

Vienna fingers sweeten concert

By KEITH POWERS

Two orchestras with the same name came to Boston on Wednesday evening to play for the FleetBoston Celebrity Series at Symphony Hall.

The first, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, gave an insipid reading of the Beethoven violin concerto, ignoring the condescending exhortations of soloist Nikolaj Znaider.

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The second, also the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, rang up a superb rendition of Beethoven's Eroica symphony after intermission, pushing the imperfect matters that preceded it far from memory.

What to make of it? Not every partnership works perfectly, and an orchestra on tour with a soloist it doesn't like doesn't have divorce as an option. Body language told the whole story. In the violin concerto,

The Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Vladimir Fedoseyev conducting, at Symphony Hall, Boston, Wednesday night.

the orchestra members stared dreamily at the notes, perhaps trying to remember what city they were playing in. Znaider, for his part, gazed lovingly at his complacent fellows — and we are talking fellows here, as like most European orchestras, only a couple of females have invaded the ranks of the white boys from Vienna.

Znaider has gifts, to be sure, and a gorgeous instrument. His 1704 "ex-Liebig" Stradivarius made some of the nicest noise these ears have ever heard from a fiddle in Symphony Hall. But his stagemates, including conductor Vladimir Fedoseyev, performed as if they wished they were somewhere else, giving a startlingly flat interpretation of this accessible and tuneful work. Per-

haps they've grown tired of Znaider's stage antics: It's always a good thing to see a soloist actually listening to the orchestra, but Znaider acted as if every grace note were changing the face of musical history.

Pep pills must have been passed around at intermission. The contrast couldn't have been more dramatic: Fedoseyev led with energy and intelligence, the orchestra members sat forward in their chairs and delivered the type of performance that has earned the Vienna Symphony a worldwide reputation for excellence and led to dozens of trend-setting recordings.

The Allegro had vigor and insight; the second movement march provided introspection, sounding Beethoven-like as only a homeland band can. The scherzo had character, and Fedoseyev made sure the finale capped off what can only be called an amazing comeback.