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## Comeback kid

**For Rachel Barton Pine, out to resurrect her career, time has stood still since her tragic accident. Unfortunately, the world has not.**

By Howard Reich

Tribune arts critic

March 30, 2008

Violinist Rachel Barton Pine--star attraction on this balmy night in Santa Fe--is stranded.

She yearns to get up from the back-yard lawn chair where her husband has deposited her and stroll to a pool that's shimmering green-blue in the desert twilight.

But she instantly realizes that finessing the stone walkways, craggy paths and uneven stairs nearby would be about as practical for her as traversing the face of the moon. So she sits, smiling, for the rest of the evening, her porcelain white skin set against a plume of red hair, feeling almost "like a prisoner," she says later. Meanwhile, Santa Fe socialites flutter around her, asking how she likes their picturesque town so far.

Unfortunately, she hasn't seen much of it, and won't. Though she will have plenty free time on this tour, she will not be able to explore the city's lovely boutiques and spacious plazas. The open wound on what remains of her right foot--which was crushed in a notorious, 1995 Metra rail accident that also took her left leg above the knee--is stinging with pain. And walking, which she does only in spurts even when her injuries are in better repair, just will make matters worse.

With an eight-hour surgery looming--she has endured more than 40 so far--she's simply hoping that she



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will be able to fulfill concert dates that were booked a year or more in advance. She's also praying that an incurable but now-dormant bone infection, which she contracted the day of the accident, doesn't reawaken, because it could cost her the already badly damaged right leg.

So she tells her admirers outside this sprawling home of a Santa Fe Symphony benefactor that she's too busy to squeeze in any sightseeing, sustaining the illusion of a concert violinist in the pink of good health. The next evening, in fact, she will open the Santa Fe Symphony season brilliantly, reaffirming her gifts as one of the most accomplished violinists of her generation.

But she pursues her art in the bittersweet frame of mind that has defined her life since Jan. 16, 1995, when that northbound Metra train shattered not only her legs but also an extraordinarily promising career and, inevitably, rearranged the rest of her life.

Before the accident, she was a 20-year-old Chicago violin virtuoso who had surmounted poverty and a troubled family life to acquire a stack of international prizes, positioning herself for global artistic success. After, she suffered "indescribable pain" and struggled to balance glorious music with inglorious medical procedures; broke off contact with her parents for years; strove to regain career momentum that may be forever spent; and endured the myth that her accident made her a musical celebrity when, in fact, it grounded her at the very moment she was about to take flight.

At 33, she finds herself performing as splendidly as her earliest fans had expected, but not with the legendary orchestras of Berlin and Paris and New York for which she once seemed destined. Instead, she appears with solid but decidedly less celebrated ensembles in places such as Santa Fe, Danville, Ill., and Youngstown, Ohio, with occasional, treasured engagements overseas.

In a way, her predicament in the Santa Fe back yard mirrors the dilemma of her career, which she hasn't yet been able to move into high gear. Instead, she's still battling to become whole again, more than 13 years after the accident.

Medically, "It's never over, just because of the complicated nature of the combination of my injuries," she says. Professionally, she still longs to perform with the world's greatest ensembles. "If I didn't get to play with those kinds of orchestras," she adds, "I would be heartbroken."

As she contemplates her lawn-chair quandary, her husband, businessman Greg Pine, arrives to rescue her. A tall and rangy former minor-league baseball pitcher, he leads her up and out of the thing, then through the obstacle course of the back yard and onto the driveway, where he has parked their rental van. Tomorrow will be a busy day, and the violinist needs to go to their hotel room to practice and tend to her wounds.

If you factor out the pain and anguish Rachel Barton Pine has endured since 1995, she's leading essentially the life she envisioned as a child thunderstruck one indelible Sunday afternoon by the power of music. Seated in a pew with her mother, father and baby sister, Sarah, at St. Pauls United Church of Christ, near Fullerton and Orchard Avenues, 3-year-old Rachel jumped when she heard three schoolgirls playing Bach on tiny violins.

