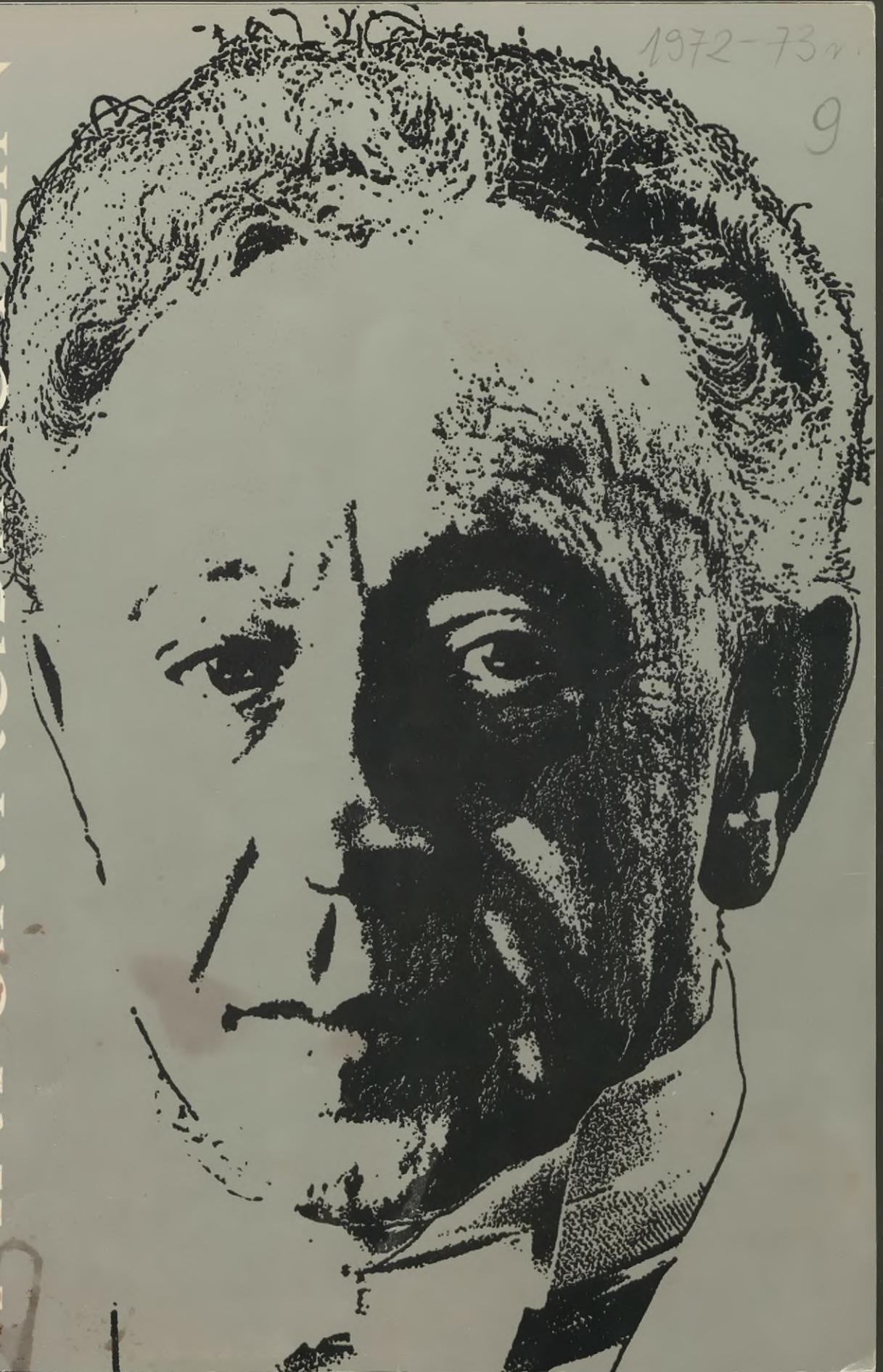


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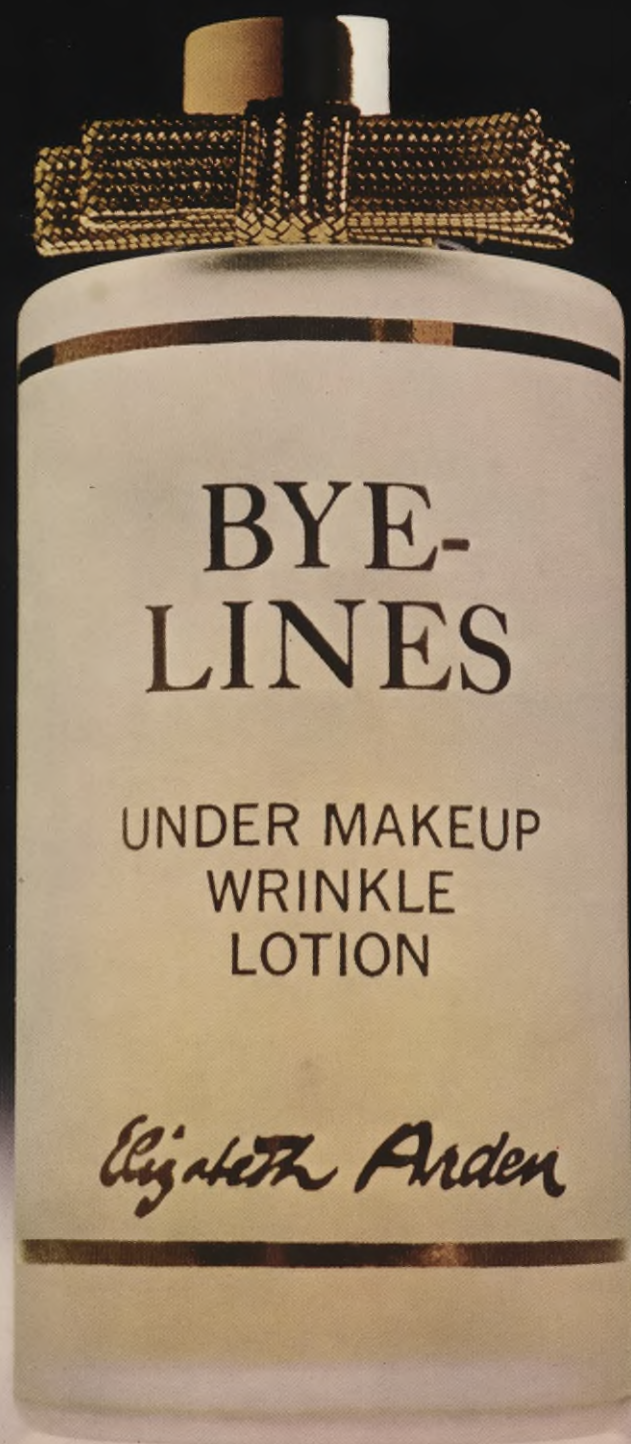
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ARTUR RUBINSTEIN

