

MUSIC REVIEW

Traditional sounds new in symphony concert

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SPECIAL TO THE
DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra may have accentuated the traditional in its Saturday night concert at Robinson Center Music Hall, but a young conductor and young pianist made some old favorites seem brand new. Indeed, the orchestra itself never sounded better.

Opening the program with Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmilla* "Overture," guest conductor Philip Mann attacked the piece with a robust, gleeful vigor, and the orchestra responded with tight, bright playing. Mann exhibited absolute technical control tempered with an emotional connection to the music and the players in his

expressively graceful yet passionate conducting style.

The centerpiece of the program was Ludwig van Beethoven's popular *Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 73*, better known as the *Emperor Concerto*. Guest pianist Andrew von Oeyen played with surpassing clarity and a light touch that illuminated the familiar work. From the opening cadenzas of the first movement through the spirited third movement, a true musical conversation evolved among soloist, con-

ductor and orchestra.

After charming the audience after intermission with an introduction to Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64*, Mann led the orchestra in a deftly controlled yet deeply felt account of the work, marked by a combination of lyricism and strength. By the time the triumphant conclusion was reached, one had the feeling that a world-class conductor had just led a world-class orchestra.

Pianist, guest conductor

and players will repeat the concert at 3 p.m. today at Robinson Center Music Hall, West Markham Street and Broadway, Little Rock. Ticket information is available by calling (501) 666-1761 or at the Web site, arkansassymphony.org.



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