

Darkness and Light, From One Violinist

It's not hard to see why Rachel Barton Pine is one of the rising stars of the violin world. She's an exciting, boundary-defying performer, soloing in the Brahms Concerto one day, jamming with members of Black Sabbath the next. In an adventurous, virtually flawless performance Sunday night at the National Gallery of Art (with the talented Matthew Hagle at the piano), Pine showed she's a major talent.

The program opened with Heinrich von Biber's Passacaglia in G Minor for unaccompanied violin — a dark, magnificent and austere work, to which Pine

brought exemplary dignity and insight. She then jumped into much lighter fare — Fritz Kreisler's romping arrangement of the Mozart Rondo in D (K. 382). Two parts Kreisler to one part Mozart, the arrangement is a wild, rambunctious ride, and Pine took it to all its delirious heights without ever careening over the top.

That was followed by Robert Schumann's Sonata No. 1 in A Minor, a work that simmers with explosive power and shimmers with delicacy. Pine handled every nuance, delivering a hotblooded performance that would have made Schumann himself swoon.

The second half of the program was devoted to American music, with Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson's "Blue/s Forms" and an enjoyable suite of fiddle tunes by Marc O'Connor. But the highlight of the evening was John Corigliano's prize-winning 1963 Sonata for Violin and Piano. Far too rarely heard, the sonata is a tour de force for the violin, and in Pine's hands it surged to life — a complex and infinitely fascinating work whose Andantino contains some of the loveliest and most delicate music written in the past half-century.

— Stephen Brookes



Virtuosity and versatility: Rachel Barton Pines is a rising star.