

## **Kahane wows the crowd at Santa Rosa Symphony performance**

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Conductor Emeritus Jeffrey Kahane returned to the Santa Rosa Symphony Saturday night to perform and conduct Mozart's majestic Concerto No. 25 from the keyboard with his usual elegance and elan.

During the second half, Kahane led the orchestra in Sergei Rachmaninoff's lush Symphony No. 3, a late work considered less popular but alluring nonetheless.

Kahane appeared relaxed and happy to be on home turf, where the nearly full house lavished him with applause and appreciation. Both his piano and conducting skills seem to be in tip-top shape.

Kahane made a splash last November when he conducted the New York Philharmonic in Mozart's Symphony No. 33 from the harpsichord, using an iPad instead of a standard score.

For the Mozart concerto Saturday, he conducted from memory, an equally remarkable feat.

Like the late-winter weather, the concerto slips constantly between major and minor keys - the clouds interspersed with rays of sun — but the music must flow freely, in one continuous motion.

Taking the first movement at a lively tempo, Kahane brought out the essential lyricism of the work, emphasizing the clarity of each note with a light and silky touch. He also performed his own cadenza, an ornamental passage, giving it a baroque twist.

During the stately Andante movement, Kahane used eloquent rubato (stretching of the tempo) and sensitive dynamics to state his case, while the woodwinds provided an alluring backdrop.

Kahane's tremendous facility came in handy in the transparent third movement, a dainty yet powerful Allegretto. The strings responded with lilting expression.

Since Rachmaninoff is one of Kahane's favorite composers and pianists, his works have always marked watershed moments in his own career. Kahane chose Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2 to end his first season with the Santa Rosa Symphony in 1996, and conducted it again during his farewell concert in 2006.

Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 3, written 30 years after No. 2, reveals the composer in a more modern light, with angular chords reminiscent of Stravinsky and Debussy.

From the brass and timpani to the harp and woodwinds, the orchestra pulled off this haunting and colorful work with seamless ensemble and explosive force.

As an encore, the orchestra performed a frothy rendition of Johann Strauss' Overture to the "Die Fledermaus" opera. Strauss began work on that opera in 1873, the year Rachmaninoff was born.