"Rachel stood up in the pew and said, 'Mom, I want to do that!' " recalls her father, Terry Barton. Her mother, Amy Barton, later made contact with the girls' music teacher, Christine Due, and signed Rachel up for lessons.

"She was an amazing little kid," remembers Due, who watched Rachel devour the class repertoire. Within months, the precocious fiddler was playing Bach at church.

Motivated beyond anyone's expectations, Rachel rushed home from kindergarten every afternoon and practiced for three hours, says her mother. When Rachel learned pizzicato-the technique of plucking the strings with the hand rather than stroking them with the bow-she practiced until "her fingers bled," says Due.

At first, Amy Barton was wary of allowing her daughter to venture too deeply into this newfound obsession. Rachel's mother considered the violin "a rich child's thing," and money was in desperately short supply in this family.

Educated in psychology at the University of Chicago, Amy stayed home to take care of the kids. Her husband, Terry Barton, who also studied psychology at the U. of C., gave up the profession to pursue various business interests, all of which failed.

But Rachel's mother soon realized "This is not ordinary, this talent she has."

Indeed, a rare, private recording of Rachel playing a Boccherini Minuet at age 5 reveals the graceful, exquisitely shaped phrases of a far more seasoned musician. By the time Rachel was 6, Due had taught her all she could and encouraged her to study with a more noted Chicago teacher.

"She was more inquisitive than other children," says Betty Haag, who has been teaching young violinists in the Chicago area for decades. "Technically, she advanced very fast."

That's putting it mildly. At 7, Rachel made her orchestral debut performing the Haydn Violin Concerto in G Major with the Chicago String Ensemble.

"I was amazed that she had not just fingers but an intellect," remembers veteran conductor Frank Winkler, who led the performance.

Before Rachel turned 8, she had learned concertos by Mozart and Bruch. The five to eight hours of practice she started logging daily prompted her mother to home-school Rachel and Sarah, beginning when Rachel was halfway through 3rd grade.

"I knew she was a genius-as close as I've ever seen," says Almita Vamos, who became one of Rachel's two most important teachers, along with her husband, Roland Vamos.

Rachel began studying with the Vamoses at the Music Center of the North Shore in Winnetka (later renamed the Music Institute of Chicago), when she was 10. Within months, she won the junior division

of the first Illinois Young Performers Competition, in 1985, playing live on TV with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. At 12, she became one of the youngest violinists in the history of the Civic Orchestra.

And by 14, "I was working enough to be able to help pay for most of the mortgage and groceries and utilities," she says.

The money was essential because the phone and electricity frequently were cut off, and another sister, Hannah, had arrived in 1986. "I wasn't always there and wasn't always completing my financial obligation," concedes Terry Barton.

Rachel's patience with her father finally ran out in 1992. Realizing that international music prizes are the jet fuel of the modern solo career, she decided to spend much of the year in Europe pursuing them and the large cash prizes they carried. But that meant she couldn't be sure she would be able to pay the bills at home, so she urged her father to take some kind of salaried job.

He refused, and she wrote him off.

That June, she risked everything to travel to Leipzig, Germany, and promptly became the first American to win the coveted gold medal in the J.S. Bach International Competition, an extraordinary achievement for a 17-year-old playing some of the most austere demanding string repertoire ever penned.

Then she went on a tear, seizing awards at the Joseph Szigeti International Violin Competition in Budapest in September, and the Fritz Kreisler International Violin Competition in Vienna in October. The next year, she won both the Paganini Caprice Prize in the Paganini International Violin Competition in Genoa and bronze medal at the prestigious Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, remarkable feats for an American with zero connections to the personalities and politics of European culture.

Her recording debut, in 1994, earned the kind of reviews emerging musicians fantasize about. "Fabulous fiddling" wrote the noted Washington Post critic Joseph McLellan of her CD "Homage to Sarasate."

Though her parents had separated and the financial pressures persisted, Barton was blossoming. In February 1994, she performed with Chicago Symphony Orchestra music director Daniel Barenboim at a benefit for the Music Center, the maestro kissing both her cheeks afterward and expressing interest in her future. With Barenboim apparently in her corner, the future seemed limitless.