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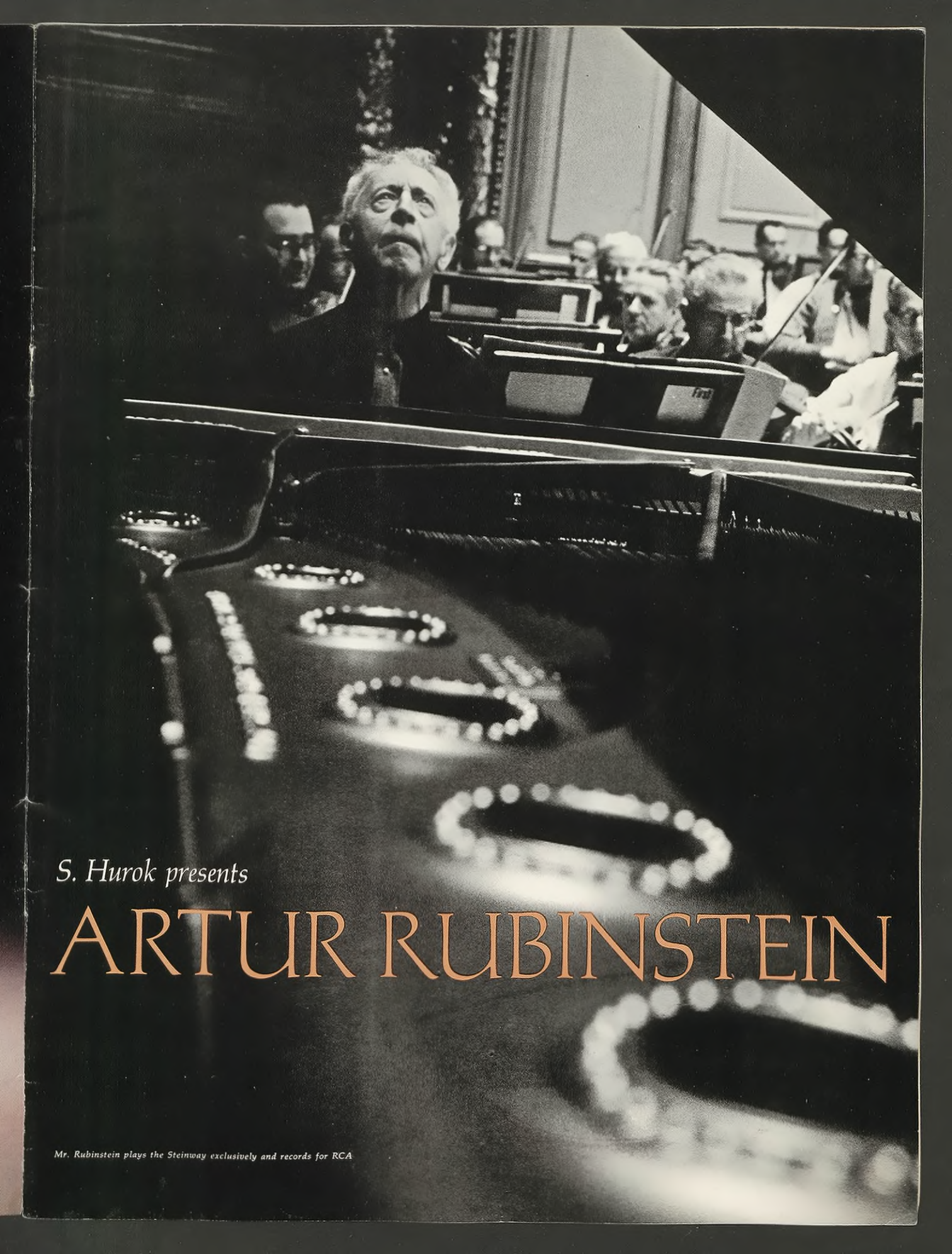
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# ARTUR RUBINSTEIN

*Mr. Rubinstein plays the Steinway exclusively and records for RCA*

*Interviewer:* During all my years as musicologist and critic, I have heard you in concert and on records hundreds of times, but many details of your life—particularly your early years—are still something of a mystery. Please tell how you got started at the piano.

*Rubinstein:* Well, I was the seventh child in the family. The oldest children were already sixteen, eighteen, and nineteen when I was born. They had all had piano lessons, for the purposes of playing for dancing or accompanying for singing. You know they had no gramophones in those times and no radios—nothing of that kind. All the womenfolk were taught a little piano. Auntie played for dancing for the young people. Otherwise you had to hire an orchestra. So I watched my sisters' lessons. They couldn't take me out of that room. When they had their lessons, I was constantly there—shrieking, yelling if they tried to get me out of that room. And, of course, right away I tried to imitate them. I put my fingers on the piano, and instead of slapping the keys, you know, banging on them, as little children usually do, I tried to find the notes, and found them! And more and more of them. Then I started to play their pieces, four hands, with them when I was three, and my only pride was that I knew when to stop playing when there was a page to be turned, even though I couldn't read the music.

*Interviewer:* All by ear.

*Rubinstein:* All by memory or knowing, yes. I could play anything by the time I was four.

*Interviewer:* I'm surprised that your fingers could have reached the chords.

*Rubinstein:* It made me quite famous all over the city. People talked about it.

*Interviewer:* Weren't your parents bewildered? Puzzled

about what to do with such a talent?

*Rubinstein:* My parents were completely unmusical, and people around the house didn't know much about what talent meant and how it showed but my uncle dared to write a long letter to the violinist Joachim, a very, very great personality in music. Very famous! He was the most revered musician in the world at that time. He was a best friend of Brahms and Schumann.

My uncle explained my case; told him exactly how I played, and so on. Being a very noble personality, Joachim wrote back and gave very good advice to my parents.

He said that one shouldn't teach me things, because it wouldn't be good for me to behave like a little monkey, you know, imitating people and so on. But to make me listen to good singing, if possible, to good kinds of music. He finished his letter, fortunately for me, by saying that if it were possible for my parents to take me to Berlin and bring me to him, he would be very glad to see for himself.

*Interviewer:* Do you still have that first letter from Joachim?

*Rubinstein:* No, my uncle died in a concentration camp in the war, and the letter and all his possessions were destroyed. All the rest of my family died with him. I have only three nieces and nephews alive by miracle. One is in Israel.

*Interviewer:* It must have been difficult for your parents to follow Joachim's advice, since there were no recordings, no radios, in those days.

*Rubinstein:* And in my little town, Lodz, very few concerts. We had a garden where an orchestra played sometimes, though. I remember they took me to see *Aida*, but I was so terrified by the trombones that they had to take me out, crying. I was terrified of trombones for quite a long

time. Every time I saw a trombone, I cried.

*Interviewer:* And Berlin—did you get to visit Joachim?

*Rubinstein:* Yes, not long after. I was a baby of four. My oldest sister was going to be married, so my mother took her to Berlin to buy the trousseau, and they took me along. My father still had some money then. We weren't rich, but not poor. We had a house, and so on.

*Interviewer:* What did you play for the great Joachim, do you remember?

*Rubinstein:* I played a little Mendelssohn piece and a Mozart rondo. Joachim made my mother and my sister leave the room, because he was afraid that they had taught me some tricks. Then he sang to me—with his bass voice—a melody from Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, and said to me, "Could you play that on the piano?"

*Interviewer:* Had you ever heard that before?

*Rubinstein:* No, never. So I played the melody with one finger. Just the melody. He said, "That's right, yes, yes, but could you play that with an accompaniment?" I don't remember exactly what I then played, but it appeared that I played it with the right accompaniment, as Schubert had written it. That, of course, absolutely made Joachim believe in me forever. He said to my mother, "Oh, he will never be anything but a musician!" And then he said he hoped that I might also be a violinist. "Why don't you teach him the violin?" he asked my mother. "I'd love it!"

Well, my father bought a little violin for me. And I hated that instrument so terribly that I broke it.

*Interviewer:* Why did you hate the violin?

*Rubinstein:* Because I was a polyphonist, you see. I wanted *all* the music; I wanted chords, harmony, I wanted modulation; I wanted to hear it all. And then, you know, a fiddle

is terrible if it's not played divinely. Have you ever heard a beginner on the fiddle?

*Interviewer:* Yes, indeed I have.

*Rubinstein:* Well, you must admit that it is better to hear a beginner on the piano. In any case, I started my piano lessons at five, with an old lady, who declared, after about four months, that she couldn't teach me anything more. So then my parents sent me all alone to friends in Warsaw, and there they left me in the hands of a very old professor of the conservatory. He was so old that the minute I started to play my lessons, he went to sleep. He only woke up when I finished and would say, "Play again" It was absolutely no good.

And I was very hurt by his son, who became later a famous composer in Poland. He's dead now, but his music is still being played. At that time, he was about thirteen years old, and I was six. Every now and then, the lady whose apartment I stayed in gave me an envelope to give to the professor. It was money. But I didn't know this until later on. One day I went to my lesson, climbed up the three staircases there, and the boy opened the door. Boys in Poland were very polite. They called each other "cavalier" and talked in the third person. We insulted each other, but always in the third person. "Will the cavalier receive a slap if he doesn't give me back—" you know. The boy opened the door a little bit and asked, "The cavalier has the money?" I didn't know what he was talking about. Had he said, "Have you an envelope," or something—but no. Then he slammed the door. I cried right there on the staircase I was so offended. I never forgave him. I never played a note of his music. I told him so later on. So that was that.

But there was a very good professor back in Lodz, who taught me quite well, I must say, for about a year or so. Then my father lost all his money. That was a very bad period for the whole family. We were dispersed, you know. We lived in different places and so on—with an aunt and then my sisters. It was not good at all. Finally, my mother took me to Berlin for studying and finding people to support me. It was sadder and more difficult.

