

# Violinist excited with her piece of symphony's 'Return to Ruby'

**Amanda Sieradzki**  
Council on Culture & Arts

After a long, pandemic-induced hiatus, the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra will "Return to Ruby" for its first concert of the fall season on Saturday, Oct. 16.

Violinist Megumi Terry is most looking forward to playing Jessie Montgomery's composition which is featured on the program. "Starburst" plays with the imagery of rapidly forming stars in an endless galaxy to create a multidimensional sonic landscape.

"I'm happy to be a part of a group that is willing to put in the time and the care to make it a really memorable experience for the audience," says Terry. "I'm excited for people in Tallahassee to be able to hear it because I think they're going to really enjoy it. I hope they want to hear more of [Montgomery's] music and look her up afterwards."

Terry is a fan of living composers like Montgomery and has made it her mission as a Florida State University School

of Music doctoral candidate to spotlight a diverse array of female composers in her research. Part of her thesis work is creating a collection of underrepresented works for violin so that both educators and their students have an easier time accessing and learning about them.

## 'Space for other composers'

For example, composer Johannes Brahms is often used as the leading example of the Romantic era of classical music. Terry wants to provide more options for teachers so that if a student wants to learn a romantic violin sonata, they might also look to composers like Amy Beach.

"Bach and Beethoven are important, but there's plenty of space for other composers as well," says Terry. "Students only play something if their teacher has played it or if they've heard it before, and a lot of these pieces you can't find the score in the library or a decent recording on YouTube. It's different

## If you go

**What:** Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra's "Return to Ruby"

**When:** Saturday, Oct. 16

**Where:** Ruby Diamond Concert Hall, 222 S Copeland Street

**Cost:** Ticket prices vary

**Contact:** For more information, visit [tallahasseeesymphony.org](http://tallahasseeesymphony.org).

when you're learning it on your own for the first time and kind of trailblazing in a sense."

Terry's violin journey began at age 3 when she saw a violinist play in her church. She begged her mother for the instrument for a year before she started lessons. The only catch was a promise she made to her mother, and continues to keep to this day.

"She said, 'if you want to do this,

**See TERRY, Page 3C**



**Megumi Terry performs during an International Piano and Strings Competition in 2016 at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. Terry will be performing with the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra in October.**

RICHARD TERMINE

# Terry

Continued from Page 1C

you're not allowed to quit until you're 99," laughs Terry. "Through my teenager years there were moments when I wanted to quit, but my mom would always ask, 'are you 99 yet?'"

## Introducing music to students

Terry is grateful for her undergraduate professor at Brigham Young University who guided her through her "formidable teenage years" and continued to be a mentor in college. A laureate of the International Stradivarius Competition — a high caliber competition for young violinists — Terry has performed with the Utah Philharmonic Orchestra, Southwest Symphony, The Orchestra of Southern Utah, and Pleasant Grove Orchestra.

Currently, she plays for the Sinfonia Gulf Coast and the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra in addition to TSO. Given her focus on music as it intersects with social activism, she is part of a new TSO string quartet initiative sponsored by the Tallahassee-Leon County Nonprofit Services Grant program.

The quartet's goal is to share music from female composers in an interactive format. Terry is looking forward to giving students at 32 elementary and middle schools the chance to hear live music, especially given the dearth of live performance opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our goal was to bring women composers or composers of color to the community because they're underrepresented," says Terry. "I think music can be a means for change. As long as you're doing something in your own little corner of the world and helping people in the way that you can, that is the best you can do. I feel as a musician, I can highlight these composers that people have never heard of even though their works are amazing and they should be performed just as much as other composers."

## Inspiration and practice

As far as inspiring female violinists, Hilary Hahn and Midori are at the top of Terry's list. She looks to Hahn for her ability to engage community on social media, and Midori for her level of precision and care for detail.

"She's also a Japanese violinist and I'm half-Japanese, so to see another Asian woman being successful is really inspiring to me," adds Terry.

Terry describes her own style as a violinist as passionate and raw. She strives for every note to be expressive and have intention behind it so that the audience can more readily connect with her. Her practice schedule is meticulously written out so that she can cover as much ground as possible in a day.

After a technique warm-up, she'll go down her list of solo pieces that need learning and fine-tuning.

Her best advice for musicians is to schedule practice performances to more easily gauge how to play the piece under pressure. Terry says performing with a



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**Megumi Terry**  
Violinist

large group like TSO is a completely different feeling given its size and sound.

She can't wait to be back in the expansive Ruby Diamond Concert Hall with her fellow musicians and the community.

"I truly feel like music is what brings people together," says Terry. "Music is what can change people's hearts."

*Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).*