

Scientist's Art Makes Music

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It's an elegant painting full of detail and color, showing the iconic image of Tulane University, Gibson Hall. The talented artist isn't usually in a studio ? he's at the Tulane National Primate Research Center, researching Lyme disease.



Tulane President Scott Cowen admires the violin painted by researcher Ramesh Ramamoorthy as a fund-raiser for the Greater New Orleans Youth Orchestra. (Photo by Marianna Roll)

Even more unexpected, the canvas depicting Gibson Hall is a violin, which Ramesh Ramamoorthy painted as part of a fund-raising project for one of his favorite musical organizations, the Greater New Orleans Youth Orchestra.

The beautiful violin, along with several painted by other artists, is being [auctioned](#) by the orchestra between now and May 10 to raise funds for the nonprofit music education organization.

Ramamoorthy's creation on behalf of the group also includes the Tulane University shield and, around the sides of the violin, notes that are the flute music for the Tulane alma mater.

It definitely was a labor of love for Ramamoorthy, a 15-year Tulane employee with no formal art training, whose daughter has been playing with the youth orchestra for nine years, starting when she was 6 years old.

He works as a research assistant professor in the Division of Bacteriology and Parasitology at the primate center.

"I hadn't painted for a long time, several years," Ramamoorthy said. "It helps me relax and at the same time contribute to a good cause."

He brushes aside compliments. "With this one, I just lucked out."

Online bids are being accepted now for his violin painting as well as others. Winners of the violins will be announced at a May 10 concert by the orchestra at Loyola University's Roussel Hall.

Marianna Roll, executive director of the group, said the project uses violins that are damaged beyond repair. Ramamoorthy's painted violin and others went on display at art galleries, art markets and concerts around the New Orleans area during March and April to promote the bidding.

The Tulane violin, which is signed by Tulane University President Scott Cowen, and four others will be displayed at the New Orleans Opera Association's presentation of *West Side Story* tonight, Saturday and Sunday (April 18-20) at McAlister Auditorium. Performances are at 8 p.m. tonight and Saturday and at 2:30 p.m. on

Sunday.

At the opera display, the violins will be accompanied by a bid book, which will provide interested parties the opportunity to write in a silent bid. The deadline for submitting bids is 3 p.m. on May 10.