She reveled in her social life, dancing into the morning at clubs that played the heavy-metal music she had adored since age 13. When she wasn't subbing with the Chicago Symphony, she was teaching at the Music Center of the North Shore, another milestone achievement for a 20-year-old violinist.

Henry Fogel, then president of the Chicago Symphony, asked for tapes of her performances so he could send them to New York managers.

"I thought: 'This is a girl who plays with poise, maturity and a depth of expression that not every young violinist has,'" says Fogel, now president of the League of American Orchestras.

So on Friday, Jan. 13, 1995, the violinist brought a stack of recordings to his office at Orchestra Hall.

A spectacular career awaited.

The following Monday, Jan. 16, was not only the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday but a special moment in the Barton family-Sarah was celebrating her 18th birthday, so she got first dibs on the family car. This meant the violinist would have to take the Metra train to Winnetka to teach her students at the Music Center of the North Shore.

She had ridden the northbound commuter train about 15 times before this day-not nearly as often as she had taken the CTA, but enough to have established a kind of ritual.

As the locomotive approached the Winnetka station, a few minutes after 11 a.m., she prepared to get up from her seat, loading her bags onto her left shoulder in the same order as always: purse, violin, bag of music and a sack containing food for lunch and dinner.

The train pulled into Winnetka at around 11:10 a.m., and it would stand there for 27 to 29 seconds, according to court records. When the doors opened, she proceeded down the stairs. As she reached the station platform, she heard the train doors close behind her and started to turn left, to head south toward the Music Center, at 600 Green Bay Rd. But she couldn't move. Her left arm and shoulder were pinned to the train, and she didn't understand why: The largest of her parcels, a 1617 Amati violin on loan to her from a patron, was still inside the train, attached to her by its strap. Barton did not know, and could not know, that she had only 10 seconds until the train would begin to move.

Yet she was not perturbed, presuming this was "not anything that's a big deal," she recalls. All she had to do, she believed, was get the doors to pop open, the way they did on the CTA trains she had ridden all her life. But when she tried, nothing happened.

She began pounding on the door and shouting to the engineer.

"I was just trying to yell to get his attention, but [there was] no fear, you know?" she says.

The train started to move, and Barton, still attached to the northbound car but facing south, instantly was slammed to the ground and dragged alongside. A woman who had been jogging near the train, Theresa Croghan, caught a glimpse of Barton on the ground and began screaming for help.

As Barton was being pulled, she "knew it was a distance to the next station, and I had seen old Westerns where they drag people," she remembers. "And I thought: 'Is it more likely that I will be dead by the time I reach the next station if I don't do anything?' I thought: 'First my coat will be scraped off. Then my jeans will be scraped off. Then my butt will be scraped off. Then my spinal cord will be severed.' "

She also realized that "if I try to somehow release myself from whatever is holding me there . . . I know I will be thrown under the wheels."

She decided that freeing herself was the better of two bleak options. So she "wormed" her fingers underneath the straps holding her left shoulder to the side of the train and gave them "one good shove." As the train pulled forward, the violinist spun away from it, her glasses flying through the air, her upper body buoyed to the right, her lower body swung to the left, placing her legs in the path of the train's remorseless metal wheels.

"And that's somehow how my left leg got cut off and the other leg mangled," she said in the deposition for her subsequent trial.

While she was blacking out, a "feeling of indescribable peace" came over her, she says today, speaking in her modest downtown apartment.

"But the thing that was very personal about what I experienced is that in that moment, God offered me a choice. That, you know, it would be acceptable for me to just stay there, and not go back," she says, losing composure as she describes the event.

"Ahh, it's hard to talk about this," she whispers, crying, "but, that, if I wanted to, I could go back. And it was totally my choice, no right or wrong. . .

"Just knowing that I only had to go back if I really wanted to, or chose to, and I did choose to, because I felt like there were things I still wanted to do, things I hadn't yet accomplished," she continues, softly.

When she returned to consciousness, moments later, she was in such physical agony that "I did not know so much pain could exist," she said at the trial.