*Interviewer:* What were you then, about seven or eight?

*Rubinstein:* No, then I was already ten. I was a long time without any lessons at all. Mother took me to different professors. They heard me play with great interest, they said that I was a great talent, but they wanted big money for lessons. And that my mother couldn't afford. So finally, in despair, she took me back to Joachim. She was ashamed to, because I had become a pianist, not a violinist. She thought he'd say, "Well, I'm not interested in a pianist. I'm a violin teacher." But she took me to him. He was a little disappointed at finding out that I was a pianist, but never lost his first interest. When Mother mentioned that my father was not able to support me in Berlin, he said right away he could find somebody to help me. He found three Jewish bankers in Berlin, one of them Mendelssohn's nephew. And for seven years those three rich men, and Joachim himself, paid for my livelihood and my education. That was very extraordinary.

*Interviewer:* Your mother was certainly a brave, persistent woman.

*Rubinstein:* Mother was very kindly, very fine, and dedicated as a mother, in the old matriarchal style. She lived en-

tirely for her family, even those only remotely related to us. She was always helping when there was illness.

*Interviewer:* Was she one of the most influential women in your life?

*Rubinstein:* No. She was not musical at all. The artistic contact was missing completely. Mother's was simply the primitive family language, the love and devotion of the family, the concern for protecting the family. Maybe she gave me that. But she did not influence me in any other way.

*Interviewer:* So many children hate to take music lessons. Can you understand this?

*Rubinstein:* Oh, yes, I was one of them. You see, music lessons mean always this horrible dictatorial attitude of the professors. They slap four fingers and *aarh*; they shout at you: "Can't you learn that? You must practice scales!" I mean, it is the same kind of thing children dislike from parents. They are all the time pushed around: "You must do this. Sit straight. You must go now. Brush your teeth again, and now again brush your teeth." I hated to be pushed and ordered to my piano. I'll tell you my story about how I studied with closed doors, with cherries and chocolates.

*Interviewer:* Please do.

*Rubinstein:* Well, it was when I was living with a private family in Berlin. They were not musical. I had my orders to do two hours practicing. I closed my doors with a key—not to be disturbed. I would put a novel of Zola, or some other writer I was not allowed to read, on the music stand in front of me. Then I had some chocolates to my right and cherries to my left, and I played with my left hand, doodle, doodle, doodle; then I did diddle, diddle, diddle, and chocolates, yum, yum. And I was reading my book. Then they would say, "Today you really studied with one hand all the time." Oh, yes. (*With mock gravity.*)

*Interviewer:* So you managed to get quite a lot of reading done while practicing.

*Rubinstein:* I adore books. When people ask me, "Aren't you mainly in love with music?" I say, "No," because music is so much in me that I am identified with it. It's exactly as if somebody asked me, "Do you like to look at things with your eyes?"

*Interviewer:* Yes, I suppose music is like your breath and your blood.

*Rubinstein:* Yes, of course I look, of course I hear, of course I touch. But books—that's already a distance. I could say, "No, I am not particularly interested in books." But I have a terrific passion for reading, and they are my best friends, books—really. I lost two of my best friends. Since then I have only *good* friends. Dear friends, but not best friends. My friends were always, always writers. Musicians, when we get together, always talk shop! "Who is the best manager?" "What hotel do you stay in when you go to Brussels?" "Do you know those people who have concerts there?" and so on. I am not interested in that. I'm *doing* it.

*Interviewer:* You have such vitality, such zest for living. How do you account for it?

*Rubinstein:* I don't think that there is any possibility of accounting for it. It's very funny. I was at a luncheon in Washington given by the National Press Club. Three hundred newspapermen there in all. And they made me speak.



*"Since we bring the children into the world without having them sign any contracts, we must admit that their lives belong to themselves entirely. All we can do is help them. . . . The child's chance of a happy childhood and youth must come first."*





I told them a little bit about my career, about the meaning of being a virtuoso, a performer, and so on. And they asked me if I would consider running for office, as Paderewski did. He was the Prime Minister of Poland for a little while. So I had a lovely story to answer them. I said Paderewski came to Versailles for the Peace Conference as Polish Premier. He was introduced to Clemenceau, the French Premier, and Clemenceau said, "Aren't you the famous Paderewski?" "Yes." "The musician, the pianist?" "Yes." "And you are now the Premier of Poland?" "Yes." "What a downfall!"

*Interviewer:* That's charming.

*Rubinstein:* Then they asked me what you just asked me now. They asked me, "What is your formula for your vitality?" I said, "If I had it, I would sell it!"

*Interviewer:* You don't take any exercise?

*Rubinstein:* No.

*Interviewer:* Or vitamin pills?

*Rubinstein:* No. Well, vitamin pills yes, sometimes. I don't believe in them at all, but the doctor says, "Why don't you take number three." It's ridiculous. I'll tell you about vitamin pills. I gave three years ago—or four years, I don't remember now—those ten concerts in New York for charities. Do you remember that?

*Interviewer:* Yes, I do remember.

*Rubinstein:* And, of course, that was a terrific undertaking. Ten different programs. So a doctor—a friend of mine, really—not curing me, just talking to me, said, "Oh, I'll give you a little pill, marvelous, to take before the concert. You'll get a feeling of resistance. Very good for you," and so on. And I was determined to take it, you see. So before the first concert, there it was. And I never played with such a feverish vitality, and I was simply jumping out of myself, and I thought: Well, this is marvelous. This pill is doing it. I will always take that pill. And there was a big party, and I was very happy until four in the morning. I wouldn't go home to sleep. I couldn't have slept. But finally we went home. And what did I see? The pill was lying on the table with a glass of water. I had forgotten to take it.

*Interviewer:* This is what they call the influence of the pill!

*Rubinstein:* Of course! Imagination is a great, great thing. I was all the time being absolutely sure that the pill was wonderful.

*Interviewer:* Which of your four children do you think takes

after you most?

*Rubinstein:* My younger son is very much like me. He gets at once the knack of things. He's interested in everything. Shows talent. It's unaccountable. One has it or not.

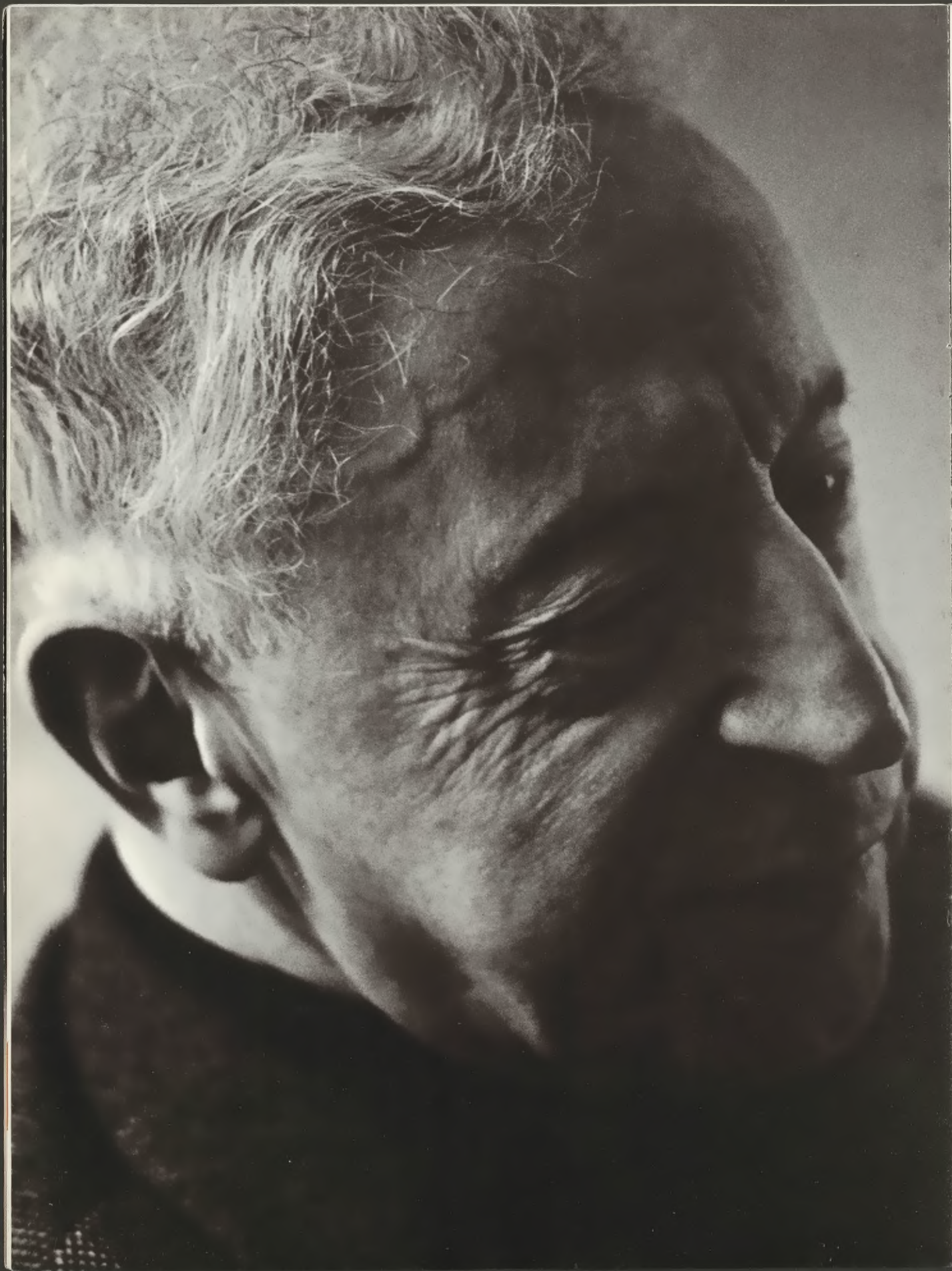
*Interviewer:* And what about your daughters?

