

Rubinstein: 'last of great pianists'

Associated Press

The death of pianist Arthur Rubinstein closes a chapter in the history of music and marks "the passing of a giant," according to the virtuoso's admirers.

"It is the last of the generation of the greats. He was an incredible man, a complete man," said Zubin Mehta, director of the New York Philharmonic, when told of his friend's death last night.

Rubinstein, who died in his sleep at age 95, was "an inspiration to three generations of pianists," said Emmanuel Ax, winner of the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Israel in 1974.

"He was, I guess with (Vladimir) Horowitz, the last of the grand old men of the instrument. I shouldn't say old, just the great pianists. It is a real close to a chapter. There is almost nobody

from that whole period left. He spanned so much.

"It is really personally sad for me, but it is also historically important, a great loss to a whole tradition.

"Just meeting Rubinstein was a thrill for any pianist. He was a real link to tradition in Western piano music. He was a friend of Rachmaninoff and he knew Debussy," said Ax, reached at home in New York.

The death marks "the passing of a giant," said Mehta.

"Oh my God," he said when reached in India. "I was with him just two weeks ago," he said finally, in a choked voice. "At this moment I have photos in my hand, and I am looking at pictures of us together."

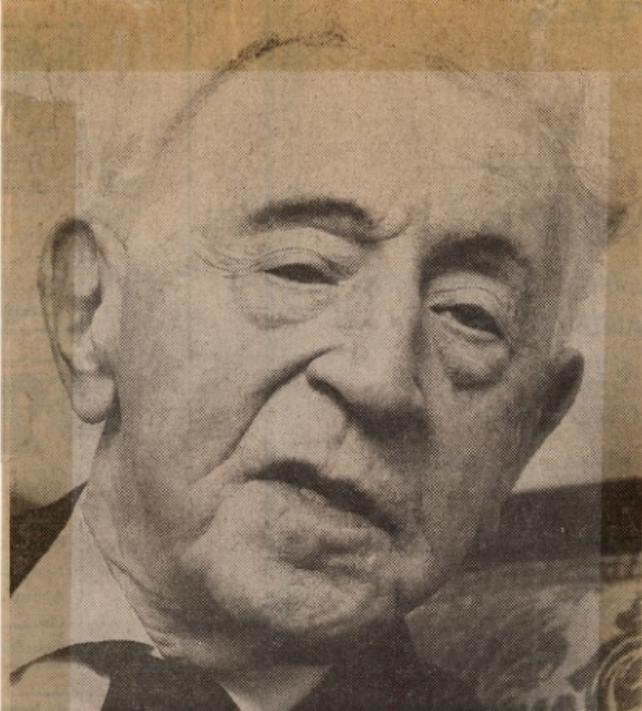
"I will always miss Arthur — my perfect playmate, whether playing music or being a joyous companion in the scherzo we call 'civilized living,'" said

conductor Leonard Bernstein, a long-time friend and colleague, when reached at home in New York.

"Nobody in our time, it is safe to say, communicated the same degree of sheer joy in playing," said Harold C. Schonberg, a former New York Times music critic. "He loved music, loved playing the piano and was eager to transmit that love."

Tom Shepard, head of the classical division of RCA Records, where Rubinstein recorded from the 1930s until 1977, when he made his last record, said yesterday in New York: "He was the greatest combination I know of a very individual interpreter and yet one who was always respectful and faithful to the composer at the same time. He was unique.

"On a more personal note, I would say everything he did he did with joy," Shepard said.



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Rubinstein dies at 95

Pianist Arthur Rubinstein, called the "last of the generation of the greats," died in his sleep yesterday in Geneva, Switzerland, at the age of 95, after months of failing health. Rubinstein, one of the last of the Romantic virtuosos, once summed up his life by saying, "Music is not a hobby, not even a passion with me: music is me." Stories/Page D9.



Death from a sudden infection has stilled the magic fingers of Arthur Rubinstein at the age of 95