

# Learning to take a bow: Violin maker in residence at Skirvin

By [Brian Brus](#)

Oklahoma City reporter - Contact: [brian.brus@journalrecord.com](mailto:brian.brus@journalrecord.com) / 405-278-2837 / <https://twitter.com/JRBrianBrus>

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Violin maker Arsenios Corbishley is artist in residence at the Skirvin Hilton Hotel in Oklahoma City. (Photo by Brent Fuchs)

OKLAHOMA CITY – The downtown Skirvin Hilton Hotel has said goodbye to artist Romy Owens and welcomed Oklahoma City violin maker Arsenios Corbishley as its new artist in residence.

Corbishley is still adjusting to his new base of operations on the first floor of the historic hotel. He said it makes him feel like he's in a fishbowl. A space about 600 square feet is surrounded by windows facing Broadway Avenue and guests are invited to drop in to chat while he's shaping wood and stringing instruments.

"Yesterday three people walked by and asked to take my picture," he said Friday. "I'm not sure I'll ever really get used to it. But I'm also very grateful for this exciting opportunity."

General Manager Roseann Grippo, who took up her new position at the hotel about the same time Corbishley began his tenure, said the violinist craftsman is more than a monetary investment to the Marcus Hotels & Resorts parent company. The payoff for having him around creates a novel environment that guests aren't likely to forget as it builds a unique brand identity and fosters a goodwill relationship with the local artistic community.

"It's a gift to our guests that is new, fabulous and different," she said. "It's definitely not something we're looking to be a revenue-driver, because we pay them to create. But from a business standpoint I think that gives us an advantage in how our lobby is perceived."

“The art of violin making is something that most people have never seen,” she said. “I look at this way: Instead of having a display of artwork in the lobby, we have a live artist.”

Corbishley was one of five finalists from an applicant pool of 21 voted on by a selection committee comprising leaders in the local art community, the Paseo Art Association and the Skirvin Hilton. The inaugural year of the residency program with Owens was recognized by Hilton Worldwide with a Best Practice Community Relations Award.

The responsibilities of each person selected for the program are fitted to the artist’s skills. During Corbishley’s one-year stay, he’s expected to continue work on his string instruments and host regular open studios and concerts.

Corbishley, who normally works from his home studio in Oklahoma City, graduated from the Chicago School of Violin Making in 2012. He refined his craft at Inter-City Violin Studios, a repair shop in the Paseo Arts District. He also attended earned an undergraduate degree in cello performance from the University of Oklahoma.

Grippio would not discuss the financial arrangement that allows Corbishley to dedicate himself to the Skirvin for a year other than to say the company considered the work opportunities he was giving up in the exchange.

“As an instrument maker, you usually end up taking on about half repair work ... just to pay bills,” he said. “Being here at the Skirvin Hilton allows me to be much more selective in the repair work so I can focus more on making new instruments.”