One of the passengers on the train, Brian McCarthy, heard Barton's screams, slammed a button to get the engineer to stop the locomotive, then ran out to help her. Another passenger, Jim Tuck, followed close behind. The two used their belts to fashion impromptu tourniquets on what remained of Barton's mangled legs.

"We both looked at each other," remembers Tuck today, "and I said, 'I hope we're doing this right.' "

Barton had been dragged more than 300 feet in a half-sitting position. When paramedics arrived, she felt chilled to her core, the result of exposure to temperatures that hovered between 32 and 33 degrees that morning, and her loss of approximately five pints of blood.

Fearing that if she passed out again she might never reawaken, she struggled to keep talking in the ambulance until she arrived at the emergency room at Evanston Hospital.

The violinist was in horrendous shape-worse than the public may have realized. In addition to the loss of her left leg, most of the skin and underlying tissue from the front of her right leg were gone as well. A large part of the bone just below her right knee was missing. The lower half of her right knee-the tibial plateau-was smashed; the upper part of the knee was cracked in two.

Doctors spent eight hours operating on her. They took skin and bone from her destroyed left leg for

future use on her right. They removed the five toes and the bottom half of her right foot because there was not enough skin to cover it or tissue to support it. They placed a "fixator," or metal bar, from the mid-thigh to the ankle of her devastated right leg, to try to stabilize what remained of it. In later surgeries, they would transplant bone from her hip and pelvis to the damaged right leg.

When Terry Barton, the violinist's father, showed up in the intensive care unit, Barton refused to see him or to allow him to return.

Every 24 to 48 hours for the next several days, she endured further surgeries.

"The moment I thought I was alone in the room, I would start panicking and I would go into shock," Barton recalls. So she insisted her mother sleep on a cot next to her for months to come. Whenever orderlies rolled her into an elevator to the operating room, "As soon as I saw a door closing, I would just start to scream and freak out," says Barton, who was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder.

A child psychiatrist talked Barton down from her fears, but the violinist's belief that at least her hands had been spared in the accident proved incorrect. When she had arrived at the emergency room, technicians had plunged an IV into the wrist of her left arm, a disaster because that's the hand with the fine-motor skills that articulates notes on the fiddle (the other arm moves the bow).

The nerve of the carpal tunnel in her left hand had been bruised, leaving three of the fingers numb.

Worse, doctors were preparing to do a surgery that would have ruined her ability to play the violin once and for all. They planned to remove muscle from Barton's back to help rebuild her right leg, a potentially catastrophic move for a violinist, because the back musculature supports the entire range of motions required to play a fiddle.

"My mom, of course, went hysterical when she heard that," recalls the violinist.

An equally vehement protest from Dr. Alice Brandfonbrener, founder of the medical program for performing artists at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, stopped that plan cold. Instead, doctors took the strip of muscle they needed from the violinist's abdomen.

Unfortunately, when bone is exposed to air and dirt, the chance of an infection is high, and Barton developed osteomyelitis, an infection of the tibia, below her knee.

Though she did not know it, she had become an enormous news story, the tale of a celebrated violin prodigy nearly killed because her instrument was trapped in a train flashed around the world. It soon morphed into the fiction of a violinist who sacrificed her life trying to save her violin.

After many surgeries and several weeks at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Barton came home to a severely altered life. She would spend her first days suffering withdrawal from addiction to narcotics she had been given to dull her staggering pain and the next months battling a "black depression," she says.

She wondered whether she would be able to walk again, whether she would be able to dance in the clubs

she frequented just weeks before.

"Will I be able to do my same moves?" she asked herself. "Will I be able to date? Why would anyone want to date me?"

Like any other 20-year-old, she obsessed over how she looked, but in her case, the issues were profound.

"Actually, the limb loss is not the yuckiest thing about my injuries," she says, noting that she wears long skirts and high boots to mask her legs. "It's all the bits of my flesh that have been transplanted to other bits of me. And I have weird scars and lumps. It just looks like I got chewed up and spit out under my skirt. Blah.

