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Artistic Director

The Globe and Mail, Wednesday, Nov. 21, 2007

## EXECUTIVE CLASS CHAN HON GOH, PRINCIPAL DANCER, NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA

Chan Hon Goh regularly performs across Canada and around the world. She also spends a fair bit of time on the road promoting and developing her own line of dance footwear.

### How often do you travel?

I grew up in Vancouver so I frequent Vancouver often to visit family, I would say, about four times a year. Other than that I often travel for guest appearances everywhere – I guess a lot in the United States and Asia as well.

### You always fly?

Yes. I prefer to fly, although when we go to Ottawa we usually travel by Via Rail and that's nicer than going by bus because you have a lot more room so you can walk around, chat with your friends and the time goes by rather quickly.

**I understand you also have your own line of ballet slippers and pointe shoes? Does that require a lot of travelling?**

Yes, it often does. Our factories are overseas and I make about one trip a year to the factory to do an inspection and to meet new cobblers and give hands-on



CYLLA VON TIEDEMANN

direction on how we like to see some things specifically made.

### Do you have any packing tips?

I always try to pack light but it's an impossible task for me. First of all, I have different shoes for outfits and that weighs a lot. And that's troublesome right now because most airlines are very strict with their weight and size restrictions. And I'm a very slight person and I can't lug anything heavy so I have to put it in two small pieces and then I

have my carry-on and my purse, so I end up taking several pieces with me so I can lift it off the belt.

### You never ship ahead?

No. No. I don't trust it. I'd rather have everything with me.

### How do you manage to eat healthy on the road?

It is hard. It is very important for us to have proper nutrition and a well-balanced diet because we exert ourselves so physically and we perspire and we lose a lot during the course of a day. So being on the road is a challenge because oftentimes you can't get what you're used to. I typically don't eat any fast food. I have a fairly simple, healthy diet with lots of greens or lots of protein like grilled chicken or grilled meat. I rely a lot on hotel room service. Even though room service is costly, it's better than being out walking around looking for a restaurant.

### Do you eat airplane or airport food?

I prefer to pack my own. I have to say there is such a huge difference between when you travel executive and first class and

when you travel in economy class. When I was invited to dance in Singapore, before negotiating anything else in the contract, I made sure that they were willing to fly me on business because it took 24 hours to get there. It's a 12-hour time difference. I had a very, very short rehearsal period and I would be coming back to a performance the very next day, so I just needed to have that for my sense of well-being. The ticket was \$8,500. If I were to do that on personal travel I would think it was outrageous.

### I guess if they want you to perform your best it's important to get you there rested and in good shape.

It does make a huge difference. I could lie down, I was served very nice food and I didn't have to worry about taking food with me.

### Do you remember the flight you took when you moved to Canada from China with your parents? You came here when you were about seven years old.

Oh yes, very clearly. Our route was through Hong Kong and

then on to Vancouver. At that point I don't know if there were other options but my father purchased the ticket for us on Air Canada and I don't think there was a Chinese representative or a Chinese flight attendant on board. They were either English or French and neither my mother nor I spoke a word of English. I remember the lady who sat next to us communicated with us in written Chinese, so all the forms we needed to fill out she helped us with. At that time you were still served, you didn't have to purchase anything, and I just remember being offered a drink in these cute transparent, plastic glasses. We had not seen plastic glasses like that in China – everything was either tin or ceramic. So I wanted to keep these glasses because I thought they were so cute and I didn't want them to be thrown away.

*» Chan Hon Goh is dancing the role of Valencienne in The Merry Widow, which starts tonight and runs until Sunday at Toronto's Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. For more information, visit [national.ballet.ca](http://national.ballet.ca) or call 416-345-9595.*

*» Sandy Farran*