

Bruno Ferrandis
Selected Reviews of Santa Rosa Symphony Programs

Please note the following: The Santa Rosa Symphony moved into the Weill Concert Hall in the fall of 2012. Although there are reviews of this conductor and orchestra from their former venue, the acoustics in the new theater have allowed this conductor and orchestra to fully realize their performing potential.

Mahler Ninth, May 2018

San Francisco Classical Voice, 8 May 2018, Steve Osborn

“...an unforgettable performance of Mahler’s Ninth Symphony...beautiful sonorities and hushed expectancy of the symphony’s closing moments...Ferrandis was by turns restrained, animated, and energetic as he guided the players through the opening movement’s many twists and turns...hush descended on the audience as the symphony gradually faded away...Ferrandis extended the silence for a long moment, gathering his composure before bidding farewell to the cheering crowd.”

ARTSSF, 7 May 2018, Paul Hertelendy

“Never one to skimp on challenges, the French conductor programmed the fiendishly difficult 81-minute Mahler Ninth Symphony...At the end, the orchestra was magnificent in carrying off one of the most nebulous closes ever, fading, fading, until nothing. This was pure Mahler...The performance was rewarded by the sell-out house’s prolonged ovation, for both Ferrandis and the orchestra.”

SFGate, 8 May 2018, Joshua Kosman

“...a largely stirring performance of Mahler’s Ninth Symphony...From the halting, dissociative opening gesture, which soon melted into a bath of tender lyricism, to the shimmering fadeout of the symphony’s final moments, this felt like a deft summing-up of the moment...The last minutes of the symphony made a poignant farewell.”

San Francisco Classical Voice, 28 March 2017 Steve Osborn

“Conductor Bruno Ferrandis is well versed in Sibelius’s intricate musical architecture, and he pushed forward relentlessly, never letting the orchestra shy away from the symphony’s exacting demands. Orchestral crescendos came and went repeatedly without ever bursting forth into full-throated song. One got the sense of a volcano waiting to burst forth but constrained in its depth. The eruption finally occurred near the end of the Largo third movement, when the orchestra let loose with a remarkable unanimity of sound.”

Classical Sonoma, 4 April 2016, Terry McNeill

“Britten’s Cello Symphony (Op. 68) and Falla’s complete music from the ballet “The Three-Cornered Hat” had rhythmic interest by the truckload...Mr. Bailey made a strong case for the Symphony, working with conductor Bruno Ferrandis to considerable effect.

Mr. Ferrandis drew some exceptional Spanish colors from his orchestra, shaping the clarinet and harp (Dan Levitan) duo, the abbreviated piano parts and a scintillating *pizzicato accelerando* in the Seguidillas section. This piece needs the sure hand that Mr. Ferrandis has, always the picture of control and energy on the podium.

Opening the concert was New York composer Daniel Brewbaker’s “Blue Fire,” a 15-minute exploration of contrast and instrumental tint...ending with a long and orderly climax in the strings, a counterpoint to the frequent previous offbeat brass phrases and insistent incisive rhythms. As with the balance of the program it was Mr. Ferrandis’ triumph, his diligent command directing every facet of the music.”

Classical Sonoma, 11 February 2016, Steve Osborn

Bruckner’s unfinished Symphony No. 9: “Conductor Bruno Ferrandis displayed a firm grasp of Bruckner’s score, carefully guiding his players through the various phrases, crescendos and decrescendos, accelerandos and ritards. He most often conducted with two symmetrical hands, drawing out a foreboding, intense and elemental sound... Mr. Ferrandis and company played the score to maximum effect, creating a tremendous, fiery sound with sustained energy... The performance was one of the Symphony’s most profound efforts in recent years, rivaling anything they’ve done in that time... a thrilling exploration of uncharted musical territory, filled with both apocalyptic fury and rays of hope.”

Press Democrat, 11 October 2015, Diane Peterson

“Under Music Director Bruno Ferrandis’ baton, the orchestra provided a sensitive, well-executed accompaniment — not always easy with Mozart — and the work drew an immediate standing ovation from the nearly sold-out crowd. The conductor made a strong case for the work, which sparkles with beautiful string melodies and fugal writing. Even though the

ending comes across as more bombastic than honest, the brass section really shone, picking up where they left off during Mahler's Symphony No. 3 at last season's finale."

Repeat Performances, 10 October 2015, Adam Broner

"On Saturday, Bruno Ferrandis led the Santa Rosa Symphony in a savvy season opener, mixing a populist new work and the timelessness of Mozart, colorist French creations and a brilliant sister act... Along with the sound, what most stood out was the high level of professionalism from a cadre of musicians whose names grace the rosters of many local orchestras including the Berkeley and Oakland Symphonies. Under Ferrandis' florid direction, their solos were punchy and their ensembles were full and taut."

