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GRANDE POLONAISE

The Paris taxi driver had let me off at the wrong address and by the time I found the right one - Square du Bois de Boulogne - I was late for my lunch date. The small square was an oasis of tranquillity and an island of seclusion. Trees and singing birds and only the faint swishing of tires from nearby Avenue Foch. Silent town houses, parked large cars. The house numbers ran clockwise and then again counter-clockwise, as they sometimes do in France, and I stood there wondering where No. 22 was when, all of a sudden, the powerful passages of Chopin's C Minor ("Revolution") etude came from the house near the western corner. That was it, then. No one else in Square du Bois de Boulogne or, for that matter, in all the world plays Chopin as Arthur Rubinstein does.

The three-story house with its straight, plain façade looked more like a town house in New York's Sutton Place than a villa near the Bois. A black-iron fence cut off the view of the ground floor where the music came from. A slit for the mail box with no name on it, a shiny brass

button. The house seemed dwarfed by the larger one next to it. There (Rubinstein told me later) Claude Debussy had spent the last twelve years of his life, had written the "Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian", and died in 1918. "Rubinstein a trouvé le bonheur dans le paysage de Debussy," Le Figaro wrote recently.

I pressed the brass button, walked across the small gravelled front yard. An elderly French maid with crisp, pleated white apron opened the entrance door. The Chopin passages rose and fell like waves during a storm. I stood in the ante-room, next to a small Gauguin, and listened. Pianists never sound bad while they practise, a fact that must have swayed many parents to let their children learn the piano. Practising fiddlers often produce awful sounds, even the very best, as anyone knows who once had a hotel room next to a famous fiddler.

The maid opened the door into the living room and the Chopin waves broke off. Rubinstein got up from the Steinway concert-grand to greet me. He made me feel at once at home; Mrs. Rubinstein was still in the kitchen, he said, everything was late this morning, as always before his concert, and there was plenty of time to talk. The prospect seemed to delight him. His smile was genuine and his warmth was real, reflected in his eyes. Rubinstein has the eyes of a man who trusts you instinctively. They are green-gray-blue; maybe there are "gold sparks" in them, as Mrs. Rubinstein later told me. Rubinstein's eyes express the sadness of his Jewish forebears, the pride of his native Poland and, above all, a passionate love of life. Asked recently by a French friend for a sample of his hand-

writing, Rubinstein sat down and wrote, "...J'aime la vie sans conditions; riche ou pauvre, jeune ou vieux, sain ou malade, je suis heureux de vivre et j'en suis humblement reconnaissant à la Providence. La musique étant en quelque sorte mon sixième sens, je n'en parlerai pas, mais j'aime les voyages, les livres, la peinture, les fleurs - j'aime le spectacle unique et toujours changeant de la vie. En somme, j'aime tout."

Rubinstein has never altered his declaration of joie de vivre, not even in his bad days. He is that rare thing, a world-famous artist who is a well-balanced human being. "I have a wonderful life," he's apt to say. "I come to a place where I know no one and when I leave, hours later, I've made thousands of friends. I wouldn't change places with a king. Matter of fact, I've known a couple of kings in my days who admitted they wouldn't mind changing places with Rubinstein." His friends are often nonplussed by what one calls his "infinite kindness." Rubinstein once invited the daughter of a friend in Los Angeles - she'd missed his last concert owing to final exams and was deeply disappointed - to his house for lunch a few days later and there played a considerable part of his concert program for her. His warmth arouses reciprocal warmth in people around him. In 1928 Marcel Achard, the French author-playwright, inscribed one of his books "pour Monsieur Arthur Rubinstein avec mon admiration enthusiaste." In 1929, the ardor of his feelings having increased, Achard scratched out the previous dedication and wrote, "Pour l'adorable et cher petit Arthur avec mon amitié impuissante à exprimer mon admiration..." and there the matter stands, temporarily at least.

