SCENE and HEARD

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Thought you'd like to see this Dorothy

By ATRA BAER

AT 74, ARTUR RUBINSTEIN must loathe being called a "living legend." The phrase is one that somehow carries a connotation of past glories standing slightly faded in the light of the present.

Rubinstein is a working artist who produces. Neither his age nor his fame should prevent him from being evaluated as such.

Last May, Rubinstein displayed the candor which characterized his youthful years, and the self-criticism which has been a constant quality, as he told a European admirer: "I have never played Brahms better."

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FEW critics—professional or amateur—have ever questioned the strength of emotion and the depth of insight that are Rubinstein's. From time to time, quite a few have questioned his fingers. But perhaps while pouncing on a missed note — (how many things are more ego-gratifying than the prompt recognition of somebody else's mistakes?) — perhaps they missed a great thought.

There was a time in Rubinstein's career when his approach to the piano was rather cavalier. Were Rubinstein a jazz musician other musicians would have called it "hacking around" or "lazy." A "laziness" that sprang from believing the praise that implied this-man-can-do-no-wrong. It is something that has happened to many artists; artists in all fields. The great ones recognize it before it destroys them. And there is genius in the fact of that recognition.

Earlier this year, Rubinstein recorded the Tchaikovsky Concerto No. 1 with Erich Leinsdorf and the Boston Symphony. RCA Victor has just released the recording (LM/LSC 2681), and it is a revelation of genius.

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YOU just may have picked up rumors that Mr. Leinsdorf is not the "easiest" of conductors. If he is less than satisfied with the performance of a soloist, the soloist is not unaware.

This recording of the Tchaikovsky First is the third for Rubinstein—but the second for listeners.

"One recording was not issued because I played it too badly," he has admitted.

RCA Victor says that the decision not to release that particular recording was Rubinstein's alone. And that his decision might well have marked the resurgence in his art.

During a radio interview following the recording session in Boston, Mr. Leinsdorf commented:

"Isn't it true," Mr. Rubinstein, that the meaning of the concerto has often been lost. A very refreshing thing in recording it with you, if I may say so, was that you are fully convinced, and have convinced everybody in the orchestra, of the meaning of the work—what is majestic is majestic, what is scherzando is scherzando and the little waltz in the second movement is not a prestissimo where you can't hear the notes, but a waltz again. This I found so marvelously stimulating and refreshing — that the meaning of the work has been re-established."

"I try," answered Artur Rubinstein, "to re-establish the beautiful, beautiful piece it is. It is a piece of genius for the piano which has been, over the years, used too much as a war horse for pianists who are only set on playing it quickly, pulling off the octaves at tremendous pace. Showing off their strength and so on. That is not making music. This is what I have not tried to do."

"Well," countered Mr. Leinsdorf, "I think you know that this is a completely mutual admiration society."

A society with worldwide membership.