In the early 1970s, a new operatic genre emerged that replaced individual creativity with a collective of composers and artists. The first one, ‘P’i pada/Sea of Blood’, styled after Cultural Revolution era operas of China, set a high mark for North Korean artistic production, mixing music with dance and spectacle, popular melodies with folksong, and combining traditional instruments with a Western orchestra. The new genre abandoned Korean p’ansori, reportedly spurned by Kim Il Sung as too sentimental for the socialist revolution. 'Sea of Blood' also abandoned operatic arias, deemed unfit for socialist realism, and turned instead to couplets and choruses designed to be sung by the audience as well as the assembled musicians. 'Sea of Blood' operas remain celebrated today, and based on two field trips to Pyongyang, I analyze their artistic components as I ask why the operas continue to be performed some 45 years' later.