

MENDOCINO MUSIC FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

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Nancy Collins's Watercolor Picked as 2007 Mendocino Music Festival Poster

The Mendocino Music Festival features an original painting each year on its commemorative poster. Local artist Nancy Collins was commissioned to produce a watercolor in her unique style for the 2007 image. A working artist for over thirty years, her work has shown in galleries and shows around the country, including Stanford University, and was featured as part of the international "Art in the Embassies" program highlighting American artists. She has won awards and been published in *American Artist* magazine and the book How Do You Paint That? "I was honored to be asked to paint this piece," Collins said in a recent interview. "I've attended the Mendocino Music Festival every year, going to rehearsals and concerts. It would be hard to live here and not be part of it in some way."

Nancy moved to Fort Bragg 27 years ago. "As a mom I painted from nine at night to five in the morning for ten years, grabbing the only spare time I had. I took college classes and workshops, attending College of the Redwoods and other community colleges. Bob Rhoades of CR was a major influence in what I developed into as an artist." She uses frogs in her paintings frequently as a whimsical trademark, and two show up in the festival poster. "I started painting frogs in my pieces about 15 or 20 years ago. I love flowers, and I thought 'What goes with flowers?' The next

thought was 'frogs!' I want to make you laugh. Life is so busy that no one takes the time to notice little things. My goal is to slow the pace down and show something you otherwise would miss."

For this year's painting, titled "Toots", Nancy created a new technique. "All-staining watercolors will sink into paper, and I used hot press paper. I lost control of the paper because it was very soft. I decided to burnish in between, which would bring more control. I found it gave the image a shine. I used transparent, all staining colors for the brass and silver instruments, giving a luster to the painting which made the instruments look metallic. The frog's eyes have a three dimensional quality because of that shine."

The name of the painting has an obvious association, with horns and a clarinet featured in the piece, but the inspiration for the title came from a friend. "We were thinking of names like Come Blow Your Horn and Horns of Plenty, and he said 'If you want to do something fun, why not Toots?' That became the name."

In the foreground of the painting a gazing ball shows the festival tent and part of Mendocino village, placing the setting of the scene on one of the picnic tables outside the tent. "That was a way to incorporate the tent and the town in the painting in a way that hadn't been done before."

Starting in November of 2006, the painting was finished in March of this year. "I worked on it every day, from two to eight hours a day." The effort shows, and viewers can find new details every time they look at it. "Watercolor is definitely my love. Even though it is the most difficult form, I have yet to find someone I have not been able to teach to do it. The first week of the

festival I'll be teaching a watercolor class during the day, through the Mendocino Art Center. It's geared both towards beginners and experienced painters who need a kick in the pants to get going again."

The print of Nancy's painting "Toots" is on sale now at the Mendocino Music Festival office (937-4041), and on line at mendocinomusic.com.