

Imaginative Taddei deserves success



WHO, WHAT, WHERE

Wellington Orchestra conducted by Marc Taddei, Michael Houstoun (piano), members of Central Band of RNZAF, Pelorus Trust Wellington Brass Band, Titan Hutt City Brass Band, Wellington Town Hall, November 22.

Reviewed by John Button

MARC TADDEI and his Wellington players have become a great success story in a short time. Taddei's programming is imaginative, his demeanour infectious and his skill has seen a distinct increase in

playing standards. And together they draw full houses, this concert being no exception, helped by the chance to hear Michael Houstoun end his series of the Beethoven piano concertos with the Emperor.

This concerto – the *Fifth in E flat* – has become a signature work for Houstoun, and this was a magnificent performance; magisterial in the first movement, deeply poetic in the second and marvellously propulsive in the finale. The orchestra, urgently led by Taddei, was a fine partner, with sweeping strings a feature. Only slightly dodgy intonation from the winds in the finale detracted a touch from a thrilling partnership.

The second half was spectacular. Taddei gave us Duke Ellington's ballet suite *The River* – a

wonderfully colourful, rhythmically infectious, seven-movement work originally written for the American Ballet Theatre in 1970. Juilliard trained, Marc Taddei has this music in his bones, and the orchestra gave him verve and great colour.

Respighi's orchestral spectacular, *Pines of Rome* was a technicolour finale.

Aided by a bevy of brass band players and the organ, the performance climaxed with a *Pines of the Appian Way* that was about as loud as anything I have heard in the Town Hall, but my most abiding memory will be some gorgeously rich, hushed, string playing. It is hard to grasp just how an orchestra and a charismatic conductor that can fill halls, should have financial difficulties.