

## **World music**

### **Santa Rosa Symphony's 83rd season has a distinctively international flavor**

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The Santa Rosa Symphony World Tour 2010-2011 launches this weekend with an international array of guest artists and repertoire on board.

The itinerary of concerts at the Wells Fargo Center this season was planned by Santa Rosa Symphony Music Director Bruno Ferrandis, who trekked through far-flung epochs and time zones to dig up interesting scores and assemble them into cohesive musical programs.

“The basic idea of the season was a voyage,” Ferrandis said. “I wanted to bring people not only to these different countries and entities, but to different times as well.”

This year, Ferrandis will be conducting six out of the seven programs — the most ever in his four years as full-time music director — and has enlisted Mexican-born maestro Enrique Arturo Diemecke to guest-conduct an Argentinian-Mexican program in January.

“I’m going to be very present this year,” Ferrandis said. “I am like a child going into the most wonderful bakery in the world, with access to the best cakes.”

Among other sweet treats, Ferrandis said he is looking forward to performances of Gabriel Fauré’s “Requiem” during December’s choral set, the Adagio from Mahler’s Symphony No. 10 during February’s Viennese set, Brahms’ Symphony No. 4 during the German set in March and Modest Mussorgsky’s “Pictures at an Exhibition” for the Russian finale in May.

In this weekend’s first program, the symphony will transport the audience to Italy for a program that offers a taste of opera and contemporary music, a virtuosic violin concerto and a tone poem evoking the sensual city of Rome.

“I wanted it to be Italian in all the aspects,” Ferrandis said of the program. “Verdi’s opera — ‘The Force of Destiny’ — has all the romantic aspects, revolution and all that.”

Russian-born violinist Dmitri Berlinsky will take on Niccolò Paganini’s devilishly difficult Violin Concerto No. 1, a piece written to show off the composer’s virtuosic technique on the instrument.

“Paganini is the Italian par excellence,” Ferrandis said. “He’s the Ferrari of the violin — fast and macho.”

Because Paganini was born with astonishing physical abilities — his fingers could leap and stretch farther than anyone else's — the concerto is rife with thorny doublestops, played in thirds or octaves, at high velocity.

Paganini's unique performance style not only made him rich but revolutionized the musical profession, inaugurating the idea of a star performer and turning traditional composition on its ear.

“When he played the violin, everyone imitated his technique and transposed it into their own concertos,” Ferrandis explained. “He could write things that no one could even think of writing before.”

Paganini not only owned several very expensive violins of his own but was able to underwrite works by other composers.

It's no accident that Berlinsky was asked to play his demanding Concerto No. 1. In 1985, Berlinsky was the youngest prize winner in the history of the Paganini International Violin Competition. Consequently, he is one of the few violinists who has performed on Paganini's own 18th-century Guarneri del Gesu violin.

Berlinsky went on to win many more prizes and to study with the legendary Dorothy DeLay at the Juilliard School in New York, where Ferrandis first met him. He now plays on a 1759 Carlos Ferdinand Landolfi violin.

“He's the nicest, coolest guy,” Ferrandis said. “He is very calm and a superb player.”

Along with Berlinsky, the symphony season boasts an enticing array of guest performers, from international artists such as guitarist Sharon Isbin to local stars such as soprano Christine Brandes of Oakland and pianist Jon Nakamatsu of San Jose.

“Every one of these people are of the highest caliber,” Ferrandis said. “I'm very proud of that.”

The concerts this weekend will conclude with the evocative strains of Ottorino Respighi's “Fountains of Rome,” a tone poem depicting four of the most famous Roman fountains.

A Renaissance man of music, Respighi was influenced by French composers like Claude Debussy and German composers like Richard Strauss while staying true to his Roman roots.

“There is no one more Italian than him,” Ferrandis said. “For me, it was a good way to finish the concert — I needed something light and more popular.”

In the opening program, Ferrandis will also introduce a work by Luciano Berio, a contemporary composer known for adapting and transforming the music of other composers.

In his 30-minute “Rendering,” Berio takes threads from Franz Schubert's unfinished Symphony No. 10 and weaves his own tapestry of sound.

According to Ferrandis, the piece stays true to the structure and form of the Schubert but still sounds like the Italian composer, who died in 2003.

“It's like in the cinema, when suddenly the focus of the camera disappears and you are in a nebulous fog, where the picture shimmers,” he said. “The music of Schubert is melting into Berio.”

Ferrandis has sprinkled other contemporary works judiciously throughout the season. There's a world premiere by Aubert Lemeland in December, Pablo Ortiz's “Suomalainen Tango” in January, Wolfgang Rihm's “Serious Song” in March and Sofia Gubaidulina's “Fairytale Poem” in May.

“When I look at other programs in America, not many orchestras have such diverse programs,” Ferrandis said. “One day I hope we will be noticed on a national level for our daring programming.”

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