

# The Manhattan Times Profile: Kelly Hall-Tompkins

By Ramón Bodden

Kelly Hall-Tompkins was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1971, but spent her childhood and adolescence in Greenville, South Carolina. The only daughter of two professionals - her father a dentist and her mother an engineer - decided at the age of six upon her path in life, she began her musical studies with a focus on the violin. "I began my musical studies in the school system and have been studying the violin 21 years now," she says.

When she arrived in New York she matriculated at the Manhattan School of Music, where she studied for two years to earn her master's. She auditioned with the New York Philharmonic and placed as a finalist. In 1990, she had her first foreign performance at the Heidelberg Festival in Germany, accompanied by the Eastman School of Music Orchestra, for an eight-week engage-

ment. Afterwards she studied at the Fontainebleau Conservatory, in France, under a scholarship awarded by the same prestigious institution and in 1994 she studied as well as performed at the Schleswig-Holstein Festival, in Germany.

For four years she has lived in Washington Heights, where she feels at home. "There are many New York musicians living in upper Manhattan. In the area surrounding Bennett Avenue, there are a lot of Russians so I get to practice my Russian with them," she says. "When I want to practice my Spanish, I go over to Broadway. Foreign languages have always been a favorite hobby of mine so I welcome the ethnic diversity of this neighborhood."

In 1996 she traveled to Spain, where she lived for a year, playing with the Tenerife Symphony Orchestra, in the Canary Islands. She also has familiar-

ity with French, German, Italian and some Japanese. She took part in the famous Sploeto Festival, in Italy, but one of the most important achievements of her career was receiving a financial award from the Concert Artists Guild, which allowed her to perform as a soloist at several venues. She also plays with the New Jersey Symphony and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

Among her favorite composers are Brahms, Maurice Ravel, Beethoven and Bach. Next November 13<sup>th</sup> she will perform a violin concert of Beethoven's music, in Atlanta, accompanied by the Atlanta Symphony. "It will be the first time that I perform the piece and I am very excited," she confesses. In May of 2001 she performed in Japan accompanied by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and she will do so again in May 2003. Her repertoire is ample, but she says, "I really like chamber music, and have performed it all over the United States." About her musical career and plans for the future she says, "I am very satisfied in my career choice. There is nothing else I would rather be doing; it's very satisfying. I have played the violin for 21 years, and I still have a lot to learn and new goals to achieve."

Her stay in Spain was very important in both a professional and personal aspect. "I always wanted to live in Europe. It was a unique experience to see my country's culture from an outside perspective," she says. Her husband is a percussionist, which has allowed them to work together on occasion. "But that doesn't happen very often, because there are not too many musical compositions for both string and percussion," she notes. The famous German composer Siegfried Matthus wrote, especially for Kelly, a piece with those characteristics, which debuted at the Pine



Kelly Hall-Tompkins

Mountain Festival, in Michigan during the summer of 2002.

Due to her energy and versatility, Kelly is one of the most sought after violinists in New York, and her performances and recitals have been highlighted in various programs, by the publishing house McGraw Hill, showcasing young artists. Being a young, developing artist, Kelly has participated in more than 150 performances of the New York Philharmonic, under conductors Kurt Masur, Leonard Slatkin, Andre Previn, Charles Dutoit and Valery Gergiev. In May of this year she released her first recording, which includes music by Zoltan Kodaly, Johannes Brahms y Maurice Ravel. The CD is available at Tower Records near Lincoln Center and at the HMV at 125th Street. For more information see [www.KellyHall-Tompkins.com](http://www.KellyHall-Tompkins.com).