*Rubinstein:* I always dreamed of having a daughter—even when I was a boy of eighteen. It was because I loved women so much. I suffered from the realization that even in the most passionate affair, no matter how much you loved a woman, she was still a stranger. If she falls in love with someone else, she can forget you and your face in no time. On the other hand, a daughter might even hate you, but she still is and will be your flesh and blood and your daughter. She cannot help but belong to you.

The thought of a son frightened me always. I was afraid he would be apt to criticize his father and assert his own personality. This is especially dangerous in the relationship of an artist with his son. The artist, you see, tends to remain rather young, not to say childish, sometimes even up to the son's own old age. This artistic trait seems often ridiculous to a serious-minded son, but never to a daughter. And when a son is not artistic-minded himself, he finds his father slightly preposterous. Daughters usually like that in a father. The son is more enchanted by a father who is an executive in a bank, or a great college professor, or a politician of importance. Daughters are a little frightened of all that. Artists generally find that their daughters are their best friends. Maybe it's their intuition that makes them more understanding.

*Interviewer:* Were you strict with your children?

*Rubinstein:* I have always had a deep respect for human life. Since we bring the children into the world without having them sign any contracts, we must admit that their lives belong to themselves entirely. All we can do is help them. When I married my wife, I exacted two things of her that I strongly believe in. One was that if we had children, we should never present a divided front. Even if we wanted to murder each other, we must seem completely united before them. The child's chance of a happy childhood and youth must come first. As for the second, I told her, "Look here, you never take me for granted, and I will never take you for granted." This business of "Darling, some friends have arrived from out of town. Would you mind if I joined them at dinner?" just does not exist with us. There has been



one exception. For three months six years ago, my wife was in bed with hepatitis. Once or twice she had to force me to go to see a movie by myself.

*Interviewer:* Do you think that all women are necessarily good mothers?

*Rubinstein:* From a completely physical, animal way, I presume they are—at least, most of them are. The maternal instinct, inherited from animals and fantastically developed, is a great asset and protection for humanity. But there are also mothers who, like pigs, eat up their small ones.

*Interviewer:* Have you known any truly destructive women? Destructive to children? To men?

*Rubinstein:* This is a very difficult question to answer, because it implies that there is a weakness of character in men which allows them to be vulnerable to “destructive women.” I can modestly say that I can think of no woman in my life who could create any situation where I might feel that she could hurt or destroy me or be a danger of any kind to me. I just am not made that way. I have known some malicious and evil women, but for me it was only one of many experiences in my life, which interested me very much at the time but had absolutely no influence. I remember when it came to a breakup with one of them, all I desired was to go to the finest restaurant in town and have the greatest meal of my life.

*Interviewer:* Why did you come so late to marriage?

*Rubinstein:* I suppose because I believed in the meaning of marriage, the way my Jewish ancestors believed. It meant the ability to offer one's wife absolute protection, a decent life. It meant making her proud of her husband's work and achievement. I wasn't satisfied with my work as a pianist for many years, frankly. I had been very lazy as a young man. Although music was a sacred thing to me, a religion, which filled my life completely, playing the piano did not seem so important. I hadn't much esteem for pianists as such. In those days, they played lots of wrong notes, often presenting an unfinished business to the public. Their example encouraged me to neglect the strictly technical work, I got away with it in Slavic countries and in Latin countries, like Italy. They adored it. They said my wrong notes were better than the right notes of others. But in America and England and Germany and Scandinavia, they were critical of my playing. They knew what was missing, and they said so.

*Interviewer:* But, to get back to the original question, about your late marriage—

*Rubinstein:* I'm coming to that. You see, for me as a pianist everything changed when I discovered my wife. She was the daughter of a great musician, Emil Mlynarski. Incidentally, it was he who conducted the orchestra at my first appearance in Warsaw when I was a boy of thirteen. That was ten years before my wife was born! Years later, when she agreed to marry me I suddenly realized I owed it to her to do something better with my talent—to start playing the piano the way it should be played. It was only then that I learned how to go about practicing.

*Interviewer:* Really? You're not exaggerating?

*Rubinstein:* No, no, not at all. I couldn't honestly say about any particular piece of music up to my marriage that I knew it absolutely well. Not one single piece. Well,

my wife made me do it, and without forcing me. I just felt it deep inside me. And she didn't know she was doing it. I simply wouldn't have her being shamed by somebody who might tell her, “Oh, if only your husband had worked at the piano more seriously, he might be one of the greatest.”

*Interviewer:* And so you began practicing the piano with the vigor of a young student.

*Rubinstein:* I had a little upright piano in an old stable that was turned into a garage. And that was where I started to practice in earnest, sometimes for four or five hours, always at night, with the light of a single candle. I began my fight to change the minds of the music critics. Finally, after quite a few years, I was lucky enough to make them forget the frivolous performances they had rightly scolded me for. I had become a pianist.

*Interviewer:* It has often been said that great musicians are equally great lovers. Do you agree?

*Rubinstein:* A dangerous generalization! Whatever a man says or writes about himself as a lover must be taken with great skepticism. A man is always apt to lie about his amatory achievements. His arithmetic is at least seventy-five percent wishful thinking. This is a fact.

Now, what can I, Artur Rubinstein, a pianist, say about the art of love that has not been said? At the heart of all the arts, there is the factor of love, sex, beauty, all bound in one. When you interpret music, it is with you all the time. The libido is never idle in music. Mathematicians—politicians—their work doesn't inspire thoughts of romance. Music does. And the responsive musician is always aware of that powerful impulse of lovemaking, and I actually find myself in that emotional state. So long as he makes music, a musician never stops making love or thinking about it. As to the physical and nervous involvement in the act of love itself, I think this is so entirely individual a matter that it is not even worth discussing. It is purely physiological. Except where this is a major impediment, I see no reason it should ever stop.

*Interviewer:* How so you feel about all this new sexual freedom?

*Rubinstein:* There is more naturalness and less strain today, but I'm not sure that it is better. Certain essentials have changed a great deal. For instance, the freedom of dressing nowadays. I well remember how the movement of a lady's long skirt revealing a tiny bit of her ankle put us young men into trances of excitement. Today, when women walk around night and day in minidresses, my eye never lingers. I am so accustomed to know exactly how every woman is built and how she looks in the nude that I don't need to exert myself to imagine it with great care. In my youth, the body of a woman was her most carefully guarded secret. No man today has to await the final undressing to discover how a woman is built. All he has to do is to go to the nearest beach and find it all laid out for him.

Lovemaking has become less of a moral strain and more of a normal function, like eating, sleeping, and the other necessities. Girls today are frightfully practical. I suppose the pill has removed some of the strain, too. Much has been gained by the whole new attitude, but it has taken a lot of the romance out of lovemaking.