Rubinstein's occasional flashes of flamboyance conceal his humility. He's passed the test of a sound sense of humor - he is able to laugh at himself. Although many fellow pianists speak admiringly of his versatility, he doesn't think he has "the inborn facility of a Heifetz or Horowitz." To a friend and a world-famous artist on another instrument he once said, "All right, you are the best of them all, but so what?" This is an unusual attitude in a medium where elephantiasis of the ego is the epidemic occupational disease. In moments of contemporary triumphs Rubinstein often remembers his earlier trials. Having seen the giants of the past - Ysayë, Joachim, Busoni, Paderewski - deteriorate before the eyes and ears of their public, unable to perform the difficult parts of their program, Rubinstein has long decided to gracefully step down when his time comes. That it hasn't come yet, is often confirmed by the judgement of his peers. After a recent concert in London, the British pianist Rosalyn Tureck wrote to him, "...No pianist today can follow you. The young generation doesn't know that world of beauty, brilliance and spontaneity..." Though unquestionably at the top of the world's pianistic elite, Rubinstein is still bothered by moments of insecurity. "All my life I've been waiting to take the place of the great ones - Paderewski, Rachmaninoff, Hofmann - and now I am waiting for a younger one to take my place," he recently said. "Which one is harder?"

At the beginning of his career, when he was young and poor, Rubinstein often dreamed that he was rich and famous, and he would wake up in a state of gloom. Now he is rich and famous and bothered by recurrent

dreams of being forgotten and poor again. Once in a while he has a "supreme nightmare": He sits on the platform in front of three thousand people and must perform compositions that are not written yet.

A few hours before a concert Rubinstein often gets the idée fixe that no one is going to be there. It will be a catastrophe. The house is going to be empty; who wants to go to a concert on a beautiful day when people can go to the beach, play golf and tennis? His despair is infectious and soon the people around him become utterly miserable, seeing rows and rows of empty seats. Of course, the house is always crowded whereupon Rubinstein is genuinely surprised. He is very superstitious, refuses to take any money before or during a concert, and never performs without an embroidered hankerchief which his wife gave him twenty-six years ago; on tour he always carries a small Nylon bag with a collection of good-luck charms, among them his oldest daughter's first pair of shoes.

I noticed that his stubborn, fluffy hair had turned from light-brown to gray since I'd last talked to him, at the end of the war, in Beverly Hills, and four years ago, in New York, but he was still as dynamic and elastic as ever, though perhaps a little quieter. ("Not quieter," he said, smiling. "Just older.") His caustic tongue, and his ability to get to the core of a problem, were still the same. (Asked what he thought about jazz, he said not long ago, "Well, unlike concert pianists jazz musicians never play a wrong note.") At sixty-nine, Rubinstein is stocky, strong and in top condition, with the pinkish-white complexion usually displayed by red-headed people, and with the strength of a professional

wrestler in his chest, shoulders and arms. ("I need it," he says. "I've wrestled with pianos all my life.") His fingers are strong and firmly jointed, hard and hammer-like. Not overly conscious of his hands, he doesn't have the exasperating habit of many fellow pianists who always perform on an invisible keyboard. He has no virtuoso mannerisms. It occurred to me again that this permanent wanderer, a cosmopolite and civilized citizen of the world - Russian by birth, Jewish by ancestry, Polish by temperament, American by choice, French and Spanish by musical preferences - is, above all, a Pole-at-heart. So much is Polish about him: his toughness and romanticism, his obstinacy and sentimentalism, his pride and sense of freedom which were always the great virtue (and tragedy) of the Poles. He is unimpressed by rank and title and appreciates people for what they are, not for what they are called.

On matters of integrity Rubinstein never compromises. During an early starvation period in London he turned down a much-needed offer of a hundred pounds a week from Sir Oswald Stoll, the impresario, to play the piano in Sir Oswald's variety show between bicycle riders and dressed monkeys. "I thought of it years later in Hollywood when Arnold Schönberg explained to me why he had turned down a lucrative studio contract. Schönberg said, 'I cannot commit suicide as a composer in order to live at ten thousand dollars a year.' I didn't want to kill myself as a pianist for a hundred pounds a week. I asked Sir Oswald to let me play a recital at Wigmore Hall, for little money. Of course, he wasn't interested."

