Schaub, BSO all-Beethoven a hit

The Boston Symphony Orchestra's recent series of concerts includes an all-Beethoven Program conducted by music director Seiji Ozawa at Symphony Hall. Mr. Ozawa shows not only his own great talent, but also the BSO's in these performances. Certainly he ranks as one of the greatest conductors of our day, and the BSO proves once again that it deserves to be considered one of the world's best.

The program opened with the Overture from the ballet "Die geschlechtsle. Des Prometheus." Composed in 1800, it was first performed in March, 1801, at the Imperial Court Theatre in Vienna. Following the Overture is Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat, known as the "Emperor." André Michel Schub, making his debut with the BSO, is the soloist for these performances. Mr. Schub has already performed with the orchestras of Cleveland and Miami, as well as the National Symphony, and has given numerous recitals elsewhere.

The closing work of the program was Symphony No. 7, performed this summer by the BSO at Tanglewood, under the direction of Colin Davis. By far the strongest piece in the program is the Piano Concerto. Mr. Schub is a fine pianist, and will be someone to listen to in the future. The Overture was also nothing less than outstanding, no doubt due to the piano work of Mr. Schub, and the fine conducting job done by Mr. Ozawa. He has good control of his orchestra, and would probably do very well on tour. The Symphony was adequate, but it would seem that it could have been played more dramatically, as was previously done by the New York Philharmonic.

Mr. Schub plays with accuracy and great expression. His technique and facilities are almost impeccable. It is no surprise that his performance was so greatly appreciated by both audience and orchestra alike. While he has toured with several fine symphony orchestras already, it would not be surprising to see him at even more renowned ones in the near future. Certainly his style would be a considerable asset to any symphony orchestra. He seems to play the parts as if they were meant to be played.

Mr. Ozawa's interpretation seems impeccable on the Overture and the Concerto. He knew the strengths of his orchestra, and let the strings sing out, and played up the brass section when need be. He also realizes the talents of his piano soloist, so the orchestra part strengthens and refines the interpretation of the piano solo. The total mood of the piece seems so totally under Mr. Ozawa's control that it would be easy for the piece to stray somewhat from the actual intent of the composer. This would not detract from the piece, as it would be worked into the 'real' mood, but, unfortunately in the Overture and Concerto this does not occur.

It does seem to occur, however in the Symphony. The piece is played more "held back," less exciting than it should. It is more a controlled excitement when something less subtle is in order. The lower parts are very important, and they simply don't seem to come out in parts as much as they should. Ozawa's interpretation is valid, just not what Beethoven intended, at least according to the different interpretations I have heard before.

The Beethoven series is certainly not one should miss. Besides a chance to see the famous BSO in concert, it is a chance to see a fine piano talent, and to watch Mr. Ozawa's fine conducting in action.