world." (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Cinema Guild has acquired "En el Septimo Dia," Jim McKay's acclaimed examination of the lives of undocumented Mexican immigrants. The title translates to "On the Seventh Day" and is a reference to the punishing hours its central characters work as dishwashers, deli workers, and cotton candy vendors. After laboring for six days, they have a day of rest on Sundays — it is a reprieve spent on the soccer fields of Sunset Park, Brooklyn.

"En el Septimo Dia" will open in New York on June 8 at IFC Center and Brooklyn Academy of Music's Rose Cinemas. It's McKay's fifth feature after a 13-year absence from the big screen. His other credits include "Our Song" and "Girls Town," and McKay has used his hiatus working on television shows such as "The Wire" and "The Good Wife." (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Underscoring the benefits of a positive reception off a big festival, Marcelo Martinessi's "Las Herederas" (The Heiresses), a Berlin

double Silver Bear winner, has closed a US distribution deal with Distrib Films US and 102 Distribution.

Brooklyn-based, Distrib Films will

handle "The Heiresses" theatrical release.

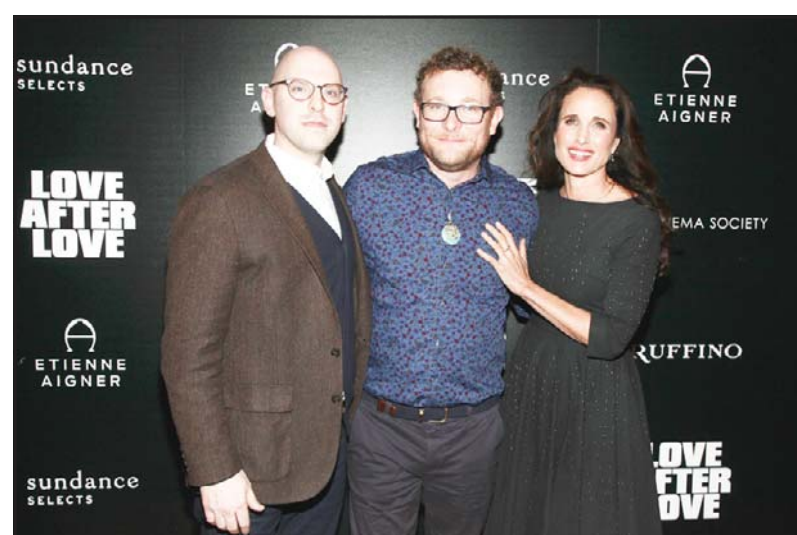
In further sales made by Paris-based sales agent Luxbox, Aurora has closed Poland on "The Heiresses." Israel and Australia are now under negotiation, said Fiorella Moretti, Luxbox co-founder.

Winning Berlin Silver Bears for both best actress (Ana Brun) and the Alfred Bauer Prize for innovation, "The Heiresses" was sold by Luxbox at Berlin to Italy (Lucky Red), France (Rouge International), the UK (Thunderbolt Releasing), Benelux (Contact) and Scandinavia/Baltics (Edge). (RTRS)

PATERSON, NJ: Rapper Fetty Wap handed out gift cards to families at a New Jersey supermarket.

The Record reports the Paterson native visited his hometown for a giveaway at a Price Rite in Center City Mall. Marie Sweeney-Tevis, director of marketing and community relations for Inerra supermarkets, which owns Price Rite, says the organization was excited for the opportunity.

Fetty Wap, whose real name is Willie Maxwell II, says he's fortunate to be able to help people now considering his upbringing. The rapper posed for pictures with eager fans. (AP)



Russell Harbaugh, James Adomian and Andie MacDowell (from left), attend a special screening of 'Love After Love' at Roxy Cinema Tribeca on March 28, 2018 in New York. (AP)