FOUR STANDING OVATIONS

Rubinstein Shows His Eternal Zest

By MAX WYMAN

How do you tell the wonder of listening to a recital given by Artur Rubinstein?

Tell it, maybe, in terms of the applause he gets? At the Queen Elizabeth Theatre on Sunday night he received not one, not two, not three but four separate standing ovations from a crowd that filled the 2,800-seat theatre and overflowed 100-strong onto the stage.

Or tell it, maybe, in terms of his stupendous pianistic talents?

They shone as beacon - bright as ever on Sunday night, with that special Rubinstein brilliance that time just can't dim.

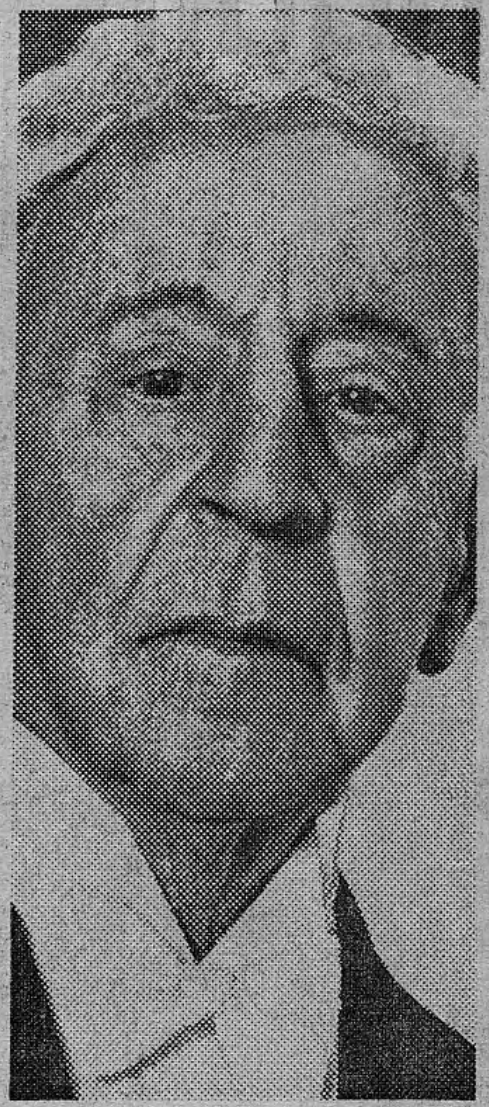
Artur Rubinstein plays the piano like most people breathe — instinctively, effortlessly, perfectly naturally.

ENCHANTING SOUNDS

The music wells and bubbles and flows in a stream of enchanting sound that makes the piano seem like an extension of his awesomely - talented hands.

However many different ways you may have heard the works performed, everything he plays becomes his own for the duration of his playing.

And despite the fact that he has been giving public recitals for 75 years, his playing has a beguiling freshness.



ARTUR RUBINSTEIN
. . . time cannot dim

At the age of 82, he has become the embodiment of eternal musical youth.

His entire program bore this out. Not once in the two-hour performance was there a suggestion of staleness or boredom in his appraoch.

On the contrary, his enlightened and persuasive viewpoints were expressed with constant clarity and charm.

OUTSTANDING ITEM

For me, the outstanding moment of an evening of highlights was the performance of Debussy's Ondine, which Rubinstein presented as the first of his three encore items.

This was sheer aural ravishment — a rare and very special demonstration of how Debussy should really sound, all fragile, gentle, evanescent beauty.

However, the centre-piece of the evening was the Brahms sonata No. 3, in F minor, and Rubinstein handled this in spacious, gracious style, bringing eloquent statement to the composition's changes of mood and tension.

His treatment of the andante, particularly, was touched with a poetic warmth and humanity that made it deeply moving.

Two Schubert inpromptus had the same leisurely, fully-defined grace and feeling, and his selections from the Chopin repertoire showed him still to have an enormous personal stylistic elegance.

PURE, GLISTENING

From Chopin, he played the B minor ballade, four etudes and the tender D-flat major berceuse — and he made their music sound like liquid diamond, pure and clear and glistening from unexpected facets.

The performance of Liszt's 12th rhapsody aroused — and earned — an instant standing ovation from the widly-enthusiastic audience, and Rubinstein went on to perform the Debussy, the dance from de Falla's Three-Cornered Hat, and Mendelssohn's Spinning Song, earning new standing ovations each time.