

Elgar - Violin Concerto; Vaughan Williams - The Lark Ascending (2004)

Written by bluesever

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1. 1. *Allegro*
2. 2. *Andante*
3. 3. *Allegro molto*
4. *The Lark Ascending*

Hilary Hahn – violin
London Symphony Orchestra
Colin Davis – conductor

When it comes to cute violinists, Deutsche Grammophon has had the market covered for the last 20 years. First Anne-Sophie Mutter, then Gil Shaham, and now, the latest and possibly the cutest, Hilary Hahn. Until they start signing child prodigies, it will be hard to beat Hahn. Although she's 25 years old, she looks like she's still a teenager in her photographs and it's hard to beat a teenager violin super virtuoso for sheer, unadulterated cuteness.

But of course, Elgar's super virtuoso violin concerto has been attracting cute teenagers ever since Yehudi Menuhin recorded the work with the composer at the podium in 1932 when he was a mere 16. And let's not forget Nigel Kennedy's first go at the work back in 1984 when he was 28 but looked more like 18. There is something about the emotional maturity of the Elgar Concerto that does it. Something about the way it gushes, something about the way it rushes from a moment of utmost intimacy to a moment of overwrought passion, something about the way it has to tell the listener every single detail of its emotional life that makes it a cutie magnet.

Hahn launches herself along with her super virtuosity into the maelstrom of the Concerto's

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emotions, holding nothing back. That Hahn has the chops is never in doubt: she can do anything the work demands and do it with aplomb and panache. But the listener finds out far more than is decent about Hahn's emotional maturity. In her hands, Elgar's passion is petulance, his sensitivity is sentimentality, and his intimacy is histrionic. Colin Davis is too indulgent in his tempos, the London Symphony Orchestra is too accommodating in its textures and Deutsche Grammophon is too flattering in its recording. ---james Leonard, Rovi

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