"And I have a huge scar running the entire length of my abdomen from that flesh transplant. I've got big gouges in my back from where I was scraped as I was being dragged along. I've got permanent scarring on my chest from the central line [catheter] that was inserted for two years," pumping antibiotics to battle her bone infection.

In 1995, she endured 15 operations, 14 prosthetic appointments, 80 rehab appointments and 101 medical appointments. Her mother still slept at her bedside, waking up in the middle of every night and donning gloves and mask to change her antibiotic IV, tend to her right knee and wrap her right leg in antibacterial soaked gauze to treat the bone infection.

Her sisters pressed on with their lives, but the household stirred with tension. Rachel and her next younger sister, Sarah, often bickered, recalls their mother.

And youngest sister Hannah, who was studying violin, "couldn't play with feeling" for years after the accident, says Amy Barton. If the music became too emotional, "she'd just break down and sob, because the whole thing affected her soul."

But Rachel experienced hopeful moments in that first year of her new life too.

By chance, in church, she met Greg Pine, a student home on spring break from Pomona College, in California. "There was something about the look on her face," says Pine, who immediately was intrigued. "Just the way she met me, there was a humanity there that really struck me."

He asked her out that night; they went to see a movie and talked for hours, but he returned to school and she resumed her struggles. By fall, she was able to reclaim her technical acuity on the fiddle, performing occasional concert dates in 1995 and most of '96 in a wheelchair.

Pine moved back to Chicago in the summer of '96 after a brief stint in the minor leagues with the Sierra Nevada Miners, to start a business, and he reconnected with Barton. Within months, he was traveling with her to concert dates, because she couldn't travel alone and didn't want to tour with her mother, as she had as a child. A platonic relationship between Barton and Pine soon became a romantic one.

At the end of '96, when the violinist was liberated from the scaffolding on her right leg and the catheter

that had been delivering antibiotics (her bone infection was pronounced in remission), she finally could get back on an airplane and try to re-launch a career that barely had gotten started.

Signed by a New York talent agency in 1997, Barton decided to leave home and move in with Pine, a blow to her mother that began their schism.

"It was very traumatic for her," says Barton. After the accident, "It was like, back to childhood, where my mom is with me every minute of every day. So for me to then leave, it was as if her 8-year-old had suddenly gone.

"I think she felt like it was disloyal of me to have left the family. But who would say that a 22-year-old was being disloyal to no longer live with her mother?

"I couldn't blame my mother for how she was feeling, but it certainly was not logical, and it did cause me to have to step back from having regular contact with her."

Amy Barton, who had divorced her husband in 1995, grieved. "Everything was too intense," she says. "Psychologically, she was really kind of adolescent at that moment. . . . But until a couple months before Greg, I was sleeping on the floor by her bed. . . . She got an opportunity to live with Greg, so she jumped for it and left us kind of in the lurch."

Mother and daughter would not speak for five years; the violinist also cut off from her sisters during that period.

"That train," says Amy Barton, "hit all of us."

Barton ran up \$672,570.97 in un-paid medical bills at the time her suit against Metra and the Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company went to trial, in February 1999. To deliver the services she needed, her medical providers had obtained liens against any future settlement.

As the lawyers battled, staging re-enactments of the accident in court, Barton relived the worst day of her life for four weeks. Her post-traumatic stress disorder "got really bad again," she says.

The jury decided in her favor, finding damages of \$30 million and attributing 62.5 percent of the fault to Northwestern Transportation, 33 percent to Metra and 4.5 percent to Barton. After subtracting that 4.5 percent, the total verdict was \$28,736,149.57, plus \$859,500 in punitive damages. CNW and Metra appealed, launching a process that would last for years.

In January of 2000, the violinist's father attended one of her concerts and approached her afterward, the two renewing their relationship. Barton came to realize, she says, that his lack of support during her childhood "was never motivated by malevolence."

The railroad companies settled with Barton in 2002. By then, her medical expenses-including ongoing surgeries-topped \$1 million. After her lawyers received their share of the judgment and expenses were deducted and medical liens paid off, Barton received about \$15 million, which she has banked, she says.

She pays for all of her accident-related medical costs out of these funds, living downtown in a three-bedroom apartment.

