



NATIONAL MUSIC MUSEUM
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

National Music Museum
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New Violin Evolves from Aerospace Technology Instrument Will Be Donated to National Music Museum

VERMILLION, S.D. – Known for its collections of rare and early musical instruments, the National Music Museum on the campus of the University of South Dakota will fast forward into the space age when it accepts the world’s first patented graphite-fibre violin during a noon-hour program at the Museum on June 25.

Today, many aspiring young violinists and their teachers must settle for cheaply made violins, which lack durability and possess poor tonal quality, but thanks to Leonard K. John, a Canadian scientist with more than 39 years of experience in the aerospace industry, that may be changing. John was the first person in the world successfully to build a graphite fibre violin in which the complete acoustic box is made of monolithic graphite. Granted a United States patent in 1983, John’s graphite design is now acknowledged to be the first major change in the history of violin making in more than three hundred years. According to *The Strad*, a noted classical music periodical for string enthusiasts, which test-played an early prototype to examine physical and tonal qualities, the graphite violin was ‘excellent by virtually all standards’ both to the eye and the ear. In fact, it is very difficult for most people to distinguish between the two. The 20th-century technology complements the art of violin making on a very basic level as well. Traditional violins are very delicate and require great care in terms of both their handling and storage environment. By comparison, the graphite violin will be more affordable and more durable, making it an attractive alternative to conventional violins.

The graphite violin owner, Joel Ferren of Cleveland, Ohio, will present the violin to the National Music Museum during the June 25 “brown bag” lunch program. Following the presentation, the inventor will offer brief remarks about the design followed by a short performance on the violin by Karen Lynne Barker, a graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, Canada, and member of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. The program is free of charge and the public is welcome.

About the National Music Museum: The National Music Museum and Center for Study of the History of Musical Instruments, located on the campus of the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, is one of the great institutions of its kind in the world. Its renowned collections include more than 10,500 American, European, and non-Western instruments from virtually all cultures and historical periods. Visit www.usd.edu/smm

About The University of South Dakota: Founded in 1862, The University of South Dakota is designated as the only public liberal arts university in the state and is home to a large College of Arts and Sciences, a School of Education and the state’s only Law School, Medical School, accredited Business School, and College of Fine Arts. It has an enrollment of approximately 8,700 students taught by 400 faculty members. More information is available at www.usd.edu/urelations/news.