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# Artur Rubinstein

## Piano Recital Given Minus Printed Program Adds Delightful Flavor

By ALFRED FRANKENSTEIN

Artur Rubinstein gave a piano recital without a printed program yesterday afternoon at the Opera House, announcing his selections as he went along, just as Feodor Chaliapin used to do in his last years. One suspects that Chaliapin abandoned the pre-arranged program because, toward the end, he was never sober long enough to make one out. In the case of Rubinstein the reasons are very different; they were explained in a printed statement given to the audience.

It seems that, because of the "climate" of the hall, the sensitivity or insensitivity of the piano, the acoustics, and his own "state of inspiration," Rubinstein prefers to select his material on the spur of the moment. Furthermore this procedure helps him to duck out from under the demands of managers, who want sure-fire box-office stuff, and the helpful suggestions of critics and others who are forever crying for this, that and the other, forgetting that artists have their own predilections and "are not living catalogues of music."

**Part of this is readily understandable and part of it is a little confusing. For a concert performer to wait for the color of a given moment to dictate the choice of what he shall play, suggests that he always has an immense repertoire at concert pitch. It seems to say he is not only a "living catalogue of music" but a kind of walking juke box set in operation by particular circumstances.**

Actually, the idea represents the rebirth of public improvisation in a new form. The old-time virtuosi had fun improvising fantasias. Rubenstein entertains himself and his hearers improvising programs.

The "climate" of the Opera House yesterday afternoon dictated a very normal-looking program arranged in a very normal order. In the first part were the Beethoven sonata, Opus 31, No. 3, and the Liszt sonata. In the second part were a modern group (Debussy, Ravel, Villa-Lobos) and a Chopin group ending with that sure-fire encore getter, the polonaise in A flat, wherefore Chopin and Albeniz provided the encores. There was a very strong, not to say excessive, emphasis on brilliance; our "climate" did not call for late Beethoven or Brahms, and only once for the more thoughtful side of Chopin.

**In other words, the improvised method of program-building did not provide as much contrast as is desirable in a well-arranged recital. The best thing to be said for it on the positive side is that the announcements of titles broke down the formality that all too often stiffens relations between pianists and their hearers. Pianists are ordinarily as mute as a catfish. Rubinstein's little remarks, and the genial, witty personality that shone through them, gave the event a particular and delightful flavor.**

The playing was, as always with Rubinstein, immense in temperament and technique and huge in sonority. The grandly thunderous gusto with which he brought off the ultra-romantic symphonic poem which Liszt called a sonata, was in the truly magnificent tradition, but his concern for the big tone and the big line and the big sweep did not prevent his dealing with the Beethoven in the crisper and more intimate style which it demands.

It was good to hear that work of Beethoven, for all the pianists have been instructed that Opus 31 consists of one sonata, the D minor, and those in G and E flat are forgotten.

It was also good to be reminded that Ravel's "Alborado del Gracioso" was originally a piano piece, and to hear Rubinstein's incredibly fleet performance of the Villa-Lobes doll-pieces once again. I thought he pounded a little in the Chopin ballade and polonaise, but the nocturne in F sharp was as beautifully sung as one might wish.