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LPO/Haitink
Festival Hall

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Why an appeal fund? The answer to this vital question was provided in the programme book of last night's London Philharmonic Orchestra gala concert, which was attended by Prince Charles and the Prime Minister: "In other major European countries the leading symphony orchestras, more highly subsidized as they are by central and local governments, have comprehensively provided for pensions and sickness benefits. It is only in the last few years that the LPO has been able to begin a programme of social security improvements, and it has been decided that from April this year provision will be made for pensions in addition to the holiday pay and some sickness benefits now allowed to the orchestra members". Every London orchestra nowadays is facing up to this problem in its own way. But in the matter of how to lure a gala audience, experience is proving that there is no safer solution than to invite the help of Artur Rubinstein.

Last night he played not one concerto but two, Chopin's in F minor and Saint-Saëns's in G minor. The programme was originally planned to allow him a brief interval breather between them. But despite each being as full of notes (if not fuller) than any in the repertory, he preferred to play them straight off, one after the other, in the second half of the concert. And with the entire hall on its feet to salute him, he still had energy to spare for two encores.

It was a late finishing concert, too late, alas, for a critic faced with a deadline to do justice to the magical freshness of Mr Rubinstein's playing throughout. One trivial (and artfully concealed) memory lapse in his first encore, Chopin's D flat Nocturne, was his only betrayal of tiredness—and even then he recovered to give a virtuoso performance of one of Villa-Lobos's *Dolls*.

In the concertos, every note glistened or sang. The cantilena of Chopin's Larghetto was beautifully timed and shaped. There was breadth and strength in the improvizatory opening of Saint-Saëns's concerto, which has always been one of Mr Rubinstein's favourites. Just now and again a few things marked *pp* emerged *mp* but nobody would want to quarrel about that.

Bernard Haitink and his players, though predominantly accompanists after the interval, enjoyed soloists' limelight earlier on in Berlioz's overture, *Le Carneval Romain* (which opened this orchestra's inaugural concert in 1932) and in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* put across with gala boldness and brightness.