Artur Rubinstein Presents Recital On Duke Campus

Artur Rubinstein filled the Duke Indoor Stadium to capacity Tuesday night, held the huge audience silently spellbound for somewhat over two hours, and departed following a standing ovation, leaving an infinitude of impressions with the people who wisely were on hand to hear him. The playing we heard involves a lifetime of work, a lifetime of artistic existence at the pinnacle of achievement.

It is work of a special kind. To quote Matthew Arnold, it is "work which in lasting fruit outgrows far noisier schemes; accomplished in repose; too great for haste; too high for rivalry."

Study of almost anything, and of the piano in particular, involves training to extend the span of concentration so that a long musical composition once begun is projected with control and meaning to perfection, exactly as the performer intends. It is not at all remarkable that a consummate artist like Rubinstein possesses this quality.

What is more interesting is that the audience shares it as they listen. This observer has never seen a more attentive audience. Pianists in our midst, probably secretly wondering if there are any openings this week in the shoe business, understandably paid the closest attention to the master performer. As for the rest of us, I believe the attention is the sharp tuning of the human spirit to the ultra refinement, the tiny variations of sound that characterize every measure, every phrase. Normally the communications we receive are gross in character and we let our minds wander.

He is superb in everything. There are the long controlled crescendo sentences that build from nothing to a cosmic roar. There is the poetic singing of something like the Andante of the Brahms F Minor sonata, the reassuring quality of the way in which an opening theme of a Bach chaconne emerges into prominence at intervals. Always there is control. Always there is a continuum of pianistic color, pastel or robust. The piano does his bidding for big chords, or for a melange of values, or a crystalline roulade. If you were there, this account simply will not do. If you were not present, you deserve no more. — P. W.