Rubinstein is a fighting Pole. He has no patience with political

naïveté, is angry about fellow artists who say they "don't mix art and politics." He can be hard and unforgiving. He has never gone back to Germany since the First World War when he was deeply shocked by German atrocities in Belgium and his feelings didn't change during the Second World War when the Nazis killed off almost his entire family in Poland. He felt unable to accept a recent invitation to play before a privately screened audience in West Germany, despite an unusual guarantee that his listeners would be "people with a clear conscience." When Mussolini promulgated his anti-Jewish decrees in 1938, Rubinstein returned to the Duce the order of Commendatore, explaining his reasons in a telegram signed "Arthur Rubinstein, Pianiste Juif," which the French postal authorities passed only after Rubinstein had called his friend Georges Mandel, the Interior Minister. Mandel advised Rubinstein to give a copy of the telegram to the press so he would be protected against being smeared by Mussolini's propaganda stooges.

A partisan of the underdog, Rubinstein is upset by injustice even if it doesn't affect him personally. His musical judgement is never influenced by relatives, foes or critics. If he doesn't like his best friend's composition, he will say so. He refused to perform a piece called "Piano Rag Music" written for him by his friend Stravinsky because "it treats the piano as a percussion box with no soul." Stravinsky himself played it for Rubinstein a dozen times in his study; each time he played it Rubinstein disliked it more. At last there was an argument, Stravinsky calling Rubinstein a silly sentimentalist and Rubinstein calling Stra-

vinsky something worse, and the two friends didn't talk for a day. On the other hand Rubinstein has helped young pianists he had no personal affection for because he was convinced of their talent. "You don't have to thank me," he said to one after arranging some concerts for him.

Rubinstein's Old-World gallantry toward women is typically Polish and so is his fin-de-siècle courtesy. He dislikes being first-named after a five minutes' acquaintance, and is pleased to be called "Maître" or "Maestro" in Europe where they still do such things. After twenty years of a successful business relationship, his manager S. Hurok still calls him "Mr. Rubinstein." In his foreword to Casimir Wierzynski's book on Chopin, Rubinstein wrote about Chopin's "passion and lucidity, temperament and perspicacity, ardor and self-control." It could have been a sentence in an auto-biographical sketch. He is a romantic, sensitive, exuberant Pole who gives himself over completely to whatever he is doing - playing the piano, telling a story, smoking his beloved Havana. An utterly gregarious man, he can't live alone: he must have his piano, his family, his friends around, and he loves to talk almost as much as he loves to make music. Last year, after being bothered for months by a persistent throat affection, Rubinstein became worried and went to see a prominent specialist. The specialist looked into his throat, into a microscope, back into Rubinstein's throat, maintaining an ominous silence all the time while Rubinstein was getting quite desperate remembering several popular magazine articles he'd just read. At last he couldn't stand it any longer. "Tell me the truth, doctor," he said. "I can take it." The

eminent physician turned to Rubinstein and said slowly, "Mr. Rubinstein, you talk too much."

Now Rubinstein was dressed in his favorite color, blue, wearing a blue suit, light-blue shirt, dark-blue silk tie with a pearl stickpin in it, and thin-soled alligator shoes. In his lapel he wore the rosette of a Commandeur of the Legion of Honor. He has received many honors and decorations and particularly values being the only living honorary member of the Academia Santa Cecilia in Rome. On the table stood a bottle of a 1806 vintage Port that he'd been given by a ~~French~~ Portugese friend. Rubinstein has exquisite taste: he likes the best. The drawing room and adjoining dining room were luxuriously carpeted and beautifully furnished. A few good paintings, a lovely bunch of mimosas by Kissling and two street scenes of the Butte Montmartre by Cannon which, I found out later, have a special meaning for the Rubinsteins, a large Victrola (with several Rubinstein recordings lying on top, to be sure), the concert-grand by the French window and a smaller Steinway, at a right angle to it; a third piano was on the top floor on which his younger two children practised when he was working downstairs. On the concert-grand was a stopwatch, a Swiss metronome looking like a watch, the opened score of Ravel's "Tombeau de Couperin" and six Venetian glass ducks, a gift from his children. On the closed lid stood four photographs, of Vladimir Horowitz, of President Eisenhower ("...to a truly great artist..."), of the late Paul Kochanski, Rubinstein's boyhood friend, a gifted violinist, and of Albert Schweitzer. (A fifth picture that usually stood here, of Toscanini,

was being newly framed.) Another photograph stood on a bookshelf, showing Rubinstein with Einstein. Einstein looked like a German Klaviervirtuose with his tousled hair and Rubinstein, gazing into the camera, looked like a famous physicist. The entire wall was covered with bookshelves. Rubinstein loves books almost as much as music.

