THE LEIDEN COLLECTION

Singing Violinist

Jacob Adriaensz Ochtervelt
(Rotterdam 1634 – 1682 Amsterdam)

ca. 1666–70
oil on panel
26.9 x 19.5 cm
JO-100

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How To Cite

Dominique Surh, "Singing Violinist", (JO-100), in *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., Ed., New York, 2017
http://www.theleidencollection.com/archive/

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Dressed in the fanciful costume of a performer, this alluring musician sings to the tune of his violin while leaning out of an open window. His festive attire harks back to early sixteenth-century styles, including the dark red velvet beret with plumed feathers, the luxurious satin brown shirt with slashed ribbons, and the aubergine-colored velvet jacket slung casually over the window sill. With heartfelt engagement in his music, the young man peers at his audience from the corners of his eyes. One can almost hear the tenor of his voice as it harmonizes with the notes of the violin and imagine the music rising in crescendo before falling away into silence.

This captivating image, which was first published as an autograph work by Jacob Ochtervelt in 1979, relates closely to a group of other half-length figures that the artist executed between 1665 and 1675.[1] Ochtervelt appears to have based one of these paintings, *Singing Violinist*, 1666, in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum **(fig 1)**, on a work by the Leiden artist Pieter van Noort (1622/25–72) **(fig 2)**.[2] Van Noort's *Hearing* from ca. 1635 is from a series devoted to the five senses, suggesting that Ochtervelt's painting in Glasgow, and by extension this work from the Leiden Collection, may also have been conceived as *Hearing* in a now-lost series of the five senses.[3] Susan Donahue Kuretsky has identified these two depictions of a violinist, as well as a third example, as self-portraits.[4]

More than one third of Ochtervelt's oeuvre is devoted to musical subjects, perhaps because, as Kuretsky suggests, he was a musician himself.[5] The majority of these paintings depict interiors with full-length figures absorbed in flirting, feasting, and playing music; all include precise representations of instruments and an informed knowledge of how they were played. In the Leiden Collection painting, Ochtervelt portrays himself at ease, holding the instrument against his shoulder in accordance with how seventeenth-century violins were played.[6] At the end of the violin's neck, the frayed

Fig 1. Jacob Ochtervelt, *Singing Violinist*, 1666, oil on panel, 26.7 x 21.6 cm, Glasgow Art Museum and Gallery, © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums and Libraries Collections

Fig 2. Pieter van Noort, *Sense of Hearing: Singing Violinist*, ca. 1635, oil on panel, 88.4 x 67 cm, Landesmuseum, Münster, 199-202 WKV

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ends of the strings hang in ringlets near the pegs. In all three of his self-portraits with a violin, Ochtervelt portrays his left hand fingering the same chord, as though he were representing a specific moment of a favorite song.

Ochtervelt executed two other paintings from this period in which half-length figures appear in a window: *Singing Woman*, formerly on the art market in Vienna **(fig 3)**, and its presumed pendant, *Man in a Niche,* dated 1668, in the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt **(fig 4)**.[7] Because of the similar size and corresponding musical subject matter of the *Singing Woman* with the Leiden Collection's *Self-Portrait*, Otto Naumann suggested that they may have been conceived as pendants.[8] The similarity of the architectural niche in these two paintings, however, is somewhat misleading, since the present painting has been largely reconstructed. During conservation treatment in 2008 it became evident that the window element had suffered from abrasion and that an earlier restorer had imaginatively overpainted the architecture with an arched window **(fig 5)**. When this overpaint was entirely removed, it became clear that the niche was a originally configured as a rectangle **(fig 6)**. The conservator therefore reconstructed the architectural details using the Vienna and Frankfurt paintings as models, which is how the painting is seen today.[9] The idea that *Singing Violinist* and *Singing Woman* were originally pendants is difficult to confirm, though possible. The suggestion that the *Singing Violinist* may have been part of a pair, rather than one of series depicting the five senses, is also compelling.

Regardless, the artist's treatment of the present *Singing Violinist* demonstrates a deeper impact of the Leiden painting beyond the influence of Van Noort's example. Ochtervelt's meticulous rendition of details and emulation of the interplay of light on different surfaces, including the soft texture of his silk sleeves, flouncy quality of the feathers, and plushness of the velvet, connect this painting to the *fijnschilder* tradition of Leiden artists such as Gerrit Dou (1613–75) and Frans van Mieris the Elder (1635–81).[10] Not only has Ochtervelt adopted a small-scale format similar to that of his Leiden counterparts, but his use of a window derives from a motif that appears frequently in Dou's works. An exquisite painting by Dou from 1653, *Violin Player*, now in the Princely Collections at Vaduz Castle, Liechtenstein **(fig 7)**, represents the type of painting—in scale, subject matter, and composition—that inspired Ochtervelt.[11]

-Dominique Surh

Fig 3. Jacob Ochtervelt, *Singing Woman*, ca. 1668, oil on panel, 26.5 x 19.5 cm, signed (sale, Dorotheum, Vienna, Alte Meister, 15 October 2013, no. 526)

Fig 4. Jacob Ochtervelt, *Man in a Niche*, 1668, oil on panel, 29 x 33 cm, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, © Städel Museum – ARTOTHEK

Fig 5. Jacob Ochtervelt, *Singing Violinist*, JO-100, pre-cleaned state before treatment

