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Too much Rubenstein

MY MANY YEARS by Arthur Rubinstein. Knopf. $16.95.

At the age of 83, one expects a man to be chatty, but Arthur Rubinstein is carrying things too far. He recently issued the second (and, hopefully, final) part of his autobiography. The noted concert pianist first came up with "My Young Years," which took his life to the age of 29. The new work is called "My Many Years" and brings the story through the next 64 years.

In the second volume, Rubinstein admits to the employment of a collaborator, which is more than evident in the writing. It is really very hard to believe that Rubinstein, or any other human being, can go back over eight decades and remember in precise detail dozens and dozens of conversations carried on in various languages. I rather suspect that such remembrances are more fiction than fact, even if they reflect some measure of actuality.

Rubinstein continues the main thrust of his first volume by boasting of his many amours, often at the expense of people who befriended and helped him. He is also one of the great name-droppers of our time. There is just too much about too little to make this book of significance or of historic value. It is not performers who make history, but cretors.

Both Rubinstein books have been given adulatory reception in some quarters. That is, I must conclude, more tribute to Rubinstein's age — and perhaps his personality — than to the impact of his memoirs. It would have been far preferable for the two volumes to have been condensed into one, dropping some of the details of Rubinstein's sex life and a few of the names which pass through simply to impress the common man.

Otto Dekom

Otto Dekom is the News-Journal music critic.