But now, with the sound of Chopin still hanging about the room, he talked of music - of the composers that had shaped his musical life. "Brahms was my first love," he said. "I was eight, and I'd just come from Poland to Berlin. When I heard Madame Hahn, the mother of a boyhood friend, play Brahms in her lovely Tiergarten villa, I broke into tears. People asked me what I wanted for my next birthday, and I said, 'More Brahms music.' At nineteen, I had the usual attack of Wagneritis. It hit me badly; I couldn't sleep for nights after my first 'Ring,' and one summer in Bayreuth I almost starved to death. This was later followed by the usual attack of anti-Wagneritis; now I can pick and choose from Wagner the things I like. Then came my violent love-affair with Tchaikovsky. Playing Tchaikovsky gave me physical pleasure. His music has everything a pianist needs, the grandiose sweep of octaves, legato passages of beautiful melody, contrasting moods and changing dynamics. I got drunk on Tchaikovsky - but I couldn't bear to hear his music played by others. You don't mind getting drunk yourself but you do mind to see your brother getting drunk."

He smiled thoughtfully and filled my glass but put only a little Port in his. "Then I became fascinated by the magnificent climaxes and colorful orchestrations of Richard Strauss. I used to play the entire

scores of 'Salome' and 'Elektra' for my friends and would give a running commentary. But now these fleeting passions have gone and the great loves have remained. Schumann, the eternal Romeo - how I love his shy sensuality! Schubert's wonderful melodies - after sixty years I still discover new nuances in his music. Mozart, the greatest of all, a sample of heaven on earth. And, of course, Chopin." He was silent for a while. "I was in Berlin, a boy of fifteen, when I fell in love with Chopin. I had a friend, a young Polish pianist and conductor, Julius Wertheim, a frail man with dark, burning eyes who always made me think of Tchaikovsky. Wertheim didn't worry about the technicalities of a piece of music as long as he was able to express the feeling and the mood the composer tried to convey. I've heard all great pianists of my times play Chopin but no one taught me as much of Chopin as Wertheim did. One day in 1932 - I was performing in Pernambuco - I read in the paper that Wertheim had died in Warsaw while conducting the 'Meistersinger' overture, during the great counterpoint. I knew this was exactly the moment when Wertheim would have wanted to die."

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The emergence of Arthur Rubinstein, musical prodigy, has puzzled students of both the theories of heredity and environment. Rubinstein was born in the Polish city of Lodz which then belonged to Russia, on January 28 - one day after Mozart's birthday, he likes to say - 1889 (not 1886, as it says in several reference books which annoys Rubinstein) as the youngest of seven children of a moderately well-to-do owner of a handloom

factory. The family had little interest in music, and his sisters reluctantly took piano lessons. Only a brother of his mother, Uncle Boleslav Schneck, was something of a connoisseur of bel canto and told his nephew, "Artek, there are three genuises in music - Bach, Mozart and Battistini," referring to the great Italian baritone, Matteo Battistini. And Uncle Schneck took the three-year-old boy to the local opera house to a performance of "Aida." But when the trombones started to play, Artek screamed and had to be taken home; for years he couldn't stand the sound of brass.

