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CSO deserves immense credit

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Listening to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra all year, it is easy to forget comparisons. The CSO performance of Beethoven Thursday night was astonishing when compared to other orchestras, at least in my view. The absolute unity of the woodwinds, and their perfection in phrasing and beauty has been achieved before

(by Philadelphia and Cleveland at their heights) but never exceeded. Perhaps the same can be said of the brass (compared to Solti's), and the tympani, but the strings were in a place I have never heard, or heard of. The precision in the syncopated staccatos of the Fifth Symphony, in the recitatives of the cellos and basses, were beyond what I thought possible. The second violins and violas played as well as the first violins and tossed tunes back and forth in a cooperative competition to reach perfection. It seems unlikely that an orchestra can ever play better

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than we heard.

Haitink himself conducted Beethoven as well as a sane man can, but one might argue that Beethoven, infiltrated if not consumed by anger at his deafness, was sometimes insane, and might benefit by a touch more of that in conducting and style.

-- *Bob Eisenberg, River Forest, Ill.*

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