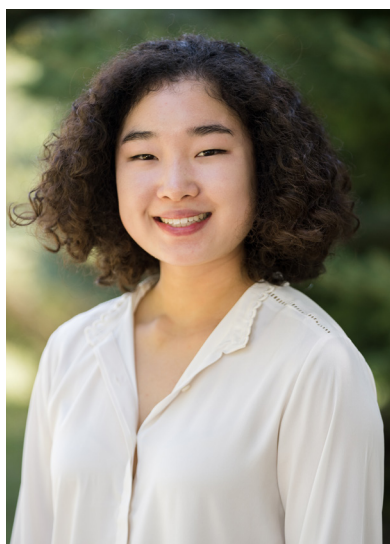


STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



TABBY RHEE *Viola*

“Overall, I’m a very emotional person,” says twenty-year-old violist Tabby Rhee. “I feel a different way each day. I’m sure everyone has those moments, but I take everything to heart. When I play the viola it’s like I’m expressing my emotions through music.”

Rhee comes to the Aspen Music Festival and School after finishing her first year at Juilliard.

“It’s a good learning experience too,” she continues, “because we don’t feel the same way each day. If I’m feeling a certain way, my music reflects that. When I’m playing I’m in a different world thinking back to old memories and exploring certain life experiences to make the music personal.”

Her journey did not start with the viola, but instead with the violin at age five. It wasn’t until her senior year of high school that she decided to explore the viola and took a gap year to study the new instrument, ending in the impressive feat of earning a spot at Juilliard.

As she reflects on her recent switch to viola, Rhee states, “I found my purpose. I always felt like I wanted something more than the violin. I didn’t exactly know what it was but when I started playing the viola, it became my instrument. It’s definitely me!”

Thanks to the New Horizons Fellowship made possible by Kay and Matthew Bucksbaum, Rhee is spending her summer studying in Aspen with AMFS artist-faculty member Victoria Chiang to continue discovering her musical voice.

“Now, I’m at the stage where I’m trying to find my own interpretation of the music rather than just playing notes. I am experimenting and exploring new ideas, finding different colors that I like. Coming to Aspen and meeting like-minded people has inspired me to delve deeper into these ideas,” says Rhee.

Her love for the viola runs deep because of its range and unique tone quality that allows for a wider exploration of musical colors than its relative string instruments. “It has a very unique sound,” says Rhee passionately, “it’s really rich and you can create a lot of overtones with the sound. The range is huge. I’m able to experiment with it more and explore different kinds of sounds!”

The decision to study at the AMFS was an easy one for Rhee because she is participating in full orchestra, private lessons, and chamber music, including a string quartet with her younger brother, winner of the AMFS violin competition. The opportunity to play in the Aspen Festival Orchestra for eight weeks “is huge, because of the repertoire we’re playing and the fact that I just started viola two years ago. Coming in and playing with a high-level orchestra and the best conductors has been amazing,” says Rhee.

Highlights of the season include Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 7 under the direction of AMFS Music Director Robert Spano, which Rhee says, “was a strong start! I was able to see what I could do with music because of the magnitude of the piece.”

Rhee also accompanied Daniil Trifonov during his own concerto and said, “it was amazing to see the person performing and know that he is also the composer. We were able to get into his mind and understand what he was thinking when he wrote it. It was fun!”

This is Rhee’s first time in Aspen and she has nothing but positive things to say about the community, culture, and landscape. “Being in Aspen has made me want to get better at music because as I’m surrounded by peaceful nature, it provokes new thoughts about the music I’m playing, and I’ve never had the experience of performing in a space like this. It’s uplifting and I’m excited to be spending my summer here!” finishes Rhee.

“It’s about making the music beautiful, expressing what you feel to the audience... I found my purpose when I started playing the viola.”

– TABBY RHEE