According to one of the legends that embroider Rubinstein's life story, a rich blend of Dichtung und Wahrheit, from which the plain facts cannot always be easily extracted, the obnoxious child smashed two fiddles before he was allowed to study the piano. The fact is that little Arthur would listen in the music room where his sisters were having their lesson; afterwards he would crawl up on the piano chair and play what he'd heard. He showed a perturbing dexterity at hitting the right keys though he didn't know what the tones were called; at one point he would make a pause "for turning the page" though he couldn't read music, of course; in short, he was an authentic prodigy. The family was bewildered by this unmanageable wealth of musical talent which became the talk of Lodz when four-year-old Artek appeared in a charity concert. Three years later the child had exhausted the knowledge of the best local piano teachers. Another boy wonder, the eleven-year-old violinist Bronislav Huberman, once listened to young Rubinstein and said earnestly and prophetically, "Work hard, Arthur, and you will go far." At that point an uncle of Rubinstein

wrote a letter to Joseph Joachim, the great German violinist and close friend of Brahms. Joachim's answer came by return mail, inviting the boy to come to Berlin. Joachim was so impressed with the eight-year-old Wunderkind that he and three wealthy friends agreed to finance his musical education. Joachim got him the best piano teacher in Berlin, Professor Karl Heinrich Barth, a pupil of Liszt, Tausig and Bülow. Max Bruch, the composer, and Robert Kahn, a brother of Otto H. Kahn in New York, taught him harmony, theory and composition. Three years later, Rubinstein made his "official" debut in Berlin, playing Mozart's A Major concerto, with Joachim conducting the accompanying Berlin Symphony Orchestra. Rubinstein always felt deeply grateful to Joachim; he had a nagging suspicion that he'd let down Joachim who had always hoped that Rubinstein might eventually turn his musical gifts toward the study of the violin.

Rubinstein has few pleasant recollections of his Berlin days. He was a sensitive, romantic boy and he was badly frightened by Professor Barth, a dry, pedantic disciplinarian. "When Barth's little beard went up, I knew he was angry, and I would be in terror. He liked me in his German way but would hurt me deeply when he began to rail at Poles and Jews. The man who helped me most in those years was Theodor Altmann, a medicine student who taught me mathematics and Latin. Altmann understood my problem. Made me read Nietzsche and Schopenhauer."

Joachim recommended his protégé to Ignace Paderewski, doyen of the Polish pianists and one summer day in 1904 the fifteen-year-old boy made his pilgrimage to Paderewski's villa near Lausanne. Paderewski, a

smiling, tall charmeur with golden hair and white necktie, greeted Rubinstein and asked him to play. Rubinstein made the mistake of all beginners, playing the most ambitious piece of his repertory, Brahms' "Variations on a Theme by Paganini," that he didn't know too well. He was nervous and played badly; Paderewski said nothing.

Lunch was a dreary meal, with Mrs. Paderewski staring icily at Rubinstein and remarking, "Well, at least his table manners aren't so bad." After lunch Paderewski gave Rubinstein a walking cane with a silver knob (which Rubinstein still has) and told him to go down to Lausanne - the carriage was elsewhere - and fetch hi s things. "You are going to stay with us for a while," he said. Rubinstein was overjoyed. That night the Boston music critic, William Apthorp, came for dinner, there was a lot of pink champagne, and Rubinstein sat down at the piano and played Brahms' G Minor rhapsody and Chopin's Fis Major impromptu which he really knew. Paderewski embraced him. Later he came up to Rubinstein's room, sat on his bed and talked about his son who had been crippled and died early. He said he was going to work hard with Rubinstein. The boy began to stammer and at last confessed that he'd had to promise to Professor Barth in Berlin that he would take no lessons in Switzerland. Paderewski understood; he always respected loyalty. They made a lot of music together that summer, but Paderewski never gave Rubinstein any lessons as the legends claim.

In the fall Rubinstein went back to Berlin; the following year, 1905, he ran off to Paris. He was sixteen, penny less, and knew no one