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Fig 6. Jacob Ochtervelt, *Singing Violinist*, JO-100, actual state during conservation in 2008

Fig 7. Gerrit Dou, *Violin Player*, 1653, oil on panel, arched top, 31.7 x 20.3 cm, The Princely Collections, Vaduz–Vienna

Endnotes

1. Previously attributed to Ary de Vois, Otto Naumann brought this painting to the attention of Susan Kuretsky, who was completing her monograph on the artist. See Susan Donahue Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob Ochtervelt (1634–1682)* (Oxford, 1979), 20–22, 67, no. 34, fig. 63.
2. Hamish Miles, *Dutch and Flemish, Netherlandish and German Paintings*, 2 vols. (Glasgow, 1961), 1:101, no. 590, 2:67, ill.; Angelika Lorenz, *Renaissance und Barock im Westfälischen Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Münster* (Münster, 2000), 108–9.
3. Ochtervelt has also depicted himself as a smoker, which may have been intended to represent the sense of taste; see Susan Donahue Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob*

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Ochtervelt (1634–1682) (Oxford, 1979), 21; Susan Donahue Kuretsky, "The Ochtervelt Documents," *Oud-Holland* 87 (1973): 124–41, esp. 133–34.

4. On the entire group of paintings, see Susan Donahue Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob Ochtervelt (1634–1682)* (Oxford, 1979), 20–22, 66–67, nos. 33–35, 149, figs. 61–64.
5. Some 39 of about 100 total paintings from Ochtervelt's oeuvre have musical subject matter. See Susan Donahue Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob Ochtervelt (1634–1682)* (Oxford, 1979), 20.
6. *The Hoogsteder Exhibition of Music and Painting in the Golden Age* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Kunsthandel Hoogsteder & Hoogsteder; Antwerp, Hessenhuis) (Zwolle, 1994), 365.
7. For *Singing Woman*, see Susan Donahue Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob Ochtervelt (1634–1682)* (Oxford, 1979), 21, 73, no. 47, fig. 70a; for *Man in a Niche*, see *Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Verzeichnis der Gemälde* (Frankfurt, 1966), 91, no. 606, and Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob Ochtervelt*, 21, 73–74, no. 48, fig. 70.
8. Personal correspondence with the author via e-mail, 3 October 2013, kept on file at the Leiden Collection.
9. According to Nancy Krieg's private conservation treatment notes consulted by Annette Rupprecht, Susan Donahue Kuretsky examined the painting in person in May 2008 and suggested the Vienna and Frankfurt paintings as plausible models for how the painting's niche was probably originally intended. See Annette Rupprecht, "Technical Notes of a *Singing Violinist* by Jacob Ochtervelt, JO-100," unpublished report dated May 2012, curatorial files, The Leiden Collection.
10. Susan Donahue Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob Ochtervelt (1634–1682)* (Oxford, 1979), 20–21. See also the essay on the Leiden *fijnschilders* in this catalogue.
11. Ronni Baer, "Violin Player," in *Gerrit Dou, 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (Washington D.C., 2000), 104–5, no. 20.

Provenance

- The Rev. J. M. Heath, Vicar of Enfield, by 1857, until at least 1880, as by Ary de Vois.
- David Manin Currie, Kensington, London (his sale, Christie's, London, 18 February 1921,

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no. 18, as by Ary de Voys [for 115.10 guineas to Spero]).

- Private collection, Belgium (sale, Sotheby's, London, 6 December 2007, no. 176 [Johnny van Haeften, Ltd., London]).
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2007.

Exhibition History

- Leeds, "National Exhibition of Works of Art," 1868, no. 680 [lent by the Rev. J. M. Heath].
- Dallas, Dallas Museum of Art, "Vermeer Suite: Music in 17th-Century Dutch Painting," 17 January 2016–21 August 2016 [lent by the present owner].

References

- Waagen, G. F. *Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain: Being an Account of more than Forty Collections of Painting, Drawings, Sculptures &c. &c.* London, 1857, 318, as by Ary de Vois.
- *National Exhibition of Works of Art*. Exh. cat. Leeds, 1868, 47, no. 680, as by Ary de Vois.
- Graves, A. *A Century of Loan Exhibitions*. 5 vols. London, 1914, 1:279, as by Ary de Vois.
- Kuretsky, Susan Donahue. *The Paintings of Jacob van Ochtervelt (1634–1682)*. Oxford, 1979, 21, 67, no. 34, fig. 63.

Technical Summary

The support, a single plank of vertically grained, rectangular oak, has bevels on all four sides.[1] The panel is unthinned and uncradled and does not have machine tool marks. There are three rows of illegible black stencils but no wax collection seals, import stamps or panel maker's marks.

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A light-colored ground has been thinly and evenly applied. The oil paint has been applied in successive thin layers with areas of fine detail along the figure, his elegant clothes, and the instrument. Although the contours of these forms are slightly raised, there is no use of impasto throughout the composition.

The painting is unsigned and undated.

The upper edge of the rectangular architectural niche has previously undergone a compositional change. At the time the painting was acquired, the upper edge of the niche had been falsely reconstructed with a shallow arch.[2] During conservation treatment, the original rectangular shape was revealed, and the upper edge of the niche was returned to its original rectangular format.

No underdrawing or compositional changes are readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers or in the X-radiograph.

The painting was cleaned and restored in 2008 and remains in an excellent state of preservation.

-Annette Rupprecht

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