

Pianist, flutist collaboration yields lyrical evening

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There is something deeply satisfying, awe inspiring, almost sacred in hearing a long-standing collaboration between two master musicians. The incomparable flutist Marina Piccinini and her no less talented husband, pianist Andreas Haefliger, offered up such an experience Thursday night at the Kennedy Center, thanks to Washington Performing Arts. When Piccinini plays the flute, you're left wondering how there can be so many ways for a human being to breathe. As for Haefliger, each keystroke is a poetic act. They share an intelligence, intensity of focus and no-nonsense demeanor that directs all energy toward the music's fullest realization.

First was a hauntingly atmospheric "Nocturne," written for the pair in 2012 by the French composer Marc-André Dalbavie, a pupil of Boulez. The Prokofiev Sonata in D unfolded with a calm, articulate eloquence, and Piccinini spun out its lyrical passages with delicate simplicity.

Thomas Adès's solo piano homage to John Dowland, "Darknesse Visible," was played with a subtlety that belied the richness of touch and nuance in Haefliger's performance. It segued into an ecstatic performance of that most ecstatic of sonatas, César Franck's for violin and piano, heard here in Piccinini's adroit transcription for her instrument. As with the best transcriptions, this one brought out structural and textural aspects often concealed in the original.

The concert, which began with music by a student of Boulez's, ended with the master himself, the "Sonatine" Op. 1 from 1946. This famously thorny, difficult music emerged as a virtuoso tour de force that had the audience on its feet at the last note.



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