



AT YOUR SERVICE

Quinn Violin Shop

by Doug Cole

Where is Chris Quinn's Violin Shop these days? I thought his shop was on Nicollet Mall near Orchestra Hall. Or was he somewhere in Golden Valley? Did Christopher disappear like the Red Violin? Or did he disappear into the virtual world like the guys in the Matrix movie? He runs an online string shop right? Right. But he also has a real violin shop with a new showroom and a repair shop too. Quinn Violins is located just north of downtown Minneapolis in a brick building at 1081 21st Avenue South East. It's not far from Dinkytown.

Christopher Quinn is indeed into the virtual world of the internet. In 1998 he began selling strings for the violin family of instruments over the "net." Gradually he added products like violin cases and accessories like shoulder rests and metronomes. And now the website has nearly ten thousand items and it competes with Shar Music, Southwest Music and Discount String Center. Quinn Violins does business with customers all over the world and currently has more business from Asia than from the Twin Cities.

In 1993 Quinn Violins was around the corner from Orchestra Hall. He moved his business to his house in Golden Valley in 1997 where he began work on the internet company called www.quinnviolins.com. Chris continued to operate from his house in Golden Valley while the internet sales were growing. In 2000 he moved to the present building, which was formerly General Mills research labs. Cheerio's breakfast cereal was invented there. (It's true!)

For the last three years he has developed what the computer "techie" call a real "brick and mortar" business. It has a comfortable office and reception area for meeting customers. Quinn and Scott Jensen have built a workshop big enough for repairing basses and for preparing the smallest kid-sized violins. There is a big stock room and a room for sending out internet orders. Down the hall is a modern and beautiful showroom. The Quinn Violins

showroom is full of instruments and bows of all sizes, from kid's sizes to adult sizes. There are many instrument cases and music stands too. The glass display case has strings and accessories of all kinds.

Quinn Violins has a wide range of quality instruments. Samuel Eastman, Frank Lee, Snow and others are but a few of the instrument makers. There are modern composite bows from Coda Bow as well as fine hand made wood bows. Many new instruments are on display but there are also some fine old instruments to audition.

The growth of Quinn Violins comes mostly from Chris's belief that real value is based on trust and relationships. Customers return because Chris is very easy going and he listens very well. He has a strong belief that he should deal with people directly, not an easy task on the internet, and that word of mouth is the absolute best source for new customers. He answers every phone call himself and people are often surprised to be speaking directly with him. He also answers e-mail messages and fills orders himself, even though he has help for that part of the business.

On any given day you will see a variety of activities. Scott is talking to someone about a new bridge for a bass in the workshop. Chris is on the phone speaking to someone about a school affiliates program. Someone has arrived for an appointment to audition some cellos. I am at the computer designing another magazine ad or am making arrangements for someone to rent a 1/2-size cello. Brianna and Stacy arrive in the afternoon to help in the showroom and to fill orders. Everyone is friendly and casual. Chris often says, "You won't be pressured here, although we do expect you to enjoy your visit." The atmosphere is unpretentious and comfortable even though one does deal with the excitement of finding that perfect instrument.

Everything at Quinn Violins has been carefully hand picked by Chris with an eye for value. That's why many people find their instrument there. Quinn Violins does offer discount prices but the price alone is only half of the value. The other half is based on quality and trust. It's a very special moment when one says, "Yes! This is the one." And everyone, parents, teachers and siblings



enjoy that moment with support and satisfaction. It's been a long time since the early days when Chris delivered a package of strings to a customer with "an emergency need" but the spirit is still there. And Chris

is still there at Quinn Violins. It's the best of both worlds, internet shopping and an old world violin shop right in Minneapolis.

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ment director at Quinn Violins. Doug plays Irish Fiddle and is the author of the St. Paul Slow Session Irish Tune Book. He is the former editor of the Irish Music and Dance Association newsletter. ♪