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# Two sides of Beethoven

OVER 20 years separated the composition of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.1 in C Major and the epic 9th Symphony, and their juxtaposition in Saturday's Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra concert emphasised his progression from youthful innovator to towering genius.

The spiritual growth is evident in the scores, but it was also stressed in the interpretation by prizewinning soloist Wolfgang Manz and conductor Richard Armstrong.

They concentrated on the lightness of the concerto.

The orchestral entry was bright and crisp, with very strict attention to precision of rhythm. It needed that spritely approach because Manz's touch on the Civic Hall grand piano was so light.

His phrasing was sensitive

and the whole performance was fluid and delicate.

Manz was certainly capable of strong dynamics — there was a powerful urgency in the bass in the first movement — but he was no thumper of the keys.

This was particularly evident in the *largo*, where he showed quiet control — the confidence to hold the melody back without reducing it to schmalz.

His lightness of touch was important in the final movement, where crisp clarity is essential to raise the tunes above banality.

The only slight disappointment lay in the cadenzas, where there was plenty of scope for melodic variations — opportunities sadly missed.

The delicacy of the symphony gave way to imposing drama in the 9th Symphony, where the first movement portrays such powerful movement and lowering darkness as a backcloth to haunting melody.

Beethoven's *molto vivace* offers sharp contrast. Its rest-

less energy swept along at a relentless pace by Richard Armstrong, its urgency was almost uncomfortable.

The sudden mood changes and silent pauses required tremendous concentration.

After sitting patiently throughout the concert, the Philharmonic Choir rose to the occasion for the extraordinary setting of Schiller's *Ode to Joy*.

Love it or hate it, the powerful melody makes an unforgettable statement at the climax of the symphony.

Baritone Phillip Joll's entry as the first vocal contribution was of a stature commensurate with the powerful intensity of the orchestral sections. • His voice is terrific.

John Treleven's tenor was also strong and positive, while soprano Elizabeth Collier and Mezzo-soprano Penelope Walker blended well.

The large choir produced a fine fat sound, intonation was good and the movement was properly triumphant.

Jane Garrett.