THE SOUNDING BOARD

Masterful Performance of Rubinstein Acclaimed

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Artur Rubinstein was never one to take the easiest way. He could have earned his fee and pleased his audience by playing only one concerto with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in The Music Center Thursday night and everyone would have been perfectly happy.

But being Rubinstein, a man who loves to play the piano more than anything else in the world and one for whom it seems to be no effort whatever, he offered his adoring public double measure by playing both Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto and Tschaikowsky's in B Flat Minor.

It was a task for a giant —but of course Mr. Rubinstein is a giant. And he did it without in any way making it seem like a stunt. He obviously wasn't trying to prove anything except that Beethoven and Tschaikowsky wrote beautiful music and that he wanted everyone to know just how beautiful it can sound.

Still Peerless

At the same time he did prove several things that are already well known—that he is a lord without peer in his realm, that he is an ageless phenomenon, and that in strength and stamina he can still beat all the young men at their own game.

And he still has surprises in store, even in a work like the Beethoven that he has played countless times. You never know in advance precisely how any particular passage is going to sound because he never relies on dull routine. He always has some fresh point of view — an unexpected accent, a different phrasing, a subtle nuance or slight variation of tempo — to cast new light on familiar material. The things that remain the same are those no one would want to change—the spirit and style of the music, the breadth and understanding of the conception, the variety and color of the incomparable Rubinstein tone.

He worked similar wonders with the Tschaikowsky Concerto. He gave it all the things without which it would be disappointing — the dash, the fire, the thunderous chords and octaves, the scintillating finger work. But he also brought to it an added dimension of poetry and sheer beauty that one had almost forgotten existed in a piece that has so often been murdered by the hammersmiths.

Standing Ovation

The audience naturally was stirred and gave the pianist a spontaneous standing ovation. Although he had already done enough work for two evenings he returned for an encore. Not expecting this development we missed it, but an informant tells us he announced it as Chopin's Grande Polonaise, and from the description we would guess that it was the Andante Spianato and Polonaise in E Flat.

Zubin Mehta and the orchestra had their only solo inning of the evening in a rousing performance of Mendelssohn's "Ruy Blas" Overture. They also gave the soloist an exemplary accompaniment in the Beethoven, but there were some uneasy moments in the Tschaikowsky when all hands did not see eye to eye about certain matters.