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Jerusalem violinist returns to the New Jersey Aug. 9

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Diana Tsaliovich, a first violinist of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, will be making a homecoming of sorts when she performs this Sunday at Rimon, a Center for Jewish learning in East Windsor. Her parents, residents of nearby West Windsor are active at Rimon.

"It feels nice to be back in New Jersey," Tsaliovich said. "I feel part of the community through my parents."

Having spent much of her adolescence in East Brunswick, including graduating from East Brunswick High School, New Jersey is just one of the many places Tsaliovich has called home. Born in Odessa in 1970, she moved as an infant with her family to Leningrad. In 1979, her family left the Soviet Union and emigrated to the United States, spending several years in Brooklyn and Illinois before settling in central New Jersey in the mid-80s.

"There was always music in the house," Tsaliovich explained, when asked about how she became interested in music. Her older sister, who she looked up to, played piano.

Wanting to follow in her footsteps, though not imitate her too closely, Tsaliovich felt she had to find another instrument. At 4 years old, Tsaliovich heard the sounds of the violin on the radio and knew right away that this would be her instrument.

"I told my mother that I wanted a violin, a real one, not a toy," she said.

Though she continued to play violin on and off as a teenager, Tsaliovich thought she would end up studying English in college. However, early on in college, she realized that playing the violin, and not writing papers, was the path she would take.

"I felt like being a musician was right for me," she said. She continued her musical

education and received a B.M. from Mannes College of Music and an M.M. from Yale University.

She has since performed throughout the United States, Europe, and Israel, including a 10-year stint at the Finnish National Opera orchestra.

In January 2007, Tsaliovich traveled to Israel in order to visit relatives, study Hebrew at an ulpan, and simply take a break from her position in Finland. The trip ended up being more than just an extended visit, when in September 2007 Tsaliovich decided to make aliyah. According to Tsaliovich, this decision was a gradual one.

"Though I had a full life [in Finland], I felt like something was missing," Tsaliovich said.

Though she was initially worried about finding work in Israel, using her connections she found freelance work right away. In late 2007 and early 2008, a spot opened up for a violinist in the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. She decided to audition and was hired as a full-time member of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. Recently, Tsaliovich finished her trial year and is now a tenured member of the orchestra.

The Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra was founded in the 1940s as the national radio orchestra and was known as the Kol Israel Orchestra. In the 1970s, the orchestra expanded and became known as the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. As part of the Israel Broadcasting Agency, the orchestra's performances are broadcast on the radio throughout the country.

For Tsaliovich, performing with the orchestra has been a positive experience, citing the close-knit atmosphere, the ability to tour throughout the world, and the fact that the job leaves her the time to pursue her other passion – teaching.

"I am doing what I love to do and doing it in Israel," Tsaliovich said.

On Sunday, Tsaliovich will perform at the Rimon Center with piano accompaniment by Andrew Sun, a graduate of West Windsor High School. Sun has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Tanglewood Festival in Lenox, Mass. The center is located at 483 Dutch Neck Road in East Windsor, directly across the historic Lee's Turkey Farm. For more information about Rimon or the Aug. 9 recital, call (609) 918-9750 or email info@rimoncenter.org.