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Subject: She's all that and a bag of chips!

Posted by [Bill Epstein](#) on Sat, 03 Feb 2007 12:48:42 GMT

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Drove up to Cleveland last night to hear Hillary Hahn. What a performance! Her absolute mastery of the Violin is a treat in every imaginable way: tone, technique and especially, passion. Her playing is a combination of a physical presence that is as icily controlled as a world-class Olympic gymnast and highly emotional content that pours from strings and bow. Her technique was highlighted by the way she played an interval that ended with reaching toward the bridge to nail a high note with extended little finger. She reached out, arched that finger and stuck it down on the string like you or I would put one foot in front of the other. But the result was a pure tone that was precisely on pitch. The gymnast simile keeps coming back to me. This young woman is an athlete. Her dress exposed shoulders and arms that have spent a lot of time in a gym! That strength is an important part of her playing. Her body movements aren't those studied, distracting swayings of some soloists but rather the foundation that permits her arms and fingers to unwrap the power, delicacy and nuance contained in the music. The newly-remodeled Severance Hall was an additional treat. The plywood rear wall of the shell was removed to expose the organ pipes that Szell had had covered up to get the faster, more detailed sound he wanted. Other acoustical treatments were done as well. The new sound is more resonant and perhaps, beautiful. Severance Hall has gone from Solid State to Tubes! The opening work of the program almost stole the show. Symphonic Minutes by Erno Dohnanyi was a musical souffle that was as much fun to hear as it obviously was enjoyable for the orchestra to play. I'll be ordering my own recording today. What a great evening!

Program