but he was unable to stand "the terrible dryness" of Professor Barth. Berlin was discipline - Paris was freedom. He met Gabriel Astruc, the formidable impresario ("a French Hurok") who built the Théatre des Champs -Elysées, made Diaghilev famous, ran the Société Musicale de Paris, and lived in splendor at the Pavillon Richelieu. Astruc liked Rubinstein and let him play a Chopin and Saint-Saëns program with the Orchestre Lamoureux at the Salle des Agriculteurs; at the same concert Mary Garden sang new songs by Debussy. But Rubinstein wasn't good enough and Paris was no city for novices though Saint-Saëns came to the rehearsals and afterwards said, "That boy is going to have a great career, worthy of his great name." He was referring to Anton Rubinstein, the celebrated Russian composer-pianist, who died five years after Arthur was born and with whom he has been confused all his life. Nowadays he simply accepts it as well-meant tribute when ship's orchestras play for him Anton Rubinstein's "Melody in F." (He showed the same equanimity toward a drunk in New York's Stork Club who kept calling him Serge, and he's patiently explained to people that neither Ida Rubinstein nor Helena Rubinstein are relatives.) One of his rare public feuds was with André Gide who had published an article about Chopin which Rubinstein thought absurd and refuted in the Figaro Littéraire. Gide later told his friends, "I've known one great pianist in my life. Rubinstein. Anton, of course."

Rubinstein had his ups and downs in Paris ("It was either lobster and champagne, or weeks of munching nothing but grapes") and in London where he gave lessons to children who hated music. Through Norman Douglas

he met his celebrated compatriot, Joseph Conrad. He played in Conrad's house and later went to see him in Zakopane, the Polish mountain resort, but there was little rapport between the young extrovert and the bitter, gloomy Conrad who, like many great writers, didn't really care about music. ("Music," says Rubinstein, "is a sixth sense. You've got to be born with it. It's not enough to love music.") One who was born with it was Maurice Ravel, the composer, whom Rubinstein met in Astruc's house. The two became great friends.

"Ravel was a small, slender, agile man with a moustache and square beard," Rubinstein says. "He wasn't very communicative, and something of a dandy. I remember his large feet with their modish yellow shoes, and I can hear his somber, nasal voice. We all adored him. He wasn't popular yet - that came later, after 'Bolèro' - and he was hurt when he was called an imitator of Debussy. He once told me plaintively that he had learned the art of orchestration not from Debussy but from Saint-Saëns' second piano concerto. He and Debussy had great respect for one another but so many people started to meddle between them and after 1912 the two composers never met. I remember the day when Ravel showed me Debussy's string quartet that had just come out. We played it together on the piano, and Ravel said to me, 'That's great music, Arthur.' I never talked much to Debussy who looked like half-Centaur snd half-fawn, and was shy and withdrawn. Or perhaps he didn't care to talk to me knowing the sort of life I was then leading." These were Rubinstein's playboy-virtuoso years; he had drifted into Continental café society, was the hero of snobbish

cliques and intellectual cult-seekers, the star of Muriel Draper's London "Musicales," and, as he now says, "a victim of my own talent."

Success had come too easily to him. It took him about three hours to study a sonata; and he would never forget a piece of music that he'd once studied. He learned César Franck's "Symphonic Variations" in thirty-six hours (without a piano) on a train ride from Paris to Madrid. He could play by heart the orchestral parts of many violin and cello concertos, the piano parts of the chamber music literature, entire symphonies and operas. When he toured in Russia with Serge Koussevitzky, he astonished the conductor by switching at thirty seconds' notice from Mozart to Milhaud, always imitating somebody else's style, and unfortunately unable to evolve a style of his own. (That came later.) After a visit with Paderewski who played from his new, yet unpublished B flat Minor sonata Rubinstein created a major sensation in Warsaw when he performed the sonata on the day it was published. (He was well-mannered enough not to perform it the day before.) He delighted in such stunts but hated serious practise. Leopold Godowsky once said to him, "You could be the best of all, if you would work a little," but at that price Rubinstein didn't care to be the best of all. He had his audiences in Poland, Russia, France and Spain who didn't mind his messing up the tempi and dropping "enough notes at a concert to make up another one." They loved his temperament. They said, "Rubinstein improvises - he's never dull, never pedantic." Rubinstein went on playing in his grand, <u>après-moi-le-deluge</u> manner, hitting the keys forcefully, with a few clinkers inbetween.

He was never a coward and when he made a mistake, everybody could hear it. "Playing the piano is a dangerous life," he would say. "You've got to live and play dangerously." He had a theory that if he would play all the notes in the score his performance might be dry and academic. It was a classic example of revolt, in this case against the dry, academic way of Herr Professor Barth. When something went wrong Rubinstein would blame the audience, never himself.

