

Neither's the second fiddle

Two SSO violinists will have a 'duel', albeit a friendly one, today and tomorrow

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ARTS REPORTER

THOUGH they have worked together for five years in the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, violinists Jin Li (right) and Chan Yoong-Han (far right) have never faced off – until now.

The pair will duel – oops, duet – in a recital today and tomorrow at the Young Musicians' Society (YMS) Auditorium. Dramatically titled Fiddlers' Feud, it is organised by the Chamber Music Society.

China-born Jin, 38, is a former protege of the late violin virtuoso Yehudi Menuhin, and has performed as a soloist numerous times here and abroad.

Meanwhile, home-grown musician Chan, 33, received the Young Artist Award in 2004, and is concertmaster of the new Singapore Festival Orchestra.

The two musicians laugh when you ask if there is simmering discord amid the ranks of the orchestra's first violins.

"In the orchestra, we tend to treat each other as colleagues. After work, everyone disappears to do his own thing," says Chan, who approached Jin about three months ago to put a programme together.

"You can stay in an orchestra for a long time, but not actually hear each other play outside of it. So this has been a great chance to get to know each other better."

Though it is the first time the two violinists are working on a recital together, they hit it off instantly.

"We hardly need to talk about the music. We can communicate with each other through music and rarely need any explanations," says Jin.

Chan adds: "Jin is a very private person, a family man and a loving father, so for him to open up to me has been a great honour."

Both violinists are married and Jin has a five-year-old daughter.

This recital will be the first the society, founded last year to promote chamber music, has organised.

Its only previous project was presenting the Passion video game music concert last December, which featured music from popular games like Final Fantasy. It was performed by an ensemble of Japan- and Australia-based musicians.

This week's concerts will include two sonatas by Leclair, all eight of Wieniawski's Etudes-Caprices, Prokofiev's Sonata For Two Violins and Moszkowski's Suite in G Minor, which was the first piece performed at the Esplanade Concert Hall when it opened in October 2002.

They will also premiere local composer Zechariah Goh's Valor which was commissioned by the society for the recital.

Said the society's founder, nava officer Adrian Tan, 30: "It was ar



excuse to get a local composer to put pen to paper, as there is a dearth of new chamber music written here."

The two violinists are certainly glad for the chance to perform chamber music.

Jin says: "It is always nice to do something different. In the orchestra, you always play the same sound. Chamber music is more intimate."

Chan adds: "It is seldom that you get two violinists with the rapport to play together. It is like putting two sopranos together – usually there is a clash of egos."

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➤ Fiddlers' Feud is on at the YMS Auditorium today and tomorrow at 8pm. Tickets at \$21 are available at Gatecrash. Call 6222-5595 or visit www.gatecrash.com.sg