

Rhea Burdick, a classical composer and violinist who majored in composition at New England Conservatory, was working in a Washington, D.C., music store, caring for and cleaning the shop's stock of rental instruments when she started wondering about the objects' origins.

"I started getting curious about how the whole instrument comes together, how it is

have it rehired; while there she struck up a conversation with the luthier. “I was curious about the tools he was using, because I was suddenly interested in tools,” she recalls. “That’s when I started thinking about the path to violin making, which had never occurred to me. I guess I assumed that making violins was just a family trade or possibly through some apprenticeship-to-master situation.”

It was only then that Nguyen learned that “regular people” could choose to attend schools where instructors taught them to become violin makers, as opposed to some mysterious process in which one’s untapped violin making aptitude is magically identi-

She was accepted to both schools and ultimately chose North Bennet for its small classes and collaborative work environment. Now that Nguyen is nearly done with the first of seven instruments, she is certain this is the path for her. “There is something about

fied by ancient, shadowy talent scouts—something like having an owl deliver an invitation to attend Hogwarts.

“I always thought violin making was something that is somehow bestowed upon you, not something that you could just decide to pursue on your own,” she says. The luthier who rehired her brother’s bow gave her a list of three schools, including North Bennet Street, and by the next morning, having done some deep-dive investigation, she’d applied online to two of them. “I guess I didn’t do super-extensive research, but I suddenly knew this is what I wanted to do.”