

LIM SHUE CHURN: VETERAN VIOLINIST LEAVES SSO AFTER 31 YEARS



A young Shue Churn gets Zubin Mehta's autograph as Choo Hoey looks on

IN October last year, violinist Lim Shue Churn bid a fond farewell to the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in Dresden – its final stop on a sensational 6-city tour of Germany and London. Music Director Lan Shui paid a fitting tribute to the long-serving SSO musician at the end of the concert by walking to her seat in the first violin section and surprising her with a bouquet of flowers.

Just 13 when she joined the first batch of SSO musicians as a trainee musician in 1978, Shue Churn became a full-time musician three years later. In 1980 she travelled with the SSO to Malaysia for its first concert tour. At the point of her last concert, she had served some 31 years

with the orchestra. Today she counts the SSO's 2005 New York debut in Lincoln Center as the highlight of her three-decade career.

"Actually I did not feel that this was my last tour and concert with SSO until Lan presented the bouquet to me. That meant a lot to me, more so than any award or medal," says the veteran musician. "My friends in the orchestra are still my friends, and Singapore remains my home. That makes parting with the SSO much easier."

The long hours of practising came easily to the young Shue Churn, who started learning the violin with her father Lim Tiap Guan at a very early age. A student of



Shue Churn with her pet parrot

Charles Treger from the United States, she also participated in many masterclasses with various visiting SSO soloists.

For the teenager, the biggest challenge in the first few years was getting accustomed to working with people from different cultures and nationalities in the orchestra. "SSO had musicians from different countries, with their own habits, personalities and idiosyncrasies. It was not easy for me then."

Of the years under Choo Hoey (1979-1996), she remembers performing alongside mega star artists such as Ruggiero Ricci (1980), Oscar Shumsky (1986) and Salvatore Accardo (1986). "Under the direction of Lan Shui, the standard of the orchestra became higher, we widened our repertoire, and performed Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* in 2004. I wish I could perform this particular work again!"

For now, there's much to look forward to, including more chamber music performances and more time for travelling, tennis, gym workouts and playing with her parrot. "Life is not only about music. I always wanted to do so many things and did not want to wait till I am 60. Now I am living my dream... so many places to travel to and so much to learn." !

by Cindy Lim



SSO rehearsing in the early days



Shue Churn with her dancer friends in Toronto