

The
Sound
 of
Science

Texas A&M Physics professor Robert Kenefick blends his hobby and profession to create a symphony of scientific sound.
 Photos by Dave House



BY APRIL TOWER
 THE BATTALION

Bryan-College Station Chamber Orchestra violinist Robert Kenefick, Ph.D., said there is a correlation between science and music.

"It is well documented that people who are scientists are very lopsided in that they are first-born children," he said. "The first-born children are the ones who get the music lessons."

Kenefick never paid for music lessons. Forty-nine years ago, his grandfather, also a violinist, taught him to play.

"My first violin cost \$5 at a pawn shop," Kenefick said. Since his first violin, Kenefick has played a violin crafted by his great uncle and another instrument made by his colleague and biochemistry and biophysics professor Joseph Nagyvary, Ph.D.

"Nagyvary makes violins, violas and cellos," Kenefick said. "He gives them to me to break in because I play kind of heavy."

Kenefick played violin in the symphony at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at the graduate school he attended, Florida State University. Kenefick moved to College Station with his family in 1965, but the orchestra was not organized until 1973.

The orchestra, conducted by Marcelo Bussicki, is comprised of 50 people, including students, professors and local musicians from neighboring towns Madisonville, Navasota and Huntsville. When the orchestra plays concerts with OPAS, up to 800 people attend. For concerts such as these, Kenefick said the orchestra brings in 30 to 50 more musicians to "fill the holes."

The orchestra has a variety of instruments including strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion.

Kenefick and cellist Ellen Horner are the members of the orchestra who have been a part of it since it originated. Horner said she has been impressed by Kenefick's talent as a musician.

"I have found him to be a very congenial person," Horner said. "He has a wealth of knowledge and is an accomplished musician."

Kenefick also plays the viola, which he described as "a violin on steroids." He has played chamber music in string quartets, violin and piano duos, string trios and piano and string quartets. Kenefick said that although A&M has had a faculty piano trio since 1968, there has yet to be a faculty string quartet.

He said he likes the diversity music offers.

"I enjoy the feel and the sound of it," Kenefick said. "It is technically and musically challenging to make it sound the

way it might be interpreted. I've really enjoyed playing symphony because I got to play a lot of big works like Brahms, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. I never thought I'd be able to play all this as an amateur."

Kenefick has been teaching a three-hour musical acoustics course at A&M since 1984. The course will be offered this spring if enough students register for it.

"It doesn't make every year," Kenefick said. "With 43,000 students at A&M, it's hard to get 12 in that class."

He said a musical background is not necessary for the course.

"It is very selective and picks out the kids who have lost sight that college is a place to learn," Kenefick said. "It is not intended to be a prep course. Students who take the course are almost always guitarists who play in a rock band. Nine out of 10 people who graduate from music school end up doing something else."

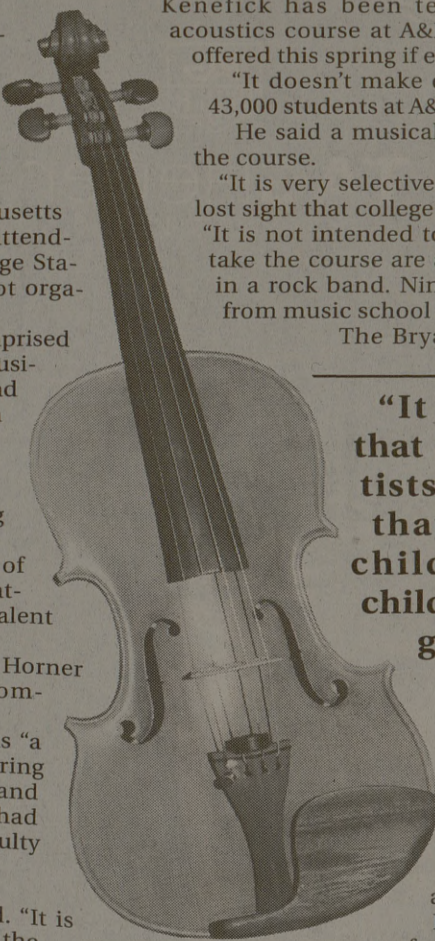
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Robert Kenefick
 Bryan-College Station
 Chamber Orchestra violinist

chestra plays at Rudder Theatre, Bryan Civic Auditorium and Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater. Kenefick said he expects its next performance will be in late November.

Clockwise from the top: Dr. Robert Kenefick, an A&M physics professor and a violinist in the Bryan-College Station Chamber Orchestra, makes his instrument sing. Kenefick plays a Nagyvary violin, crafted by Joseph Nagyvary, an A&M biochemistry and biophysics professor. The violinist uses a Chin bow, made by a master craftsman from China who worked for Herman Kleerekoper in the bi-



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