Music review

Artur Rubinstein

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Friday has been proclaimed Artur Rubinstein Day in Minnesota. On that day, he will celebrate his 85th birthday. But festivities were held almost a week early at Northrop Auditorium, where Rubinstein gave a special concert Saturday night to a capacity audience of over 5,000.

After a gracefully rendered orchestral introduction, Von Weber's overture to "Oberon," Rubinstein played Mozart, Schumann and Chopin.

Then, amidst cheers, he was presented a birthday cake, topped with one large candle, by Gov. Wendell Anderson, representing the Minnesota Orchestral Association.

Rubinstein's career has spanned almost 7 decades; his contribution to music has been unique. Before the days of the mass record market, programmed to suit every musical whim, rare was the home in which 78s by Rubinstein, Horowitz and Heifetz could not be found.

Horowitz and Heifetz were aloof and aristocratic figures, complying with the wishes of the public, but more than seldom biting the hand that fed them; Rubinstein has always been businesslike in his presentations, but far more accessible. All three achieved the fame that is more commonly lavished on football players today.

Horowitz is semi-retired, and Heifetz is living quietly in Hollywood, but Rubinstein continues his love affair with the public. When we mob his concerts we are paying homage not just to the man, but to a more naive but probably saner musical past.

His concert Saturday night was a steady crescendo—from the Mozart Piano Concerto in D Minor, K. 466, to Robert Schumann's A Minor Piano Concerto to Rubinstein's beloved Chopin, the "Grande Polonaise."

Present as always were the percussive, bullet-like fingers, the romantic liberties, the enormous piano sound.

Mozart has never been his specialty. Such an approach often fights Mozart's probable intentions more than it abets them. The bravura of Schumann's romanticism is a better vehicle for Rubinstein's style of playing. The evenness and delicacy of his stroke in the second movement arrived like a long-remembered friend.

Yet it was not until the Chopin encore that we heard the "real" Rubinstein — the furious, the fire and brimstone and constant building of energy to a roaring climax.

Though Rubinstein's playing is not now and never has been beyond reproach or discussion, criticism is no longer to the point. In an age of scant and halting bows to our heritage, Rubinstein remains a solitary exception.