

**VSO Sound Trek ends****Steve not slick, but still superb**

By MICHAEL QUIGLEY

A superb performance of Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto capped the Vancouver Symphony's ambitious 20th Century Sound Trek series at its final concert Monday night.

Originally composed in the late 50's for Russian cellist supreme Rostropovich, the Concerto proved an easy vehicle in the hands of guest artist Stephen Kates. Though he lacks the ultimate slickness of the Soviet master, Kates turned in a thoroughly masterful performance, especially in the solo third

movement with its tricky multiple stoppings. On the podium, VSO Associate Conductor Simon Streatfeild led the orchestra capably behind Kates. The slow moderato was given a lyrical interpretation, though there could have been a bit more enthusiasm in the dry, witty first and final movements.

The other large work on the program, Bartok's 1944 Concerto for Orchestra is a difficult piece to bring off, unless either the orchestra is of super-virtuoso quality or the conductor lets loose with a dynamic, high-powered ren-

dition. The VSO combined the best of both approaches, even though the results weren't 100 per cent effective. The orchestral playing was of a fairly high quality (despite the absence of the VSO's usual first clarinet and some sloppy playing by the trombones) and conductor Streatfeild kept things moving at a well-controlled, brisk pace.

The concert opened with Schoenberg's Five Orchestra Pieces, which created quite a stink at their premiere in 1912. It was good to finally hear these epochal works by the twentieth century's most

influential composer played by the VSO, even if the performance was a bit subdued (no wonder, for the orchestra had inexplicably been shoved back behind the Queenie stage proscenium). The pieces might have proved a bit more interesting if their titles had been printed in the programme: Premonitions, Yesteryears, Summer Morning by a Lake (Colors), Peripetia, and The Obligato Recitative.

Also on the program was Tableau for String Orchestra by Canadian composer Harry Freedman, written in 1952.

Purportedly a musical picture of an Arctic landscape, it turned out to be a little more than reminiscent of Bartok's Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, despite some interesting organ-like harmonies appearing occasionally in the sweaty string textures.