



# CLARINETFEST® 2026

by Wonkak Kim

**C**larinetFest® 2026 will be held July 7–11 in the coastal city of Incheon, South Korea—the first ICA festival in Asia since the 2005 Tokyo ClarinetFest®. Set in Songdo International City, a modern district known for its cultural and architectural innovation, the event will bring together clarinetists from around the world for a week of performances, lectures, and community.

The festival will open on July 7 with a Gala Concert in the spectacular Art Center Incheon Concert Hall, one of Korea's most advanced performance venues. The Hankyung Philharmonic Orchestra will share the stage with an exceptional lineup of headliner soloists, including international star Annelien van Wauwe, Christelle Pochet of l'Orchestre National de France, and Jerry Chae of Korea National University of Arts. The program will also spotlight the remarkable talents of Se-Yeon and Do-Yeong Lee, two sisters who captured first prize in the ICA's Junior Young Artist Competitions in 2024 and 2025, respectively. Their appearance marks a celebration of the next generation of clarinetists.

Throughout the week, attendees will enjoy the newly introduced International Clarinet Choir Series, showcasing the



global community of large clarinet ensembles. The Seoul Clarinet Ensemble, led by Hyungon Kim and Jungmin Song, will headline the series, joined by clarinet choirs from more than a dozen countries across five continents. With hundreds of players expected to participate, ClarinetFest® 2026 aims to set another Guinness World Record for the largest clarinet choir ever assembled. The evening "Clarinet Ensemble Headliner" concert will feature premier groups including the Kaguya Bassoon Trio (Japan), Bass Clarinet Association of Canada, and Magic Clarinet Quartet (Taiwan), promising an unforgettable celebration of ensemble performance.

The festival's Jazz Night will spotlight Japanese jazz icons Eiji Taniguchi and Ko-Ko-Ya, alongside Spain's Oriol Mares & Talal Fayad Quartet. Afternoon headliner concerts will present the vast spectrum of clarinet artistry, from historically informed performances on period instruments to cutting-edge works for clarinet and electronics. The festival will close with a final concert featuring a Korean premier wind ensemble with soloists Javier Llopis (Tenerife Professional Conservatory of Music), Soo-Young Lee (Estonian National Symphony Orchestra), Hosup Song (Chugye University for the Arts), and Jose Franch-Ballester (University of British Columbia), a fitting culmination to a week of extraordinary artistry and international camaraderie.

Located just 30–60 minutes from Incheon International Airport, the Songdo ConvensiA provides a modern and spacious home for the conference. Within walking distance are numerous hotels at a range of price points, including the Sheraton Grand Hotel, Oakwood Premier, Bridge Hotel, and Orakai Hotel. The ICA is working to secure discounted room blocks, with details expected to be announced in early 2026.

Attendees will also have the option to join organized day tours through FNF Korea Travel before and after the main conference. These guided small-group excursions will offer ClarinetFest® guests a chance to experience Korean culture at a discounted rate, adding an extra layer of discovery to their visit. Details and pricing are available at [clarinet.org/clarinetfest-2026](http://clarinet.org/clarinetfest-2026).

Returning for its second year, the Pre-ClarinetFest® Enthusiast Prelude Workshop will precede the main festival, offering early arrivals a unique opportunity for in-depth study, collaboration, and community building. We look forward to welcoming the global clarinet community to Incheon next July. ♪♪♪