Press Democrat, 4 May 2015, Diane Peterson

"The Santa Rosa Symphony closed its 87th season Saturday under Music Director Bruno Ferrandis with the first of three performances of Mahler's Symphony No. 3, delivering a confident reading that soared through the span of the 90-minute work without ever looking back. The concert in the Green Music Center's Weill Hall marked the first time Ferrandis has conducted a full, Mahler symphony with the orchestra, a longtime dream that had been deferred by the lagging economy. (The army of musicians onstage for this work numbered nearly 170, including orchestra, mezzo-soprano Abigail Fischer and two choirs.) Ferrandis studied at Juilliard with Mahler's greatest champion, Leonard Bernstein, and conducted the sprawling and unorthodox work with sensitive restraint, allowing the angst-ridden music to speak for itself."

artssf.com, the independent observer of San Francisco Bay Area music, 24 March 2015, Paul Hertelendy

"One of the greatest display pieces for sumptuous orchestration remains "The Firebird Suite" by Igor Stravinsky. It's a brilliant condensation of a 1910 ballet, full of fairy-tale coloration. This last of several rewrites features splashy glissandi on the trombones, plus that earth-shaking jolt when the evil Kastshei ogre lands unexpectedly on the scene. This is a giant jigsaw puzzle, with myriad instruments and effects. Memorable in the orchestra were solos from French horn (Meredith Brown), oboe (Laura Reynolds) and bassoon (Carla Wilson). Stravinsky must have loved the lowly bassoon, having written for it prominently, here as in "The Rite of Spring," most notably... The orchestra sounded very accomplished in this. Music Director Bruno Ferrandis conducted with his customary overblown, gestures, his long lean arms flying in all directions like condor's wings. But he cued the players well and held his ground atop the podium."

San Francisco Classical Voice, 9 February 2015, Steve Osborn

"The Brahms Symphony No. 2, played after intermission, is not the least bit frantic. Here Ferrandis allowed the majestic themes to rise and fall at a leisurely pace. The opening movement featured outstanding French horn solos by principal Meredith Brown, complemented by a lush sound from the strings. The fourth [movement] began more energetically, with Ferrandis picking up the pace. The ensemble was meticulous, the dynamics well controlled, the drive to the end relentless."

Classical Sonoma, 10 November 2014, Terry McNeill

"The important surprise was how well the audience liked the thorny Dutilleux cello concerto, *Tour un Monde Lointain* (A Whole Distant World). It was written for Rostropovich in 1970 and played to the hilt by Swiss cellist soloist Christian Poltéra. It was a courageous program selection by conductor Bruno Ferrandis, especially when surrounded by familiar and sober works by Debussy and Beethoven." For Beethoven Symphony no. 7, "Mr. Ferrandis kept the Symphony's momentum going into the wild and swirling finale, deftly balancing the rhythmic definition and taking a tempo that seemed overly fast but oh so right."

San Francisco Classical Voice, 18 February 2014, Steve Osborn

Sibelius Symphony No. 2: "Ferrandis did a great job of propelling the orchestra through Sibelius' unpredictable psychodrama. They were by turns somber and funereal, then furiously active, nowhere more so than in the agitated beginning of the third movement. Like Sibelius, the orchestra never said the same thing twice. Each moment was distinctive, leading to a shattering climax at the end, with the brass ringing out at top volume."

San Francisco Classical Voice, 9 February 2013, Steve Osborn

Brahms' Third Symphony, Op. 90: "Ferrandis conducted that movement and its predecessors with sweeping gestures that befit his tall frame. His approach changed dramatically in the spirited last movement, where he seemed to get more energy and precision from the players by standing almost still. The more compressed his gestures became, the more results he got. The playing throughout was exemplary, especially from the cellos, who rose as a section at the end of the performance to acknowledge the sustained applause."

San Francisco Classical Voice, "Titans of Opera," 3 December 2012, Steve Osborn

"In the Wagner half of the concert, Music Director Bruno Ferrandis conveyed with his baton that the audience was not to applaud between pieces, thereby transforming the selections into a seven-movement "Ring Cycle suite," with one interlude from Das Rheingold, two from Die Walküre, one from Siegfried, and three from Götterdämmerung. Listeners lacking the

stamina or inclination to endure all four operas could get a good idea of their essence just by listening to these well-chosen excerpts.”

San Francisco Chronicle, 9 October 2012, Joshua Kosman

“Ferrandis led the orchestra with forceful assurance, shaping the sonic landscape superbly and bringing out the music's rhythmic directness. Mozart's "Magic Flute" Overture began the evening in a reading that attempted a similar propulsiveness. After intermission came Mahler's First Symphony... a blaze of glory for a vibrant and superbly dynamic finale.”

artssf.com, the independent observer of San Francisco Bay Area music, 9 October 2012, Paul Hertelendy

“TIP FOR THE SYMPHONY LOVER: After just one hearing, with Mahler's grand Symphony No. 1, I would gladly sacrifice the crown jewels to nail down lifetime tickets in the central balcony, a nonpareil vantagepoint to get the best aural massage that these ears ever hoped for, with every rich overtone present and accounted for.

The piece de resistance of the concert in retrospect was Mahler's Symphony No. 1, a 54-minute purview of romanticism from many perspectives—a village dance for country bumpkins, a lung bursting funeral march of searing tragedy, various quotations of Mahler lieder, and an exuberant, triumphal finale, with instruments' bells raised in full fire. Apart from some errant woodwinds that appeared to be a work in progress, the orchestra sounded excellent. The vivid, mobile Ferrandis with his epee-like flashes of baton was on top of the music, though rarely given to soft touches for the leisurely loving themes.”