Rubinstein had never had a lesson since he ran away from Professor Barth at the age of fifteen, and now, ten years later, the lack of discipline and control began to show. There were always too many women and too much champagne, never enough sleep and enough work. On the day of a concert, Rubinstein would have a sumptuous lunch with wines, and then he would spend the afternoon at a cinema. Once he asked the waiter at the Casino of Monte Carlo after lunch to bring him a brandy and the concert program. He had forgotten what he was going to play there at a concert that afternoon. These escapades would often be followed by protracted periods of remorse and gloom. "While my friends in Budapest and Warsaw envied me for having a wonderful life in Paris I was so miserable I once actually thought of killing myself," Rubinstein now says.

One afternoon he sat at Fouquet's at half past five when the composer Paul Dukas came by.

"What are you doing, Rubinstein?"

"Having breakfast, Maitre."

"Now, in the afternoon? Does that happen often?"

"Quite often."

Dukas stared hard at the young man and told him to come up to his study. There he tossed a bunch of photographs in Rubinstein's lap - not exactly pictures from a family album. "Obviously that's the only thing that interests you," Dukas said scornfully. "Then he really let me have it," Rubinstein remembers. "He told me to stop squandering my talent, to get sleep and drink milk and grow up. It did work for a while, but I was still young and stupid, and then there was another woman; there was even a duel with the woman's husband; and there was too much champagne. Dukas was like a father to me."

Rubinstein later paid off his debt to Dukas by performing the composer's music all over the world. He has always been a champion of modern music. He pioneered Ravel when no one knew him and he played Debussy's "Jardins sous la Pluie" in Warsaw in 1906 while people laughed and booed; only his friend Wertheim understood that there was great beauty in this strange, new, impressionist music. Rubinstein later spent a year of his life to make known the music of the Polish composer, Karol Szymanowski, who became director of the Warsaw Conservatory. He introduced Isaac Albeniz, Manuel de Falla and Enrique Granados who were hardly known outside of Spain; he pioneered Alexander Scriabine and a group of young French composers called Les Six - Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, François Poulenc, Eric Satie, Germaine Taillefer and Jean Cocteau who had evolved the program of the group. Among composers who

have gratefully dedicated piano works to Arthur Rubinstein are Igor Stravinsky and Serge Prokofiev, Milhaud and Poulenc and de Falla, the Poles Szymanowski and Alexandre Tansman, the Mexican Manuel M. Ponce and the Brazilian Heitor Villa-Lobos whom Rubinstein discovered playing the cello in a cinema in Rio. A concert pianist can never be a creator ("I envy my friend Picasso," Rubinstein says, "when he gets through with his work, it's there for ever; when I get through, the sound of my performance has evaporated into thin air") but in his fine moments Rubinstein does more than merely perform music - he recreates the spirit and divines the innermost intentions of the composer. After a performance of Stravinsky's "Petrouchka" sonata the composer said to him, "How can you get so much feeling out of that piece when I didn't put it in?"

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Rubinstein is an absolute pianist. He has played the piano as long as he remembers anything; he has no memories of the first three years of his life when he didn't play the piano; in his consciousness he has always played it. He communicates with a piano as few people can communicate with other people; his love affair with the piano has been troubled by none of the customary afflictions of love affairs among humans. To his younger fellow pianists he is already something of a legendary figure. Rubinstein is the only concert pianist still around who has performed both during and after what is now known as the

romantic era of piano-playing, the second half of the nineteenth century which was dominated by Liszt and Anton Rubinstein, and among whose giants were Paderewski, Godowsky, Rachmaninoff and Josef Hofmann. These men were keyboard magicians who overwhelmed their audiences with technique, grandeur and sweep even though they didn't always care about style, taste and precision. They were pianists first and foremost, able to express the tremendous possibilities of the piano. They didn't necessarily play all the notes in the score but hypnotized their listeners with vibrations of wild passion. They took liberties with the music to display their dazzling technique - brilliant staccati, thundering octaves, pyrotechnical arpeggios, rapid double trills. They were no purists. They would improvise. They claimed that even great composers were sometimes careless and that, as Godowsky said, "we owe it to them to correct their errors." They found unexpected support from living composers - Strauss, Ravel, Stravinsky - who admitted that the printed page was not sacrosanct. After performing his own cello sonata with the Viennese cellist Buxbaum, Strauss was told by Buxbaum, a blunt man, that he'd played many false notes. "In my own score I can play all the false notes I want," Strauss said.

