Rubinstein at 82 is still as supreme

By ERIC MASON

Artur Rubinstein. Royal Festival Hall.

RUBINSTEIN, now aged 82 but seemingly as energetic as ever, continues to delight and astonish in about equal measure.

Last night's recital was the first of five he is giving in Britain in 11 days, with an important concerto engagement sandwiched in between—a heavy schedule even by his phenomenal standards of activity.

He began with two Schubert impromptus, played with unaffected simplicity and limpid tone, and Brahms's Sonata in F minor, an early work of uneven interest, in which I most enjoyed his beautiful phrasing of the slow movement's closing bars and his vigorous plunge into the scherzo.

More Rubinstein's own special property were six doll pieces by Villa-Lobos, which he premiered half a century ago. In the last one, the crossed-hand work reached dizzying extremes of prestidigitation.

Finally, there was Chopin, of whose music Rubinstein is still the supreme interpreter. After the D flat Nocturne and Second Scherzo there were three Chopin encores, and the packed audience would have kept him playing all night if he could.