

# The Washington Post

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There is an opal-like beauty in the viola playing of Jennifer Stumm, who made her Washington debut Tuesday evening at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater. On the surface it is a dark, baritone sound. But this young, Atlanta-raised musician also has a wonderful way of finding color in a phrase and injecting phosphorescent energy through rhythm. Her interpretations of the music of Schumann and Brahms, along with non-German scores, were smart and engaging. They displayed a self-effacing but boldly drawn style, revealing high-end conservatory training and intense summers spent at that chamber music temple, Vermont's Marlboro Music Festival.

The German scores, Schumann's "Märchenbilder" and Brahms's Sonata in F Minor, Op. 120, No. 1, were drenched in romanticism, rhetorically big, filled with melancholy and vigor. Stumm spun gracefully turned musical lines, conjuring rich textures and little points of color. Resting between these large works, "The Stream Flows" of Bright Sheng -- inspired by the high-pitched Chinese vocal style -- came off like a musical comma, if wonderfully rendered.

Stumm has made a showpiece of Rebecca Clarke's Sonata for Viola. As well she should. It is a superbly crafted score, albeit a conservative one that looks back more to Brahms than ahead to the avant-garde. The work showed Stumm at her best, as reverberant sounds arched across the theater. Benjamin Britten's "Lachrymae" was similarly polished and elegant.

At the piano, Finghin Collins showed gifted technique and musicianship, though the nearly closed lid made his supporting role all too clear.

The Washington Performing Arts Society presented the fine concert.

-- Daniel Ginsberg