*Interviewer:* Are you a religious person? (concluded on next page)

*Rubinstein:* My family on both sides were Jewish. My wife is a Catholic.

What is my own belief? I believe that everything is a miracle or nothing. I would never give the title of miracle to unforeseen things. If the angel Gabriel appeared at lunchtime to a family, do you know what would happen? The older people would fall on the floor with amazement because of the miracle, while the little children would take him for a baby-sitter and start playing with him. Children don't see any difference between the ordinary and the miraculous. We take for miracles only those things we are not accustomed to. I am not surprised at anything. Sky and rain and a flower and man and woman. All these are miracles. Why are they there? If any of these things, which we take so much for granted, were not there and they were suddenly to appear for the first time, they would then be miracles in the eyes of most people.

*Interviewer:* When you think of the soul, what thoughts come to you?

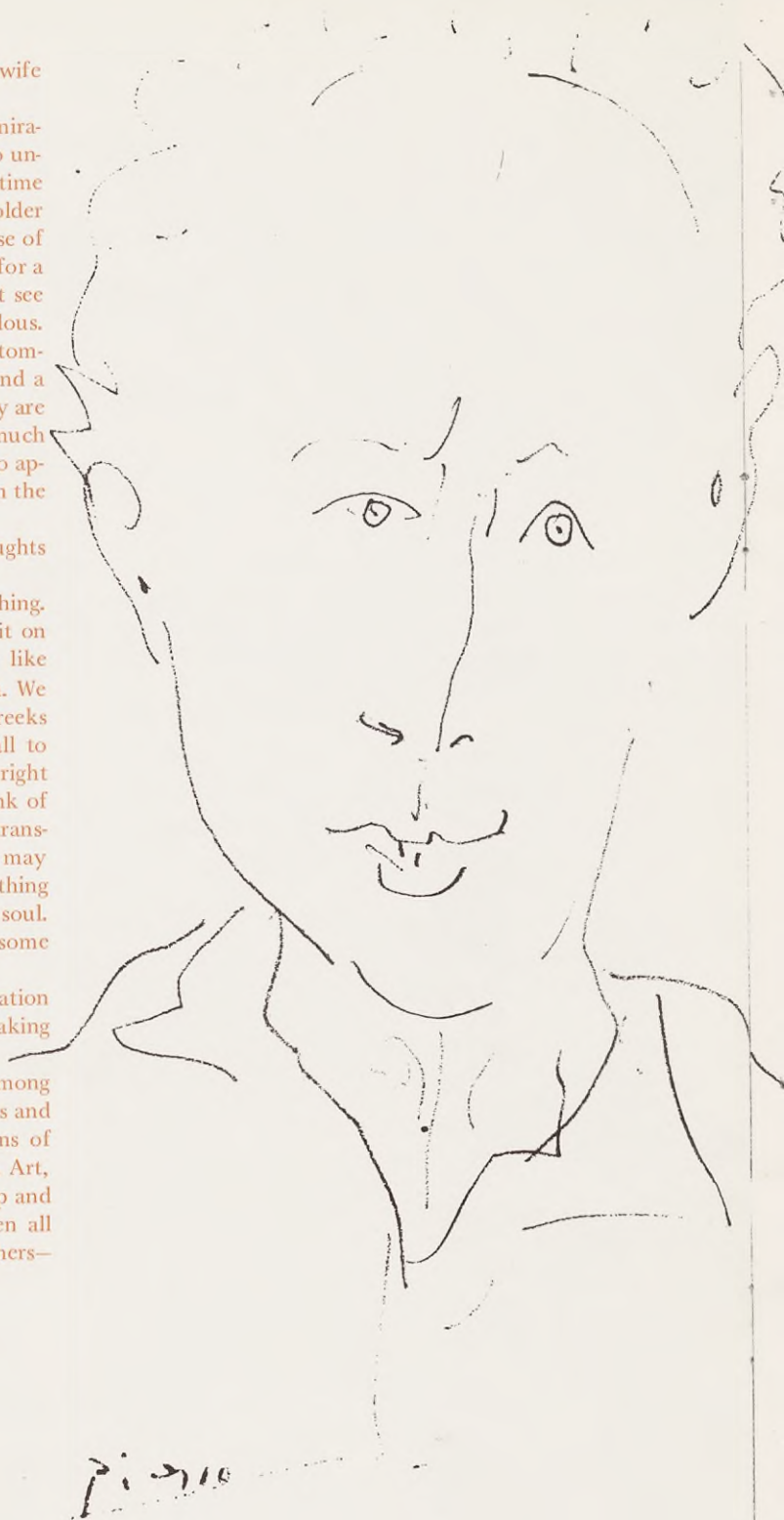
*Rubinstein:* The soul is the motor which runs everything. We are each a parcel of that motor. Maybe we turn it on like electricity. We have been toying with things like thought transmission, spiritism, hypnotism, et cetera. We have played at it like a game the way the ancient Greeks played with signs of electricity. They imputed it all to their gods. We know now that the Greeks were on the right track. Who knows what the next generation will think of us for ridiculing a thing like the silent and distant transference of thought from one person to another? We may be toying with things which really emanate from something still beyond our reach. That something we might call soul. I believe there are people who dominate others by some sort of emanation, which we still cannot trace. . .

*Interviewer:* Have you any hope that the next generation will find better ways to communicate—ways of breaking down the barriers to peace among men?

*Rubinstein:* The only hope to bring some harmony among the nations is through art. Art never wakens suspicions and afterthoughts, thus leading to treachery, to violations of the spoken and printed word. Diplomacy has failed us. Art, particularly music, is the universal language of kinship and shared emotion; it creates love and respect between all creeds, colors, systems. In its image, all men are brothers—and equal.

10

*Sketch of Artur Rubinstein by his long-time friend, Picasso.*



“THE DIRECTNESS OF HIS MUSICAL APPROACH SOUNDS SO

Artur Rubinstein's career has mounted and mounted to the point where many consider him the greatest living all-around pianist: an artist at home with Beethoven, a Chopin player in the great tradition, a specialist in Spanish and impressionist music. He is an extrovert who loves people, loves life and loves to play the piano. All this comes out in his interpretations. And none but an artist in love with the concert platform would push himself so hard. Rubinstein was over seventy years old when he gave a marathon of ten Carnegie Hall recitals in one season. He gave the series because in 1961 he was entering what he considered his twenty-fifth American anniversary. It was on November 21, 1937, that he made his grand re-entry into New York. Up to then he had never been a headliner in America, though he had played here off and on since 1906. He himself has explained the relative failure of his early tours. "When I was young," he once told an interviewer, "I was lazy. I had talent but there were many things in life more important than practicing. Good food, good cigars, great wines, women. . . . When I played in the Latin countries—Spain, France, Italy—they loved me because of my temperament. When I played in Russia there was no trouble because my namesake Anton Rubinstein, no relation, had conditioned the audiences there to wrong notes. But when I played in England or America they felt that because they paid their money they were entitled to hear all the notes. I dropped many notes in those days, maybe thirty per cent, and they felt they were being cheated." In those years Rubinstein was unperturbed. "To hell with the German pianists and their exact fingers. Temperament! I was spoiled and I admit it. But as I have never played in Germany since 1914 I have at least escaped their criticism."

A natural pianist with the hand of a natural pianist (Broad palms, spatulate fingers, a little finger almost as long as his middle one, a mighty stretch that can take in a twelfth: C to G), Rubinstein found that he did not have to work too hard. He memorized almost instantly and practiced very little. When he had to give a recital he would give the music one quick look. "I couldn't sit eight, ten hours a day at the piano. I lived for every second. Take Godowsky. I was awed. It would take me five hundred years to get that kind of mechanism. But what did it get him? He was an unhappy, compulsive man, miserable away from the keyboard. Did he enjoy life? It made me think a bit."

But in the early 1930s Rubinstein went through a period of soul-searching. "Was it to be said of me that I *could* have been a great pianist? Was this the kind of legacy to leave to my wife and children? He started working intensively. He also started his great series of recordings, a series that not only was eventually to take in Chopin virtually entire, but large segments of Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms and the impressionists; chamber music from Beethoven to Fauré; and substantially the entire active romantic concerto literature. When he did return to America in 1935 it was as the giant he could have been from the beginning. To overflowing temperament was added discipline. Color, technique and a fine musical mind he always had.

