

Violins,” Iren Schio of Abiqui says, “are like eggs: perfect just the way they are.” Other artists, such as Sarah Tyson of Santa Fe and Dan Griggs of Albuquerque, also have a thing about violins, and a worldwide audience will have a chance to see—and bid on—their painted violins and those done by 39 other artists who are participating in an auction to benefit the Santa Fe Symphony and its guild, Fanfare.

The auction will be held Friday, October 6, at the Hilton Santa Fe, but anyone anywhere in the world who has a telephone and has made previous arrangements will be able to bid on the painted violins. Santa Fe is not the first city where artists have painted violins for a benefit (Atlanta, for example), Donald Tusk, the president of Fanfare, says, but he does believe that the marriage of visual art and music is perfect for the City Different.

Tusk, who recruited most of the artists, said the project started with a goal of 20, but as he contacted galleries and artists, word spread and calls came in from volunteers. Eventually, he and his fellow Fanfare members settled on 42 artists, including 13 Native Americans.

One of those was Sarah Tyson, who was a first-chair violinist in high school in Corning, New York. For her, turning a violin into a work of art was a natural connection.

What drove her was the power of Beethoven’s Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 61, one of her favorites. To create her work, she did something that went against her instincts—she cut the violin in half down the middle. She then downloaded the concerto from a Web site and processed it in a photo-editing program that enabled her to print the notes of the entire concerto on a 150-foot strip of Mylar.

She stuffed the result into the split violin so the music bursts out and curls around part of the neck. “The music is so powerful,” she said, “that I wanted to show it blowing the violin apart.”

For Dan Griggs, a native of Las Cruces, the assignment was something of an evolutionary move for him. A guitar player, Griggs says he has “always had a hankering to play the violin,” and he listens to classical music in his Albuquerque studio while he paints. “Music evokes beauty, grace, passion, rhythm and mystery,” Griggs wrote in the artist’s statement that will accompany his violin.

On the back of his violin he has painted a young woman in profile, a transparent veil covering her. He sees the young woman, a model named Summer Fry of Durango, Colorado, and a junior at the University of New Mexico, “in a transcendent moment, listening to an otherworldly score or a Mozart aria.” Mozart inspired Iren Schio, who said she listened to Mozart’s *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* as she painted her violin.

Both the Santa Fe Symphony and Fanfare will share in the proceeds from the auction. Fanfare will use its share to support its outreach programs, including its mentor program, according to Mathew Frauwirth, a trustee. To help music teachers who must work with 25 youngsters as a group with a range of ability, Fanfare hires professional

musicians to work with beginning students individually. "It keeps the beginners from getting discouraged and dropping out," Frauwirth says. A pilot program was so well received, the music teacher begged for more. Fanfare will do that.

The symphony provided all of the violins, thanks to a good deal from the Santa Fe Music and Piano Company. People have been sponsoring violins at \$100 per instrument, Tusk said, and additional sponsors are welcome.

But how will the international auction work?

The painted violins, which unlike the life-sized painted ponies of 2001 will fit in a living room on an acrylic stand (provided), have been displayed throughout the greater Santa Fe area during the summer and are also shown on the symphony's Web site (www.sfsymphony.org). The auction will be both silent and live.

Tusk stresses that no violin will be sold before the auction. However, anyone who wants to bid before the evening of the auction will be establishing the starting bid for that violin. Otherwise, the starting bid will be \$500. Those who want to participate by phone should call the symphony office at 505-983-3530 to get details. To see in person the way the way each artist interpreted the perfection of the violin, go to the Hilton Santa Fe at the appointed hour on the appointed date.

Georgia O'Keeffe understood the shared spontaneity of music and visual art, praising singing and the violin as perfect means of expression and adding that because she couldn't sing, she painted. As O'Keeffe always did, the 42 artists have made their own kind of music—this time through their painted violins.