"That money from the trial is my safety net," she says. "If I didn't have that money, and if Greg died and my bone infection came back, I would probably be in a nursing home for 50 years and [would be] unable to go and play the violin."

With legal issues finally resolved, she and Pine married. Guests at the Fourth Presbyterian Church on June 5, 2004, wept when they saw her proceed gingerly down the aisle without crutches for the first time in public.

Because mother and daughter had not yet come to terms, Amy Barton and the violinist's two sisters did not attend the wedding. But Amy and Rachel had begun speaking again around 2003 and were regularly talking on the phone and going out to lunch. Hannah studies violin at the Peabody Conservatory, in Baltimore, and maintains close contact with her sister. Sarah, who is married, does not speak with the violinist and declined to comment for this article.

Even amid her extraordinary personal triumphs, Pine has not achieved a fraction of the acclaim that once seemed within her reach. The years she would have spent basking in her competition wins and playing international concerts in their wake were lost to years of recovery and rehab. Nevertheless, she suffered the myth that the accident had boosted her career rather than wounded it.

"Would 22-year-old violinist Rachel Barton be booked solid for the next couple seasons had a tragic Metra accident not claimed one of her legs?" wrote a critic in the Chicago Reader. "Probably not."

What's more, she struggles to be heard in a shrinking classical music world that's vastly overcrowded with talent. Earlier violinists such as Jascha Heifetz, Isaac Stern, Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman became household names, but today's pop-culture firmament—which lavishes fame and riches on rap performers and rock personalities—creates precious few classical superstars.

"Rachel is a very fine violinist, no question in my mind," says Fogel, the former CSO president. "But there are more very fine violinists than there are opportunities for playing at the very top level."

On her New Mexico tour, Pine pursues a schedule that might exhaust someone in Olympic condition.

She and her husband wake at dawn to start promoting her concert. As always, her husband helps her in and out of the rented van, chauffeurs her to all of her appearances and aids her in finessing the often perilous backstage areas of concert halls. In those that are too difficult for her to navigate (the Americans with Disabilities Act does not require backstage areas to be handicapped-accessible), Greg Pine picks up his wife and carries her up and down stairs leading to and from the stage.

On this morning, the couple arrive at a local rock station at 7:15, and she regales listeners with the slash-and-burn music of Metallica, which she plays on the multimillion-dollar, 1742 Guarneri del Gesu on loan to her.

"Imagine all these violin licks with an orchestra behind it!" she exclaims on the air, hoping to lure young listeners to the weekend's Santa Fe Symphony season opener.

Next she plays high-brow repertoire at a classical station, then on to a local violin shop, where she persuades the owner to contribute extra rosin, strings and other fiddle paraphernalia for her Rachel Elizabeth Barton Foundation, which distributes the goods to musicians in need from Chicago to Africa.

For all her palpable energy and drive, however, she moves gingerly, constantly studying the ground beneath her, looking for potentially hazardous bumps, ridges, inclines, declines and other dangers that can send her tumbling onto her face.

"I've seen that happen," says Greg Pine. "She'll fall in hotels, where the floor is slick and she doesn't realize it. . . . Any time she's standing, any time she's walking, she's on stilts," adds her husband, who often doubles back to extend an arm to her when he realizes there's tricky terrain ahead.

As always, her husband carries the precious Guarneri del Gesu fiddle. She can't, because it's too heavy, and because of her PTSD.

"As soon as something is sitting on my shoulder, even, say, a strap on my shoulder, [I feel] I'm going to die," she explains.

When it's time for the big concert, she walks, smiling, onto the stage of the Lensic Performing Arts Center, in downtown Santa Fe, hobbling a bit to center stage, bowing, then leaning up against a custom-made stool she has brought with her from Chicago and drags along wherever she goes. She half-sits on it while playing, almost giving the impression that she's standing, as any other concert violinist would do.

Though she's one of just three soloists on the program, only she receives a standing ovation, and only she plays an encore-her own Paganini-meets-the-blues version of "Sweet Home Chicago."

