

Beethoven 'Experiment' Lifts Orchestra

17 July 1962

By JOHN HORNER

Dr. John Black has such a respect for Beethoven that he has so far forbidden the City of Burnside Symphony Orchestra to approach him.

Last night, however, he showed his respect for his orchestra by withdrawing the ban and permitting his proteges to make their first solemn obeisance to the master through the "Eroica" Symphony.

His pupils did not disgrace him. Of course, the conductor had to cut his coat to suit his cloth, especially in the matter of tempo.

There is a whirling scherzo in this symphony. Strong men (e.g. Weingartner) have come to grief in public through playing it so fast that the horns in the trio crashed in a heap and had to start all over again.

Dr. Black took the opposite risk and played it too

slowly, but far from coming to grief, he managed to make it sound both like a scherzo and like Beethoven.

Riskier still, he even took the Funeral March too slowly, yet still kept it in shape, burning with inner fire to the end.

In the finale, too, again and again the great glow of feeling rose up as though of its own accord through the carefully controlled handling of quite simple passages.

This Beethoven experiment came off, lifting the orchestra to a new phase of achievement and seriousness.

Another successful experiment was the introduction of the orchestra's new associate conductor, David Bishop, who took the baton in Mozart's flute concerto in G with Robert Hecker as soloist.

Mozart is as difficult in his own way as Beethoven in his, but the orchestra has had a good grounding

in his style and it made a good healthy shot at the accompaniment to a strong, confident soloist.

Norene Lower's ardent contralto voice and temperament found a fitting vehicle in the little known but very lovely "Absence of Berlioz, the orchestra being reduced for this to refined chamber proportions.

Elgar's "Froissart" overture, expressing the soul of chivalry and knightly pomp, showed that Dr. Black had infected his players with some of the flexibility needed for the passionate surges of the composer's romantic temperament.