

**PRINCIPAL SECOND VIOLINIST CHIEN TAN
RELEASES GROUND-BREAKING CLASSICAL MUSIC VIDEO
FEATURING TREBLE VIOLIN**

Portland, Ore. Chien Tan, Principal Second Violin of the Oregon Symphony, utilizes innovative approaches to performance in her self-produced music video "Vivaldi Goldfinch," which features Tan playing the treble violin, a high-tech new addition to the string family. Tan hopes the release of this video, which she is currently marketing to classical cable channels both in this country and abroad, will inspire other musicians to explore inventive means of presenting themselves.

"This isn't a typical career move," Tan admits. "A principal violinist of a major orchestra, who is both a producer and feature artist for a music video, is creating a fresh spin on how classical music can be presented."

The treble violin is the smallest of a new family of string instruments known as the violin octet. Approximately one-quarter the size of a standard violin, the treble violin has an exceptionally high range; its highest string is made of high-tech carbon rocket wire, which is necessary to withstand the extreme tension of its tuning. Although similar to a standard violin, there are distinct differences: the "f" holes are longer, the neck is narrower but the fingerboard is both thicker and wider, while the body is slightly thinner. "The concept behind these instruments was to apply a consistent theory of acoustics that would increase string power and dynamics," Tan explains.

Tan first heard about the treble violin a little over a year ago and was immediately drawn to its sound and the possibilities it offered for creative expression. "The acoustic violin hasn't changed much in 200 years, so this is something refreshing," she explains. "My idea is to collaborate with other instruments, whether with the violin octet or as a soloist or in a special show. I also want to commission arrangements and new works for treble violin." Tan also wants the treble violin to cross stylistic boundaries and reach lovers of contemporary, folk and world music as well as classical. "I hope in time the treble violin will be seen not as a novelty but an accepted legitimate instrument in the violin family."

These instruments, although invented in the mid-20th century, are made by only a few luthiers and relatively few exist outside museums. Tan bought her treble violin from the principal builder of treble violins, Dr. Carleen Hutchins, a 93-year old luthier and founder of the New Violin Family Association, based in New Hampshire. "At first these instruments were considered novelties and weren't much accepted, but now, after a lifetime of advocacy by Dr. Hutchins and the Hutchins Consort which plays violin octet music all over the world, more musicians are trying them out." Tan explains. "The blueprint is available to other luthiers who are starting to build them, so in time more of these instruments will be made for players. Next year there's going to be a New Violin Family Convention, which shows there's growing interest among musicians in these instruments."

Tan came up with the idea of a music video as a way of introducing the treble violin to a wider audience. "There aren't a lot of classical music videos being broadcast, and I want to attract both new and regular classical music listeners with my video," she says. "The fact that one person can create a project like this shows it can be done because the technology is there," Tan continues. "I think there's a perception that videos are expensive to do, but my music video proves you can make one on a shoestring and it can still be very professional and contemporary. I didn't have to sell my first-born in order to make it." Tan hopes that other musicians as well as orchestras will take advantage of this more accessible video technology to promote themselves and their

ensembles. “Aside from introducing the treble violin I also want my video to serve as a role model for other musicians.”

In addition to the concerto itself, “Vivaldi Goldfinch,” available in DVD format, also includes a short informal presentation by Tan about the treble violin itself. Tan chose Vivaldi’s “Goldfinch” concerto because its range and style complement the sparkling clarity of the treble violin’s unique sound. The video features Symphony musicians Julie Coleman, violin; Ayako Gamo, violin; Mara Gearman, viola; Una O’Riordan, cello and Paul DeNola, bass, along with harpsichordist Janet Jones all playing the orchestra part of Vivaldi’s concerto, while Tan performs the solo on her treble violin. The backup players all agreed to play for union scale, to assist Tan with her creative enterprise. “The Symphony’s musicians are a supportive bunch and were willing to do this because they know me as their friend and colleague,” says Tan. “Also, ‘Goldfinch’ is fun to play.”

Filmed entirely on location at Portland’s Montgomery Park, the four-minute video is infused with golden light, which reflects the treble violin’s high range and frequency. The video also combines animation with live action; a computer-animated goldfinch flutters in and out of the frame, soaring with the music. “A lot of clips of classical video on TV were made in the era of black and white television,” Tan says. “I wanted my video to merge classical performance with contemporary visual effects. Based on what I’ve seen on Classic Arts Showcase (a free 24-hour cable channel devoted to the performing arts), the average age of classical performance videos is about 30 years, and most are in black-and-white. Classic Arts Showcase gets many of their clips from archives and major record labels but there are very few of today’s North American classical performers featured on cable or regular television.”

“Perhaps when music videos came out in the 1980’s there was a perception on the part of people who produced them that classical music lovers wouldn’t be interested in this new format,” Tan continues. “Personally, I think a video reaches out to a wider audience and doesn’t degrade the music at all. However, I don’t feel for most classical musicians that the idea of a music video is even part of their vocabulary.”

For Tan, the process of making the video was an enormously satisfying experience and allowed her to explore all aspects of the recording process. “This is a good time to be an independent musician because you don’t need a huge studio or a major label. Also, doing this sort of thing independently means you have total artistic control and you are completely involved in the whole process, not just as a session or side musician. I have a better appreciation of what’s involved and I met a lot of creative people.”

The “Vivaldi Goldfinch” DVD is now available for purchase at Music Millennium-Classical and CDBaby at www.cdbaby.com/cd/chientan. For more information, or to see the music video, visit Tan’s website at www.trebleviolin.com. For more information about the treble violin, visit the newviolinfamily.org website.

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