Piano Artistry of Artur Rubinstein Shines Anew

By PATTERSON GREENE

Masters of the difficulties of the keyboard appear at the rate of a dozen a month. Masters of its simplicities appear rarely in a generation.

This generalization, which may also sound like a pontification, was prompted by Artur Rubinstein's piano recital before a jammed Philharmonic Auditorium last night.

Serene Song

Simplicities on the program were, to be sure, relative; but when a master of every sort of pianistic "Sturm and Drang" turns to such a downtrodden item as the D Flat Nocturne of Chopin (I do not at the moment recall any other Chopin nocturne in that key, but for identification I report the opus number as 47) and when that item turns into serene song and tonal enchantment—then an artist is at work.

It was not, on the whole, an athletic recital. There were some breath taking escapades in Chopin's G Minor Ballade and in his B Flat Minor Scherzo, but even these held to the general mood of introspection without exhibitionism. I have never heard Rubinstein play more beautifully, and when Rubinstein outdoes himself there is little competition left on the track.

Revelation

The gracious C Major Sonata from Beethoven's Opus 2 was a masterpiece of musical sculpture in the older tradition, with warmth of tone and beauty of phrase shaping in the Adagio. The ebb and flow of sound in the Brahms Capriccio in E Flat Minor was a revelation, and Ravel's "Valses Nobles et Sentimentales" led a patrician but luxurious existence under Rubinstein's fingers.

Among the encores for the clamorous audience were the C Sharp Minor Waltz of Chopin (following, in its final episode, the late Josef Hofmann's tradition of emphasizing an inner melody) and Debussy's "Ondine," one of the loveliest of musical waterworks.