



Kelly Hall-Tompkins

SHADES OF VIRTUOSITY

Visionary violinist Kelly Hall-Tompkins unleashes her 'Imagination' with new music-video album

By Pat Moran

Kelly Hall-Tompkins sees music in color. The young violin virtuoso has synesthesia, a neurological condition in which stimuli to one sense impacts another. In Hall-Tompkins' case, musical pitches are also perceived as color. "B is red and C sharp is yellowish shading into orange," she explains.

Hall-Tompkins' peculiar gift colors her latest ground-breaking project, the visually sumptuous music-video album *Imagination*. A potent package, *Imagination* pairs Hall-Tompkins' angular performance of Eugene Ysaÿe's combustible, corkscrewing Violin Sonata in E major, No. 6, with "Pure Imagination," her own playful jazz-inflected arrangement of family-film classic *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory's* main theme. The project has topped 100,000 views on YouTube.

For *Imagination*, she had no doubt that

Ysaÿe would form the centerpiece of the CD: Ysaÿe's sonatas are "the perfect vehicle, not just for technical mastery, but for including imaginative colors and textures," Hall-Tompkins says, calling the Belgian composer "the thinking-woman's Paganini."

Hall-Tompkins' longstanding desire to reach new audiences found its natural culmination in the music-video album *Imagination*.

"People are attracted to my performance visually. They say they get so much more from *seeing* me," she says. "So why not bring the visual aspect to a formalized recording?"

A lengthy search for a collaborator stalled, until a fortuitous encounter at a concert brought Hall-Tompkins and cinematographer William Caballero together. A violinist and composer as well as a filmmaker, Caballero proved to be an ideal

partner for the project. "I went into *Imagination* with a lot of specific ideas, and they were heightened by his contribution," she says.

Hall-Tompkins' synesthesia also was put to use for the visualization of Ysaÿe's 6th Sonata in E major. "E to me is white, a bright white light," Hall-Tompkins says.

In the video, Caballero's use of a translucent fading effect signifies that light. "There was a synthesis of ideas," he says. "I wanted something that represented the openness of that E major feeling. So we had white light and doors opening."

In contrast, the images employed for Hall-Tompkins' arrangement of "Pure Imagination" are whimsical. Lollipops magically appear.

Hall-Tompkins blows bubbles, and the performance is contained within a chocolate box she opens at the beginning of the video.