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From notes to paintbrush strokes

Local violin ensemble, painter to perform together in front of a live audience

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Surrounded by an ensemble of Austin's best string musicians, local artist Jan Roset listened closely to the music that she will translate into paintings in front of a live audience.

"I couldn't sleep last night; that music does something to you," Roset said the morning after the Tuesday evening rehearsal. "It's going to be interesting to see what happens."

Viola by Choice, a local ensemble known for its creative and unique performances, will present "Sounds Seen, Hues Heard," an evening of music inspired by colors, on Friday night. The performance will also premiere three original works composed exclusively for the group, as well as live improvised paintings by Roset.

French violist Aurelien Petillot founded Viola by Choice in October 2007 with *Death by Viola*, a Halloween-themed concert. He founded the viola-centric group to promote the seldom-recognized but powerful, rich instrument, as well as to provide affordable, exciting and eclectic music to Austin.

"If the violin is the soprano of the strings, the viola is tenor, and everybody likes a good tenor," Petillot said. "We bring fun classical music to the city, not stiff and stifling. There's no sleeping at our concerts."

Petillot graduated from UT with a doctorate in musical arts in 2005 and decided to create Viola by Choice in Austin, a community already hooked on live music.

"Austin is the best city and the best music scene," Petillot said. "People connect to the city. Once they come, they're hooked — like the viola. It's the voice of the underdog; once people hear it, they connect with it."

Roset will use the colorful music as inspiration for her improvised, abstract paintings. She said she is nervous about approaching what few painters attempt: live performance in front of an audience. Petillot met Roset during the East Austin Studio Tour at her studio, Pump Project Art Complex, where he saw her work and convinced her to participate in the concert.

"I always paint to music, but not always classical," Roset said. "The titles of the pieces I find intriguing. While they were practicing '50 Shades of Green,' I visualized a jaguar stalking a man in the jungle. I am an intuitive painter, so I'm not quite sure what's going to happen. I'm just going to focus on the concept of colors."

The performance will include two ensemble pieces: "Fragmentary Blue" by James Norman and "Monochrome" by Peter Schickele. Three living composers contributed colors missing from the older repertoire, including Lynn Job's "Arcangelo Red" and P. Kellach Waddle's "Your Midnight Blue Lies," both for solo viola.

"Working with composers allowed me a lot of insight into their process," Petillot said. "A lot of the colors we see as we play aren't necessarily the color that inspired that piece. The way we hear colors is very subjective. It is interesting to hear what they create using specific colors as inspiration."



Kim Espinosa; The Daily Texan

Practicing for their performance on Friday night, an Austin violin sextet gets ready to perform during "Sounds Seen, Hues Heard." Using the music as inspiration, artist Jan Roset will be painting live during the performance.

Roset will paint three or four canvases during the performance, without the breaks for observation and changes she usually has. The paintings will then be sold to benefit Viola by Choice's artistic and educational goals.

"I am delighted that Aurelien invited me to do this," Roset said. "I've seen this kind of thing with contemporary art and rock bands, but it is really unusual for this to happen with classical music. Hopefully I inspire people who are interested in art to stretch themselves and not be afraid of color."

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