He is, and always has been, the romantic pianist *par excellence*—but the modern kind of romantic pianist. Bach and Mozart play relatively little part in his repertoire, though in recent years he has turned more and more to the Mozart piano concertos. Of Beethoven, his recitals take in the sonatas through Op. 81a. From there the whole world of piano music seems to be at his disposal. And he treats that world like a *grand seigneur*. More than any contemporary pianist's, Rubinstein's playing reflects a culture, and exuberance, a sheer healthy masculinity and athleticism, that must make him the despair of all competition. Romantic as it is, it is entirely unmannered, and almost always true to the text. And it is playing expressed in a gorgeous tone, with bigness, sanity, directness and emotional clarity.

Considering the generation in which Rubinstein was reared, his respect for the text and his direct rhythm are all the more a miracle. When he was born the pupils of Liszt and Leschetitzky had taken over, and the playing he heard in his formative years had a great deal of exaggeration and distortion. Liberty was the order of the day, in the name of "expression" It was a wonderful age of piano playing, but not an age that would be accepted today. Somehow Rubinstein avoided the prevailing anarchy. He developed into a romantic pianist who consistently avoided the meretricious elements of romanticism and retained all that was good. He never breaks a line or bends a rhythm; he has sentiment without sentimentality, brilliance without nonsensical virtuosity; logic without pedantry; tension without neurosis. And he has musical curiosity, though in the last part of his career he has left the new music to the younger men. As a youth in Paris he flung himself into the modern school.

In 1904 he was playing Debussy and being hissed for his trouble. Throughout the next two decades he interested himself in composers like Prokofieff, Ravel, Stravinsky, Dukas, Villa-Lobos and others, to his great artistic satisfaction and to the distress of his finances.

The directness of his musical approach sounds so inevitable that one wonders why most pianists cannot duplicate it. But style is, after all, the man. Rubinstein as a man is polished, witty, highly intelligent, probably emotionally uncluttered. As the man, so his music. His Chopin playing—and he is the greatest living Chopinist—unfolds with suavety, poetry and aristocracy, and above all, with ardor. It is all the more poetic because Rubinstein never feels the need to prove something to himself and his audiences, or to counterfeit an emotion he does not feel. In his Chopin are none of the artificialities, stresses, underlinings, frigidity or hysteria that make so much contemporary Chopin playing unsettling.

It is interesting to note that in his early years Rubinstein came under the same kind of attack as did Hofmann for his Chopin playing. Both artists threw over the romantic excesses and adopted toward Chopin a much more direct approach. In 1960, on the occasion of the Chopin sesquicentennial, Rubinstein wrote an article for *The New York Times* about his development as a Chopin player:

... I heard quite a bit of Chopin during my childhood in Poland—mazurkas, polonaises, nocturnes, the whole be-

loved repertoire. All of it was played interminably, and most of it badly.

Why badly?

In those days both musicians and the public believed in the Chopin myth, as do many people today. That myth was a destructive one.

Chopin, the man, was seen as weak and ineffectual; Chopin the artist as an irrepressible romantic—effeminate if appealing, dipping his pen in moonlight to compose nocturnes for sentimental young women.

Pianists whose heads were filled with such nonsense had to play Chopin badly. . .

At my next recital (about 1902) I included Chopin and I presented him nobly, I hoped, without sentimentality (sentiment, Yes! ), without affection, without the swan dive into the keyboard with which pianists customarily alerted the audience to the fact that they were listening to the music of Chopin.

What was the result of what I considered conscientious work? My interpretations were adjudged “dry.” The audience and critics, it turned out, preferred the “good old Chopin” they knew from before—the mythical Chopin.

By the time I came to America four years later to make my New York debut, I felt I was a dedicated, deep-minded, well-educated musician. Technically, however, I did not feel well equipped. What happened? The critics said that technically I was “impeccable”—but lacking in depth! And also, as had happened in Europe, I was chastened for my “severe” interpretations of Chopin.

Stubbornly I continued programing Chopin in my concerts. And stubbornly the critics continued to criticize. Oh, yes, it was admitted subsequently, I could play Spanish music, and I certainly could play Ravel and Debussy. But Chopin? No.

Only very much later was the validity of my interpretation granted. Only then was I permitted to have my Chopin and to give him to audiences. . .

Rubinstein continues presenting his kind of Chopin (and many other composers) to audiences while well along in his seventies. What ever his chronological age, his playing has remained that of a young man in love with music. He never developed into the philosopher of the keyboard. As Dr. Johnson's friend said, cheerfulness was always breaking in.



12



Left: *The Rubinsteins with Prime Minister Golda Meir and President Shazar of Israel.*

*Harold C. Schonberg is the distinguished Music Critic of The New York Times. This article is taken from his delightful and informative book, The Great Pianists, published by Simon and Schuster. It is reprinted by permission. Mr. Schonberg's most recent book is The Lives of the Great Composers.*

Artur Rubinstein was born in Lodz, Poland, the youngest of seven children by nine years. He was, to quote him, "the Benjamin of his father," who owned a hand-loom factory.

Artur early displayed his musical talent. His uncle wrote to Joseph Joachim, the great Hungarian violinist and friend of Brahms, who pronounced the child's talent extraordinary but warned against forcing his development.

Two years later, Artur gave a concert for charity in Warsaw and at eight studied in that city with Prof. Rozycki. In a few months, however, he had absorbed all that that teacher could provide.

By a stroke of luck, Artur's sister was going to Berlin to prepare for her marriage and took her prodigy brother to be presented to Joachim. The venerable pedagogue was so impressed that he assumed responsibility for young Artur's musical future—and sent him to study piano technique with Prof. Heinrich Barth, himself a pupil of Bulow, Taussig and Liszt. The amazing child was also placed with Max Bruch and Robert Kahn for instruction in composition and harmony.

At eleven, he made his formal debut in Berlin, playing the Mozart Concerto in A major, with his musical godfather, Joachim, conducting the orchestra.

By the time he was fifteen, young Rubinstein had spread his talents to encompass most of Germany and Poland, playing once in Warsaw with the orchestra under the direction of Emil Mlynarski, whose daughter Aniela, as yet unborn, was in later years to marry the brilliant soloist.

Joachim also sent his young charge to visit Paderewski who was so enchanted with the youth's ability that he prevailed upon him to prolong his stay for three months.

Rubinstein, a stripling of sixteen and already a specialist in Chopin, Beethoven, Brahms and Liszt, first came to America in January, 1906, under the auspices of William A. Knabe. At the time, Charles Henry Meltzer wrote of him, "He has the intelligence of maturity and the wit of a 'boulevardier,'" His first American appearance was in Philadelphia with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the beginning of the month, and his New York debut on January 8, 1906 was with the same orchestra under the direction of Fritz Scheel. In Philadelphia Rubinstein played the E Minor Concerto of Chopin; in New York he chose the G Minor Concerto of Saint-Saens.

Only a few months before, introducing him to the Con-

cert Society of Paris (a fraternal organization of professional musicians) Saint-Saens had said: "Allow me to introduce to you one of the greatest artists I know. I foresee for him an admirable career, and to say it all in a few words—he is worthy of the great name he bears."

During the first tour which lasted three months, he gave forty-two concerts. After leaving America, Rubinstein gave no concerts for several years. When he reappeared in Berlin in 1910 he was asked where he had been and what he had been doing. "Oh," he replied, "I've been dead for a few years."



*At the request of his family, Rubinstein posed for a formal portrait.*

*His life...*

Actually, he had been in Paris devoting those years to incessant study and "to hurdling the greatest obstacle in the path of a prodigy, that of shedding my immaturity." He succeeded in planting his feet firmly in the music of the classics and the moderns and in establishing his personal and pianistic freedom.

He concertized extensively throughout Europe during the next half-dozen years, playing in Moscow and also in St. Petersburg where he performed the Anton Rubinstein Concerto in D Minor with Serge Koussevitzky conducting the orchestra.

Before the first World War broke out, Rubinstein toured Italy bearing a diplomatic passport presented to him by Rome. His native Poland granted him a similar document with the inscription: "On a mission of art for Poland." It was first honored by Alfonso of Spain even before Rubinstein's homeland had an ambassador at the Spanish court.

