

## Violinist Mark Kaplan

Plays the Bruch Concerto with the Southwest Florida Symphony

***"Mark Kaplan was the outstanding violin soloist."  
"...a stunning solo performance of a Paganini Caprice"***

### SW Florida Symphony closes season with forceful works

Naples News - William Noll - Tuesday, March 27, 2012

The Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra closed the initial foray into its second 50 years Saturday night at the Barbara B. Mann Center in Fort Myers. It was noticeably not as packed a house as usual, but this had no effect on the orchestral forces on stage. The evening's string complement of around 30 players opened with a sensitive but cool reading of American composer John Corigliano's setting of Baudelaire's poem "Invitation au Voyage."

The only challenge was that this reposed and delicate string arrangement was originally composed as a choral work set to an English translation. There was no poetic text printed in the program, so the full meaning of the composition was rather lost — rather like performing a great aria with no vocalist. But it was politely played, and the sensitive violin solos of Reiko Niiya were especially pleasing.

**The program continued with the seldom-heard Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor by the German composer Max Bruch. I cut my musical teeth on this work with a recording of Heifitz with Bruch's "Scottish Fantasy" on side-two of the vinyl. The Concerto is not often played in public anymore. It's a shame, as it is a wonderfully warm tribute to the bright side of the Romantic era.**

**Mark Kaplan was the outstanding violin soloist. He and Music Director Michael Hall combined their musical forces to**

**give a cohesive and balanced performance of melodic beauty and rhythmic character. Kaplan obliged the audience, after his third curtain-call, with a stunning solo performance of a Paganini Caprice on his 1685 "Marquis" Stradivari violin.**

Following the intermission, Hall and the orchestra gave a robust, stunning performance of Beethoven's dramatic Symphony No. 7 in A Major. This inspired 200 year-old composition remains as vivid and relentless as ever. However, the forces on stage were entirely capable of bringing out the best in this difficult work, and then some.

The opening Sostenuito had a sense of majesty that practically made you want to bow down to King Ludwig von Beethoven. The second movement spun out gorgeous lines that made you feel as though Beethoven was usurping the future style of Brahms. The third movement Scherzo was both pastoral and powerful. The fourth movement finale was simply brilliant. Every section of the orchestra was at its finest. But, the horns, the horns, the horns! What a sensational night for them. In tune, balanced, supportive, soulful; and popping out high E's like child's play.

I understand Maestro Hall has been signed on for another season. The manner in which this orchestra has continued to grow in musical style and discipline under his direction has been awesome. The citizens of



#### Artist Management

Fort Myers should rally around their cultural gem and pack the house for every performance next year.

Maestro Hall has some big plans for next season: "Symphonie Fantastique" of Berlioz, Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, Strauss' Suite from "der Rosenkavalier," and more. Better call the box office, 239-418-1500 "now

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