Rubinstein Heard in Chopin Program

Pianist Wins Acclaim at Symphony Hall

By Jules Wolffers

It scarcely seemed possible last year when Artur Rubinstein played so splendidly at Symphony Hall that he or any other person could do better. But yesterday afternoon in the same hall the impossible happened. The great pianist reached heights of performance so towering that again it seemed difficult to imagine anything superior.

It is a matter of record that he is approaching his mid-seventies. Yet in manner, bearing, physical powers, and attitude he is truly a young man. Like Verdi and Beethoven, each succeeding year adds only enrichment to his extraordinary talents.

Everything about yesterday's concert was right. Boston rather than New York was chosen as the starting point for Mr. Rubinstein's current American tour. Nor did the recital serve a commercial purpose only. Thanks to the extreme thoughtfulness of Aaron Richmond, who presented the event by arrangement with Sol Hurok, the concert benefited the Scholarship Fund of the Friends of Music of Boston University.

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How splendid that this magnificent and enobling experience served also to assist younger neophytes along the same road that the recitalist has traveled with such distinction. Every seat for the concert was sold, and the platform itself was crowded with 200 extra hearers.

Playing a Chopin program, Mr. Rubinstein made the old new and showed us that like himself the music of his compatriot can be only enhanced by time. The might and power alternating with the tenderness of Chopin's Scherzo in B minor again depicted the almost cosmic character of this "jest," as the composer named it.

Six Preludes from Op. 28 found the recitalist showing new aspects of these miniature masterpieces. The Fantasie in F minor, Op. 49, became an epic of grandeur under the pianist's imaginative guidance. The familiar Nocturne in F-sharp major and the unfamiliar Polonaise in F-sharp minor both received the same devoted attention to detail, timbre, and proportioned architecture.

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After intermission came the rocking Barcarolle, Op. 60, also beautifully done. But it was left for two little Mazurkas to provide the afternoon's highest peak of excellence. The very spirit of the Polish nation seemed to breathe through these works as Mr. Rubinstein ministered to the texture, the phrase, the line, and above all to the hidden meaning and love that the composer imparted to the idealized dance of his native country.

This was almost enough, and the concert might have ended there and then. But the pianist still piled on his gifts with overpowering renditions of six Etudes, together with the Andante Spianato and Grand Polonaise to bring the listed program to an end with an unparalleled exhibition of speed, control, and artistic comprehension.