By 1914, he had finished a tour of all the major cities on the Continent, winding up in London just as the war started. Although he wanted to join the Polish legion, his knowledge of languages (he speaks eight fluently—English, Polish, German, Russian, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese) made him more valuable at headquarters as an interpreter. He remained there for several months until he

undertook to play for the Allies a series of thirty joint concerts with the celebrated violinist, Eugene Ysaye.

A witness of the havoc caused by Germany among non-combatants, Artur Rubinstein vowed never to play in Germany again. Despite innumerable invitations from that country, he has kept that oath.

In 1916 he made his first entry into Spain, where his mastery of de Falla and Albéniz evoked national acclaim. Scheduled for four recitals, he remained to give 120. He became the adopted son of all Spanish-speaking countries, and one of the foremost interpreters of their music.

He followed this success with an extensive tour of South America, so that he did not reach the United States again until the 1919 season.

Though Rubinstein's appearances in the United States were many up to 1927, he did not visit this country again for a decade thereafter, when Impresario S. Hurok persuaded him to return.

Meanwhile in 1932 he had married Aniela Mlynarski at a fairy-tale wedding in London attended by celebrities in music, art, literature, and diplomacy. His daughter, Eva, was born in Buenos Aires in 1933; his son, Paul, in Warsaw in 1935; Alina and John Arthur arrived in Hollywood in 1945 and 1946 respectively.

During his American season in 1937 Rubinstein was presented by Hurok in seventeen concerts in nine weeks, appearing with seven major symphony orchestras, the initial one being with the New York Philharmonic Symphony Society broadcasting that historic rendition of Tchaikowsky's Concerto in B Flat Minor on Sunday afternoon, Nov. 21, 1937.

When war came and the Germans entered Paris to take over his lovely new home on the Avenue Foch, the European chapter of his life was closed temporarily. A short time later, he settled in Hollywood.

With Hollywood studios close by, it was not long before motion picture companies were knocking at Rubinstein's door. For his first film he received the record sum of \$85,000 for three days' work for putting Rachmaninoff's Second Concerto on the sound track of Republic's "I've Always Loved You."

In 1946, the most international of all living artists, friend of royalty and toast of their courts, Rubinstein became a U.S. citizen. A sincere and passionate believer in democracy,

*(continued on page 16)*



Above: At a party for Artur Rubinstein hosted by S. Hurok. At right, top-to-bottom, Rubinstein in retrospect: At the age of four, one year before his debut in Warsaw; At ten, one year before his official debut in Berlin with his musical godfather Joachim conducting the orchestra; In 1937, on his return to the United States, under the management of S. Hurok.



## *A tribute* BY S. HUROK

It was during the 1921-22 season at New York's old Aeolian Hall that I first heard Artur Rubinstein. The power of his personality and the sense of grandeur and poetry that enveloped his playing at that first hearing filled me with almost unbearable excitement. I knew that I was in the presence of that rare, unique kind of personality who is instilled with a power of communication which instantly captures and holds an audience.

It has been one of the great pleasures and privileges of my life to have known Artur Rubinstein—the artist and the man—for five decades. I have been his manager for more than three of these.

I wooed Rubinstein that season and borrowed him from his manager for concerts in the New York Hippodrome and in the Acadèmy of Music in Brooklyn and Philadelphia. Now he has become a legend, but at that time he was not really accepted here nor appreciated for the great artist he was. He was not happy here. Already the toast of Paris, London, Rio de Janeiro, and Madrid, he did not return to the United States until 1927, and after that tour, left these shores, expecting never to come back.

From 1928 until 1936 I pursued the pianist across Europe and South America using my not inconsiderable powers of persuasion, but to no avail. Finally in 1936, I convinced him that America was ready for him at last. Artur and his lovely wife, Nela, arrived on the Queen Mary in November of 1937. By the end of the season it was clear that America had taken him to its heart, and he had accepted America. He became a citizen of this country in 1946.

So vivid, so vital, so charming is Artur Rubinstein that it is impossible to describe him adequately. It is really not necessary, for his vast audiences around the world need no description of his personality; it comes overwhelmingly across the footlights to them, in sound, in sight, in aura.

There is something lordly about him on the concert stage. There he is a great gentleman receiving his friends and sharing with them the things closest to his heart. There is something lordly, too, in his bearing everywhere. One instinctively rises when he enters the room. He is well aware of who he is and the effect he has on people, but he also has a marvelous capacity for laughing at himself as well as at the foibles of the world around him. Wherever he is, he is the center of a group listening with rapt attention to his stories.

Rubinstein is one artist, who, despite the strict demands of his art and the deep passion he accords it, is never limited to it. His world stretches out in all directions and his art feeds on that rich world. He is interested in life, people, in food, cigars, painting, politics, literature, philosophy, and conversation. He has deep affection for the many persons to whom he is specially attached. He always has the time to speak at length to his thousands of acquaintances in the eight languages he calls his own. He always takes the time to listen with rapt attention to the young.

His friend Thomas Mann once called him "that civilized man." Sometimes, as I watch Artur moving with such impeccable style and kindness and grace, I think he may be the last of that breed.



he is prouder of the simple document that officially makes him an American than any decoration or citation he has ever received.

Mr. Rubinstein has been honored on numerous occasions by governments, civic groups, grateful citizens and universities. The French Government conferred upon him the Medaille of Arts and Letters. He is also a Commander of the Legion d'Honneur, a Commander of the Order of Leopold II and of the Order of Leopold I, of Belgium, Commander of the Order of Chile, Grand Officer of Alfonso XII of Spain, Benemerenti of Roumania, Officer of Santiago of Portugal, oldest military order on the Continent, Officer of Pologna Restituta, Correspondent Member of Academy of Arts of Brazil, and Honorary Member of the famous Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome. The Royal Philharmonic Society of London conferred upon him its gold medal, an honor given only seven times since 1937 when Toscanini and Weingartner received it. The cities of Florence and Venice honored him in 1952 shortly before Brown University and Yale University conferred honorary doctorate degrees upon him. At Yale, he was honored at the same time as President Kennedy. He also holds an honorary doctorate from Northwestern University.

In the Fall of 1947, he returned to Europe to concertize for the first time since 1939. An idol before he left the

Continent, his return was the signal for one of the greatest tributes ever awarded an artist. He played more than thirty-five times to sold-out houses. In Paris, his four concerts grossed five million francs, an all-time high for the French city. For his first recital in Rome, a box-office line formed at four o'clock in the morning. At La Scala, he received a twenty-minute ovation. One couple flew to Antwerp from Copenhagen to hear him. When they heard there were no tickets available, they followed Rubinstein by plane to Brussels and then to Ghent. At the latter city, faced with another sold-out house, they appealed to the pianist who arranged for them to attend the concert.

In 1954 the pianist recovered his home in Paris. Mr. and Mrs. Rubinstein divide their time between the United States and Europe. In 1965 they purchased a summer home in Spain in Marbella on the Costa del Sol.

During the 1955-56 season, the pianist undertook three massive cycles of works for piano and orchestra, encompassing in a series of five concerts, seventeen compositions including all the Brahms and Beethoven concerti, Chopin, Mozart, Grieg, Tchaikowsky, Rachmaninoff, Liszt and Schumann and works by Franck and Falla. Rubinstein played the series in London and Paris during November, 1955, and in New York's Carnegie Hall performed it in thirteen days, beginning on February 7, 1956.

In all three cities the entire cycle was sold-out in advance. In New York, the press seized the occasion to point out that Rubinstein had first played in the U.S. 50 years before. Editorials in the New York Times and Herald-Tribune hailed the event, though the pianist emphatically denied he was celebrating an anniversary. Since hearing the great Busoni in a similar cycle in Berlin during his student days, he said, he had always intended to bring all these works together and "see whether I've accomplished anything after all these years of banging the piano."

In June, 1958, Rubinstein returned to his native Poland after a 20-year absence and won from a weeping audience in Warsaw the second ovation in Polish history. (The first went to Paderwski.)

On his return to the United States in December, his daughter, Eva, presented him with his second grandchild, within a year. Alexander Sloane was born December 1958. The first, Amy Elizabeth, was born January 13, 1958. Grandson David arrived in 1959. To his son Paul and his





*Opposite, far left: A standing ovation greets Rubinstein after a Carnegie Hall Concert.  
Below, left: Rubinstein greets a Moscow audience.*

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wife a son, Jason, was born on January 21, 1967.

