SUN-PRESS 1-16-64

Rubinstein Makes Concerto 'Shorter' In Olympian Play

By BAIN MURRAY

Arthur Rubinstein, silver-haired dean of the piano world, returned to Severance Hall Monday to collaborate with George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra in two evenings of concerto concerts for the Orchestra's Pension Fund. Neither the pianist's venerable age, 78, nor the blizzard which had attempted to paralyze Cleveland had any effect on this eternally young virtuoso artist.

Rubinstein's playing, as always, was nothing short of Olympian, and he received a standing ovation from a cheering audience that did not want to go home. Concertos by Mozart and Beethoven had been interpreted with such magical perception that they both sounded shorter than usual.

Szell and the Orchestra provided Rubinstein with the finest of accompaniments throughout the evening. Mozart's Concerto No. 20 in D minor, a somber work, was given a strong, straight-forward presentation. Rubinstein's tone, as on previous occasions, was singing and rich, especially in the lower register where the harmonic progressions of the musical structure flowed with inevitable security. The Romanze had a simplicity and repose with a rich-sounding orchestral accompaniment that contrasted vividly with the dramatic, fast-paced Finale.

Glow of Nobility

Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto No. 5 in E Flat Major has always been a king among concertos. Monday night it glowed with mellow reflection and nobility. As with the Mozart, all impurities were sifted out. The vintage result of this uncanny collaboration between Szell and Rubinstein was like a beacon of light pouring down on the music itself. Personalities did not get in the way. Rhythm, phrasing and tempos seemed just right from beginning to end. The Adagio was beautifully phrased with pearl-like tones coming from Rubinstein's fingers. Szell, conducting without score, was extremely attentive to Rubenstein's every inflection, and to all orchestral details. The soloist and orchestra romped through the Rondo with an athletic vigor and control. This superb performance would have been a feat for a man half Rubinstein's age.

The program opened with Weber's "Oberon" Overture which brought harmonious playing from all sections of the orchestra and sustained melodies from the 'cellos, clarinet and violins. Although short, it is expertly planned with lyrical and dramatic elements that make it a little masterpiece.

Performs Phantasy

Leonard Rose, a virtuoso cellist and former first cellist of the Cleveland Orchestra (1939-43), introduced William Schuman's new Fantasy for Violoncello and Orchestra "A Song of Orpheus" on last Thursday's Symphony concert under George Szell's baton. The piece had a lyrical beginning, which was expressive. But as the Fantasy unfolded, the solo part seemed to have less and less to do with the orchestral accompaniment which was filled with jazzy, block-like chords in the brass. Although Rose gave the solo part a mellow tone, he could not keep it from sounding like one long recitative. Despite a smooth ending and some effective harmonies, Schuman's Fantasy did not quite come off.

The program closed with a brilliant performance of Richard Strauss's sunny, long-winded, thickly scored "Symphonia Domestica," which had little more to say in its 40 minutes than did Weber's magical "Oberon" Overture that served as the curtain-raiser.

Sun Press