

A flourish of eccentricity pays off for Taddei

MUSIC

- Vector Wellington Orchestra conducted by Marc Taddei with Michael Houstoun (piano). Music by Beethoven, Schumann, Rossini and Stravinsky
- Town Hall, July 24
- Reviewed by John Button

SINCE Marc Taddei took over the Vector Wellington Orchestra, he has attracted big audiences to concerts, and has done so again with a programme that, on paper at least, looked eccentric.

Two overtures, a concerto and a 20 minute ballet; surely a menu of entrees

and desserts. But, in linking the works to the year 1810, Taddei appeared to make a case, and it worked for the first half, with both Beethoven's Egmont Overture, first heard in 1810, and with the Schumann Piano Concerto (Schumann was born in 1810). But neither the Rossini overture to the *Barber of Seville* nor Stravinsky's ballet *Jeu de Cartes* appears to have any link to 1810.

Not to worry, the concert was, partly thanks to the unusual programming, a fresh, unhackneyed, affair, distinguished for the most part by excellent playing.

The Egmont Overture got things off to a fiery start, followed by a most eloquent performance of Schumann's Piano Concerto. This is not an easy work to bring off, but Michael Houstoun

provided an ideal mix of bravura and lyricism, allied to an easy clarity, that caught Schumann's elusive world to a tee. The orchestra gave him fine support, with the woodwind showing more character than is often the case.

The Rossini overture fizzed along nicely, but the best playing of the evening came in the rarely heard ballet *Jeu de Cartes* (card game).

This is a witty work describing a game of cards in three deals, composed in Stravinsky's neo-classical style. Taddei is very good at this type of music – and here he draws some crisp and sure playing.

A fine concert, then, but I had a sneaky wish for a substantial work to anchor the evening.