

ART OF NOTE STRIKES A CHORD WITH

Youth music programs are going through some tough times in the state of Wisconsin. According to *Arts Education in Wisconsin Public Schools: A Preliminary Review*, a 2008 report from the Music for All Foundation, student enrollment in music is low—34% for grades 9–12—and there is a high student-to-teacher ratio for many classes, especially in urban areas. The report found that the percentage of student enrollment in music declines 73% between grades 6 and 12, concluding that “something is occurring to reduce course enrollments and overall participation. The long-term trend is showing a continual decline.”

This is where organizations like the Madison-based Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestras (WYSO) can help to bring more music into the lives of students. Established in 1966 by Professor Marvin Rabin of the University of Wisconsin–Extension Music Department and currently under the artistic direction of James Smith, WYSO offers opportunities for young musicians of all kinds to audition and play in any one of three full orchestras and a string orchestra, a chamber music program, a harp program, a percussion ensemble, and a brass choir program. WYSO programs serve about 350 young musicians from 35 communities in south central Wisconsin.

Students who successfully audition into WYSO programs are assessed a tuition fee that represents only about 30% of the total cost to sponsor a WYSO student musician. Scholarship funds are available for student tuition. The orchestras rehearse on Saturday mornings during the academic year, perform three to four public concerts per season, and have toured regionally, nationally, and internationally, including past trips to Canada, Scotland, Spain, France, and Japan.

But WYSO, like the many high-school music programs it helps to augment, could use some support in these challenging economic times. So, what’s the best way to support the arts? Why, with *more* art of course. This is the creative idea behind the Art of Note project. Created to support WYSO programs and students, Art of Note is a unique program where eight noted visual artists, many of whom are from Wisconsin, create and contribute original works of art made from unplayable violins to be raffled off to the highest bidder. “The Art of Note project is the perfect confluence of music and visual art,” says Andrée Valley, WYSO board member, artist, and originator of the Art of Note project. “We couldn’t be more pleased with the generosity of our artists and those who bid on their works in order to support this



Art of Note violins for this year’s program are designed by (from left to right) Randall Berndt of the James Watrous Gallery, textile

WISCONSIN ARTISTS

amazing program.”

The artists donating their original work to Art of Note this year—the sixth in a row for the project—range from Madison textile artist Briony Jean Foy to Verona rosemaler Jan Norsetter to painter and James Watrous Gallery co-director Randall Berndt. Even less-established artists like Sujeong Jin are represented. Jin, an eleventh-grade student at Madison West High School, is the 2009 winner of the student Art of Note design contest. She also plays cello in WYSO’s Philharmonia Orchestra.

This year, the Art of Note violins will be displayed at four sites in Madison from September 2–November 8, and they can be seen online at artofnote.org. Raffle tickets (\$10 each or six for \$50), available at various locations around Madison, can be purchased for any of the five of the violins on display. Raffle winners will be announced at the Art of Note Gala on November 13, 2009, at the new Atrium Auditorium of the First Unitarian Society. The gala runs from 5:30–9:30 pm and attendees will enjoy gourmet cuisine prepared by celebrity chefs, musical performances by WYSO musicians and guest artists, live and silent auctions, and the violin raffle. For more information on the Art of Note project or related events, visit artofnote.org.



artist Briony Jean Foy, rosemaler Jan Norsetter, and Sujeong Jin.

SHARE YOUR PROSE AND POETRY WITH ALL OF WISCONSIN

Writers of Wisconsin, sharpen your quills for the annual *Wisconsin People & Ideas* / Wisconsin Book Festival poetry and short story contests. Every year we sponsor the state’s largest contest of this kind in order to find the best of Wisconsin prose and poetry. First- through third-place winners in both contests receive cash prizes, publication in a forthcoming issue of *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, and other prizes.

Participation is open to all Wisconsin residents and the contest is currently accepting submissions until December 15, 2009. For more information about the contest and complete contest rules, call 608-263-1692 ext. 21 or visit wisconsinacademy.org.

ABOUT THE SHORT STORY CONTEST

The *Wisconsin People & Ideas* / Wisconsin Book Festival short story contest is supported by the Wisconsin Humanities Council, Avol’s Bookstore, and Wisconsin Public Television. Winners will receive prizes of \$500 (first place), \$250 (second place), and \$100 (third place). Winners’ works will be published serially beginning with the first-prize story in the summer issue of *Wisconsin People & Ideas*. The first-place story will be reviewed by a noted literary agent, and the author will receive a one-week stay at Edenfred, a creative arts residency owned by the Terry Family Foundation. Contest judges include:

- Dwight Allen, Madison (lead judge)
- Beth L. Lueck, Whitewater
- Alison Jones Chaim, Madison
- Nickolas Butler, Madison
- Jason A. Smith, Madison (contest coordinator)

ABOUT THE POETRY CONTEST

Winners of the *Wisconsin People & Ideas* / Wisconsin Book Festival poetry contest receive cash awards of \$500 (first place, the John Lehman Poetry Award), \$100 (second place), and \$50 (third place). The top three winning poems will appear in the spring 2010 issue of *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, with the ten runners-up appearing in the summer 2009 edition. The first-prize poet receives a one-week stay at Edenfred and a three-hour CD recording/editing session at Abella Studios. Contest judges include:

- Linda Aschbrenner, Marshfield (lead judge)
- Lester Smith, Delevan
- Tom Montag, Fairwater
- B.J. Best, West Bend
- John Lehman, Cambridge (contest coordinator)

The top three winners of both contests will be invited to read their work at a special event at the Wisconsin Book Festival. Winners from the 2009 contest can be seen reading on October 9, 5:00 pm, at Avol’s Bookstore, 315 West Gorham Street, Madison.