



YOUNG ARTIST AWARD 2024

## ALAN CHOO



Alan performing a Vivaldi's Concerto with Apollo's Fire, 2022.

Violinist **ALAN CHOO** (b. 1990), whose performances have been described by 'The Straits Times' as "an intoxicating brew of poetry and dare-devilry," performs on the global stage as a soloist, chamber musician and baroque specialist.

As founder and artistic director of Red Dot Baroque (RDB), Singapore's first professional baroque ensemble and ensemble-in-residence at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, Alan believes that baroque music can unlock new possibilities in expression and collaboration, while having the power to bring new audiences into the world of art.

The concertmaster and assistant artistic director of the Grammy-winning Apollo's Fire (USA) released a solo recording debut with Apollo's Fire and Jeannette Sorrell called 'Biber: Mystery Sonatas' on the AVIE Records label in March 2024. The album topped at No. 2 on the Billboard's Traditional Classical Albums chart and earned rave reviews from 'BBC Music Magazine,' 'The Strad' and 'Classica Magazine.'

As a soloist, Alan has appeared with Apollo's Fire at Carnegie Hall (United States), Tanglewood Music Festival (US), Ravinia Festival (US) and St Martin-in-the-Fields (United Kingdom). Other credentials include performing concertos with the FVG Orchestra (Italy), St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra (Russia), Tafelmusik Winter Institute Orchestra (Canada), and back home with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Chinese Orchestra, Orchestra of the Music Makers, and more.

Passionate about inspiring future generations through outreach and education, the arts advocate conceived and co-wrote the script for 'Red Dot's Rovin' Ride Through the Four Seasons' (2024) – a kids theatre show based on Vivaldi's Four Seasons, in collaboration with Taugeh Productions. Alan also designed 'The Circle of Life' (2023), a collaboration between RDB and the Open Score Project celebrating the crossroads between Western Baroque and Asian folk music; and in the realm of contemporary music, co-founded 'SG Inspirations' (2015) with pianist Lin Hengyue, which commissioned, performed and recorded new works by Singaporean composers.

Alan's awards include the Peabody Conservatory's Early Music Award (2016); the NUS Centre of the Arts' Paul Abisheganaden Grant for Artistic Excellence (2015); the Goh Soon Tioe Centenary Award (2014); Peabody's Grace Clagett Ranney Prize in Chamber Music (2014); and the first prize in the Singapore National Piano and Violin Competition (2011), Artist Category.



## A CONVERSATION WITH ALAN CHOO

**Tell us about your earliest memories encountering the arts. Who or what were your key influences in music?**

I have my parents to thank for nurturing me in an environment where the arts was always part of our lives. My Dad loved playing the piano, and my Mum loved to sing. The car would play anything ranging from Beethoven to musical theatre to Taiwanese folksongs, and sing-a-longs happened. I got my first start on the violin when I was six, alongside art classes. My sister took up ballet and every Sunday would be a family field trip to Fort Canning Park to observe her lessons. We would then go to the Art Museum. Soon my Dad started taking me to concerts, and buying me CDs as gifts.



Alan and his parents with his poster at the Ravinia Music Festival, 2024.

**Please share what a typical day in your life as a violinist is like.**

There isn't really a typical day, but I'm glad to be living every day as a violinist.

In Singapore, Red Dot Baroque's evening rehearsals are preceded by my personal practice and conducting masterclass/lessons, or meetings and organisational time as part of my artistic director role. Abroad, a full-day rehearsal schedule is more common, so there isn't much space for anything else.

On concert days, I try to give myself mental space to focus and relax. I do my best to set aside time in between projects to decompress and to spend time with loved ones.

**What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in your artistic journey and what motivated you to continue in spite of these challenges?**

As artistic director of Red Dot Baroque (RDB), I had to learn many skills on the job. As RDB grew, my directorial duties also grew, which I had not foreseen when we gave our debut concert in 2018. It can feel overwhelming.

But every time I start playing music with my friends, experience the magic of performing live to a warm audience, or listen to a piece of music and get deeply moved by it... that's when everything feels worth it, and it motivates me to keep going!

**What do you want the audience to experience through your works?**

English Baroque composer Henry Purcell has a famous song that goes, "Music for a while, shall all your cares beguile." I find this to be such a beautiful portrayal of what music can do. It has the power to make us forget our cares, even if for a while. It stirs emotions and feelings that we may otherwise bury and brings people together.

**What advice would you give the younger generation who would like to pursue a career in the arts?**

If you wake up every day feeling excited about the arts, let the passion guide you. It can feel intimidating as it is a road less travelled. As long as you stay in touch with your artistic identity and what is true to you, you will find your way, even if it ends up being quite different from what you originally thought.

**What are your hopes and vision for Singapore's music scene?**

I hope for the arts and music to be even more integrated into every person's life. I want people to discover that everyone can be a musician in their own right, whether it's by humming a tune, clapping along to



Alan leading the rehearsals of St John Passion with Red Dot Baroque and YST Conservatory, 2022.

the beat or moving along to the groove. It is worth devoting more time and resources to celebrating art as a society as it improves our lives and reminds us what it means to be human.

**How does receiving the Young Artist Award change things for you?**

Receiving the YAA changes little in terms of my artistic goals and dreams. Performing at a high level, celebrating Baroque music, reaching out to people and bringing them together through my music... these have always been my goals. That said, such a major recognition of my efforts on this journey has been immensely motivating, and I find a renewed sense of energy and purpose which I will take forth toward future challenges and adventures!

**Tell us more about how you would like to further grow and contribute to the arts scene.**

I would like to become a musician with increased relevance and value to all of society. I envision coming up with fresh programming ideas and concepts that attract new audiences, and initiating creative collaborations that challenge our notions of ever-evolving art forms, drawing links and connections to where we are at any time and place.

By staying in touch with a society's development and my own identity as an artist and a human, I hope to deepen my impact on this land that has nurtured and inspired me.



## WORDS OF APPRECIATION

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My friends at Red Dot Baroque — thank you for your spirits and camaraderie that make RDB a special place – and our Board members, donors and supporters;

Last but not least, my dearest family for your support for all my artistic pursuits, concerts, travelling... and for me. I definitely would not have become the person I am today without all of your love.