Happy Birthday, Artur Rubinstein

Anyone who wasn't at Veterans Memorial Friday night might find it hard to believe that Pianist Artur Rubinstein still is improving, after more than a half-century as a mature concert artist.

It's even more astounding, in that most of us keep expecting him to decline, as a performer. After all, Thursday was his 74th birthday, and he has been touring almost continuously as a piano virtuoso for 62 of those 74 years.

BUT SERENE and assured as always, he played exquisitely. Everything was interpreted in a manner appropriate to its composer and period in musical history. Through most of the evening it seemed that we were hearing more of the music than ever before.

I don't think there is a pianist in our time who more consistently realizes the full potential of the piano. Rubinstein never is erratic. His dependability, as a meticulous artist, is a continuing wonder.

THE BRAHMS F minor Sonata, for example, represents all the warmth, graciousness and color of the late Romantic period without ever being florid. Rubinstein revealed it totally to his audience. The poetic and placid Andante seemed, at the moment, to be the most lovely of musical sound.

But the same could be said for almost any passage played the entire evening—the small theme repeated in the Chopin G minor Ballade, for another example.

BEETHOVEN'S E FLAT major Sonata, Opus 31, No. 3, contrasted pleasantly with the Brahms which had preceded it; each achieved its own aesthetic objective. The Twelve Visions Fugitives of Prokofieff were remarkable for their variety and design. Villa-Lobos O Prole do Bebe afforded an interlude of gentle humor.

Without theatrics, but with majesty, authority and grandeur, Rubinstein played the mighty Polonaise in A flat major, as he has here many times before. We're still walking on air. NORMAN NADEL.