Highlights of Mr. Rubinstein's 1960 European itinerary included a Beethoven cycle in London and a cycle of three Chopin concerts in Paris.

On October 30, 1961, at 8:40 P.M. Artur Rubinstein began a unique piano series at Carnegie Hall. Within forty days he gave ten solo recitals, never repeating a work. His programs explored the full range of the piano repertoire from Bach to Stravinsky.

Musicians and audiences were overwhelmed by this feat. Editorials hailed the "music marathon". Mr. Rubinstein was more modest. He termed it an expression of gratitude to the New York public. For them he was playing works they had enjoyed together for twenty-five years. At the same time, he celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his collaboration with Mr. Hurok. Mr. Rubinstein donated the receipts of this series of concerts to charities.

To prepare his programs for the concerts, Mr. Rubinstein sat down in his Park Avenue apartment, after a full season of touring, and in between recording dates for RCA Victor, to list the works he felt were in his fingers or could easily be polished. Next to some of them, he put a question mark. When he listed Chopin Etudes, he couldn't recall whether it was sixteen or twenty he could reel off. With the Preludes, he noted twenty to twenty-four. The grand total was 196 pieces by twenty composers.

Mr. Rubinstein played concerts throughout the summer, with his last performance in Paris on October 22. The following day he flew to the U.S. to begin the Carnegie Hall series less than a week later.

Any other artist would have regarded the feat of ten such recitals as enough to last a season. Mr. Rubinstein, however, gave 44 concerts in 26 cities in the U.S. alone. In the middle of his American tour, he returned to Europe to play another dozen concerts, and, in addition, Mr. Rubinstein played at least 12 concerts with symphony orchestras across the country.

During the Fall of 1963, prior to his return to North America, the pianist played 30 sold-out concerts in 40 days.

In May, 1964, the pianist attended impressive ceremonies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem when the Artur Rubinstein Chair of Music was dedicated. The professorship was endowed with the earnings which had accrued from Mr. Rubinstein's solo recitals in Israel for which he had refused any fees. He had also refused any compensation for his appearances as soloist with the Israel Philharmonic, which expressed its gratitude by presenting the artist with a new Steinway.

The following September, Rubinstein, after an absence nearly 30 years, returned to the Soviet Union to play a series of six recitals in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. Received by wildly applauding throngs, including all the leading figures in Soviet musical and cultural circles, the pianist scored one of the greatest triumphs of his career. When admirers in his dressing room after the concert told him that they had heard him during his last concert tour there in 1935, Rubinstein said, "I have made progress since then. I have the Americans to thank for that; they made me work."

En route to Moscow, the pianist played both in Bucharest

and in Belgrade. Long absent from both cities, he drew ecstatic crowds. He also played extensively in Western Europe and flew to Australia for widely heralded appearances there. *The New York Times* headlined a dispatch from Sydney: "Rubinstein Fortissimo Beats Yeah, Yeah, Yeah!" The dispatch reported: "A crowd of 300 admirers of Artur Rubinstein engaged a slightly smaller crowd of Beatle fans in a shouting match today. Most observers judged the Rubinstein side the Winner."

On January 16, 1966, the pianist was honored by the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. Among the artists who paid tribute to the pianist by performing at Carnegie Hall were Leonard Bernstein, Isaac Stern and Alexander Schneider.

Another award which gave Mr. Rubinstein particular pleasure came in 1961 when B.M.I. gave his son John the



Mr. and Mrs. Artur Rubinstein enroute to London.

Varisty Show Award for his original musical at U.C.L.A.—*The Short and Turbulent Reign of Roger Ginzburg*.

In 1969 Artur Rubinstein became the first great international pianist to star in a full-length color feature film made in France and called *L'Amour de la Vie*, a true portrait of the artist. The film won him an Oscar which was presented to him by Gregory Peck, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. NBC added special material and used the film for television. It won a 1970 Emmy Award for the production and Rubinstein won a personal Emmy for his commentary.

This year, Mr. Rubinstein again tours the major cities of North America and will make some special appearances abroad. In between concerts he is writing his autobiography which will be published by Alfred Knopf.

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VCS-7071
- The Three Piano Quartets: Op. 25, 26 & 60*  
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- Barcarolle*  
3 Nouvelles Etudes, Bolero, Fantaisie in F minor, Berceuse, Tarantelle  
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Grand Fantasy on Polish Airs  
Ormandy, The Philadelphia Orchestra  
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## Scherzos

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34, No. 3; No. 5 in A-Flat, Op. 42 ("The Two-Four Valse"); No. 6 in D-Flat, Op. 64, No. 1 ("Minute Waltz"); No. 7 in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 64, No. 2; No. 8 in A-Flat, Op. 64, No. 3; No. 9 in A-Flat, Op. 69, No. 1 ("L'Adieu") (Posth.); No. 10 in B Minor, Op. 69, No. 2 (Posth.); No. 11 in G-Flat, Op. 70, No. 1 (Posth.); No. 12 in F Minor, Op. 70, No. 2 (Posth.); No. 13 in D-Flat, Op. 70, No. 3 (Posth.); No. 14 in E Minor (Posth.)  
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## The Chopin I Love

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## Falla

*Nights in the Gardens of Spain*  
Jorda, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra  
Rachmaninoff: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini,  
Op. 43; Reiner, Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
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Saint-Saëns: Piano Concerto No. 2  
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## Franck

*Symphonic Variations*  
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## Grieg

*Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16*  
Orchestra conducted by Wallenstein  
Favorite Encores  
LSC-2566/ Tape (Grieg only) R8s-1011

*Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16*  
Orchestra conducted by Wallenstein  
Highlights from Rubinstein at Carnegie Hall  
Tape R8s-5009

## Haydn

*Andante and Variations in F Minor*  
Mozart: Concerto No. 20 in D Minor, K. 466  
Orchestra conducted by Wallenstein  
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## Liszt

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Wallenstein, RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra  
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LSC-2068/ Tape R8s-5035

*Rubinstein Plays Liszt*  
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religieuses"); Valse Impromptu; Mephisto Waltz;  
Liebestraum No. 3 in A-Flat; Hungarian Rhapsody  
No. 10 in E; Consolation No. 3 in D-Flat; Hungarian  
Rhapsody No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor  
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*Sonata in B Minor*  
Schubert: "Wanderer" Fantasy  
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## Mendelssohn

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Ravel: Trio in A Minor  
Heifetz, Violinist; Piatigorsky, Cellist  
LM-1119

## Mozart

*Concerto No. 17 in G, K. 453*  
Orchestra conducted by Wallenstein  
Schubert: Impromptus, Op. 90: No. 3 in G; No. 4  
in A-Flat  
LSC-2636

*Concerto No. 20 in D Minor, K. 466*  
Orchestra conducted by Wallenstein  
Haydn: Andante and Variations in F Minor  
LSC-2635

*Concerto No. 21 in C, K. 467*  
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Wallenstein, RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra  
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*Concerto No. 24 in C Minor, K. 491*  
Orchestra conducted by Krips  
Rondo in A Minor, K. 511  
LSC-2461

## Rachmaninoff

*Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 18*  
Reiner, Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
Liszt: Concerto No. 1 in E-Flat  
Wallenstein, RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra  
LSC-2068

*Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43*  
Reiner, Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
Falla: Nights in the Gardens of Spain  
Jorda, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra  
LSC-2430

## Ravel

*Trio in A Minor*  
Mendelssohn: Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 49  
Heifetz, Violinist; Piatigorsky, Cellist  
LM-1119

## Saint-Saëns

*Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 22*  
Franck: Symphonic Variations  
Wallenstein, Symphony of the Air  
LSC-2234

*Piano Concerto No. 2*  
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Ormandy, The Philadelphia Orchestra  
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## Schubert

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Orchestra conducted by Wallenstein  
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"Wanderer" Fantasy  
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Orchestra conducted by Wallenstein  
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(Ravel); Mouvements perpetuels, Intermezzo in A-  
Flat (1944), Intermezzo No. 2 in D-Flat (Poulenc);  
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50 (Szymanowski); Twelve Visions Fugitives from  
Op. 22 (Prokofieff); Prole do Bebe (Villa-Lobos)  
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LM-7025

*Three Favorite Romantic Concertos*  
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Grieg: Concerto in A Minor; Rachmaninoff: Con-  
certo No. 2 in C  
VCS-7070

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