

Santa Rosa Symphony bids farewell to Wells Fargo Center

Ferrandis family steals the show during farewell concert

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Conductor Bruno Ferrandis was joined by his brother Jean Ferrandis on flute during the Santa Rosa Symphony's last appearance at Wells Fargo Center For the Arts.

A nearly full house greeted the Santa Rosa Symphony Saturday night as the orchestra wrapped up its 84th season with an invigorating, French program while bidding farewell to the Wells Fargo Center for the Arts.

The historic moment was marked by a champagne toast at the end of the evening in anticipation of the symphony's move to the Green Music Center at Sonoma State University this fall.

“We are family, as we celebrate not only the end of the season but the end of an era, of 30 years of music-making at the Wells Fargo Center for the Arts,” said Alan Silow, executive director of the symphony.

Familial ties emerged as a theme of the evening, providing a natural segue into Mother's Day.

With an extra bounce in his step, Music Director Bruno Ferrandis welcomed his younger brother, flutist Jean Ferrandis, to the stage before intermission to perform Mozart's Flute Concerto No. 2, which the soloist tossed off from memory with understated élan.

But the conductor inadvertently stole the show when he asked his parents, Georges and Therese Ferrandis, to stand up. The couple had flown from their home in southwest France to see their sons perform together in a rare, joint performance.

“For all their years of hardships,” Ferrandis said. “Merci, merci (thanks, thanks).”

While most musicians and audience members are excited about the move to the new hall — modeled after the Seiji Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood in western Massachusetts — a few of the symphony's 90-some volunteer ushers waxed nostalgic. That's because their jobs will be outsourced to SSU students.

“There is a certain sadness in not being here anymore,” said Marilyn Scott of Santa Rosa, an usher for more than 10 years. “I will subscribe, but I've really enjoyed being behind the scenes.”

The music itself underscored the ebb and flow of this transitional moment. In the curtain-opener, Debussy's densely textured "Jeux," melodies quickly dissolved and reformed, creating the impression of standing on shifting ground.

In Ravel's "La Valse," which closed the concert, the sensuous waltz rhythms climaxed into a nightmarish delirium, which has been described as "dancing on a volcano."

In Jacques Ibert's Concerto for Flute and Orchestra after intermission, the ensemble was a little rocky in spots but the flutist carried the day with his glowing tone and top-notch technique.

The orchestra lent solid support to the Mozart Flute Concerto No. 2, but the delicate cadenzas were marred by a mysterious clatter. That made the farewell a little more sweet than bitter.

The concert will be repeated at 8 Monday at the Wells Fargo Center for the Arts.