But throughout this performance, it's obvious that she far outshines the orchestra. And she realizes that ensembles such as Santa Fe's, while impressive for such a small town, do nothing to promote the kind of top-rank, international career she once was close to achieving.

"I find it really good to play with an orchestra like this, and play for all these wonderful people," she says on the way to the airport. "But when I play with an orchestra on the next level, it's such a deeper experience, and I have this longing for that."

As soon as she returns to Chicago, she is swept up in the next round of medical appointments, as she prepares for another round of surgeries. If they succeed, she should develop fewer sores, endure less pain and spend less time at home, recovering from the physical rigors of life on the road.

Yet being a perpetual work-in-progress strains the psyche. "I spent the whole morning at the doctor's office," she says, near tears, back in her Chicago apartment, two days after Santa Fe. "And it just takes up so much time, you know? And I think about all the things I could do if I wasn't running around to all these stupid appointments."

Though she takes pride in rarely canceling a concert date, though she thrives on squeezing so much teaching, chamber music and lecturing into her work life, she laments the sacrifices she's still forced to make. "I can't even consider starting a family until I've had [more] surgeries," she says, pointing out that the painkillers and other drugs she requires are unhealthy for a baby in gestation. "It really makes me mad."

At home at night, she tools around her apartment in a motorized wheelchair to take weight and pressure off of her legs. Though for years she had preferred to tough it out with a manual wheelchair, violinist Perlman, who suffers the effects of childhood polio, "gave me this huge lecture," she recalls. "He was like: 'You have to stop using that now!' "

When she did, she noticed that she gained new stamina.

To this day, she works several times a week with a physical therapist, standing in front of a full-length mirror to improve her posture, gait, balance and strength. She can't do aerobic exercises because of the limitations of her legs, as well as her reluctance to put too much stress on her arms and torso, for fear of altering the musculature she uses to play the violin. Yet if she gains as little as five pounds, the implications can be severe for her sores, her leg and back muscles, and the fit of her prostheses.

In December, several weeks after Santa Fe, she undergoes the planned eight-hour operation. She wonders what shape she'll finally end up in, and whether time and opportunities to become a major violinist are slipping away from her. She knows she never will be able to match the early-in-life success of marquee names such as Joshua Bell, Jennifer Koh, Sarah Chang and Leila Josefowicz, peers who for years have been at the top of the classical world.

But it's just possible that Pine—who has released several fascinating, idiosyncratic recordings on independent labels—may be forging a different kind of career. Discs such as "Violin Concertos by Black Composers of the 18th and 19th Centuries" (1997) and "American Virtuosa: Tribute to Maud Powell" (2007), which briefly cracked the classical charts, are the work of a musician whose enormous technique is matched by a comparably probing intellect.

Her wunderkind days may be over, but her work continues to deepen and conceivably could attract an international following over the long haul. Certainly, as she proved in Santa Fe, she's playing with more tonal bloom, self-assurance and emotional directness than at any time in her career.

For years after her injury, she concedes, her playing "wasn't as good as I believe it could have been. And now I actually think I am back to realizing my potential."

The question is whether the world is ready to hear it.

## **Rachel's playlist**

**"The 5 albums I've probably listened to most often":**

**Metallica: ". . . And Justice for All"** I will reluctantly concede the argument that *Master of Puppets* is a slightly better album, but *Justice* will always be special as my first, life-changing exposure to Metallica and to the whole world of speed metal.

**Nine Inch Nails: "Pretty Hate Machine"** There are many albums suitable for times of angst, but somehow I always come back to this one.

**Peter Gabriel: "Us"** This beautiful, imaginative recording is frequently my album of choice for relaxing at bedtime.

**Itzhak Perlman: "Paganini: 24 Caprices"** This was the only recording of the Paganini Caprices that I owned during my early childhood, so it was through Perlman's version that I became fascinated with this amazing showcase of the expressive and technical possibilities of the violin.

**John Holloway and Tragicomedia: "Biber Mystery Sonatas"** There are many great interpretations of these spiritual and violinistic masterpieces, but I love the variety of continuo instruments on this version.

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