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Pianist In a Dazzling Show

By Robert Commanday

It was an inspiring evening at the Masonic Auditorium Tuesday for there was Artur Rubinstein playing as he has always played, only more so.

The wonder is not simply his age, 89, and the proof of endurance. Rubinstein is at a mountain top of complete assurance, long and uniquely won. As he experi ences this freedom, the music as he plays it, and not the venerable master we see, isthe affirmation of life.

He has performed the music of Tuesday's program probably for most of his 77 concert years: Chopin of course, Franck, Schumann, Liszt, and Beethoven's E flat Sonata, Op. 31, No. 3 as the opening work.

This view of Beethoven was beautifully deliberative, with conscious flexibilities that set out what was luminous and lovely, a soft freedom that di d not try to engage with surprise, but prepared each significant musical event, as if to say, "Now here it is, listen to this.

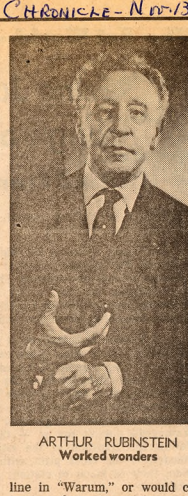
" The Scherzo, for exam ple, was no dance flurry (that happened in the sparkling Presto at the end).

It was a rhetoric of tempo contrasts, the fast episodes spaced between passages almost recitative-like in character.

Rubinstein understands time and worked wonders with it in Schumann's Fantasy Pieces, Op. 12, making of the eight pieces an eloquent unity, as if it were a sonata.

The work opened with a dreamy nocturnal feeling in "Des Abends, " closed with a philosophical repose ("Ende vom Lied"). Between, he created profound character studies.

Who else dares to repress so the accompaniment to the song line in "Warum," or would contrast a fast, strong staccato in "Fabel" with the scurrying light imagery in "Traumeswirren"?



ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN
Worked wonders

His Chopin, two large works, was predictably incomparable. For the familiar B- flat minor Scherzo, there was none of the heroic firebrand stuff. Instead there was a spacious and lustrous excursion. The D-flat major Nocturne, Op. 27, was ethereal and a dream.

Rubinstein has always been a trifle cavalier about hitting occasional false notes, but this time there were far fewer than usual. In fact, Franck's Prelude , Choral and Fugue was not only more poetic than one ever expects, but utterly lucid, transparent in all internal detail and voicing.

The virtuosity is there yet, laid out for all to hear with the lightest possible dazzlement in Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12, one of the less famil iar ones. There was only a flurry of power play at the end. That kind of showiness is beside the point.

The excitement created by Rubinstein now is of the quieter, internal kind, but not less real.

Naturally, the capacity crowd rose in repeated tributes at the end. Naturally, the master obliged with encores, effortlessly played: Chabrier's Scherzo-Waltz and Villa-Lobos' "Polichinello."