Rubinstein worshipped the great pianists for their "originality" and interpretative powers. He had no patience with purists and pedantics. When Professor Barth had told him, "Don't listen to Busoni, he's a criminal who plays with the pedals as much as with his fingers!" Rubinstein would seek every opportunity to listen to Busoni. The boundless admiration

which he once had for his predecessors has given way to sober appraisal as time went on and today he is not at all sure that the pianistic gods of his romantic youth would stand up well under the scrutiny of contemporary audiences and discriminating critics, whose ears are conditioned by high-fidelity recordings and the merciless microphone. Today's audiences insist that all the notes of a score be played exactly as they were written. The perfectionist approach to music (which in its extremes often sacrifices mood and beauty of the music to clarity and precision) originated after the First World War in the concert halls of the Anglo-Saxon countries where Beecham, Toscanini, Casals, Heifetz and Horowitz established exalted standards of style, taste, musicality and exactness. Scholarship, authority and craftsmanship became essential. These men didn't interpret; they considered themselves priests officiating on the composer's altar. (Perhaps the earliest pioneer of this uncompromising, severe attitude was Gustav Mahler.) Artists too old or unable to adapt themselves to the new standards were squeezed out. Rubinstein survived by the closest of margins because he had intelligence, stamina and will power to start from scratch again at an age when many artists begin to think of retirement.

The "new" Rubinstein was born in the summer of 1934, when he had passed his forty-fifth birthday. He had little money, not much of an artistic past and practically no future. For the first time in his life he had responsibilities, being married and the father of two small children. He'd had fun and now he was in trouble. The brilliance

of Horowitz had swept Paris, and there were other fine pianists who did recreate, not improvise. It must have been a period of deep gloom for Rubinstein. "I didn't want my children to grow up and be told that their father had been a second-rate pianist," he says now. He took his family in a small Citroën to Saint-Nicolas-de-Veroce, a tiny mountain village in the Haute-Savoie. They lived in a small pension de famille. Rubinstein rented the only piano in the village, a battered upright, and put it into the empty garage below their room. There was no electric light, so he placed a candle on top and began to work. Six hours, eight hours, nine hours a day until he had calluses on his fingers.

"... and a strange thing happened. I began to discover the pieces that I'd performed for over thirty years." Rubinstein poured me more Port but took no more himself; not today, on the day of his concert. "I'd always been satisfied with myself but now I wasn't. Instead, I tried to play a little better than before. I've been trying ever since but I'm still not quite satisfied. I realized that playing the piano - and playing it well - was really my life. You see, I've never wanted to play any other instrument. I'm a born polyphonist and love the independence that only the piano can give me." He gave a shrug. "What can you fiddlers do by yourselves? Nothing. You need a pianist, or a few string players for chamber music, or an orchestra as accompaniment. I need no one. And I'm getting a little tired of being told by my string-player friends that the piano has 'no soul' and can't sing. Of course, it's harder to make a piano sing than a string instrument - but that's just the beauty and challenge of it."

Rubinstein walked over to the concert-grand. The production of a "singing" piano tone is a matter of technique as well as of instinct. Many good pianists have the technique but not all have the instinct. Despite its potentialities the piano by its very nature is not a beautiful-sound instrument. Its tones are produced by blows of felted hammers on stretched metal strings. The aim of the pianist and the test of his artistry is to manipulate the keys in such a way as to disguise the percussive quality of a hammered tone and give the illusion of a sustained singing tone. The predecessor of our piano was invented in 1709 by an Italian harpsichord maker, Bartolommeo di Francisco Cristofori of Padua and Florence, who combined the hammers of the medieval dulcimer (a series of strings of varying length stretched over a sound box and played by hammers in the hands of the performer) with the keyboard mechanisms of the clavichord and the harpsichord, or spinet. (The clavichord was a rectangular sound box whose strings of equal length were set in vibration by brass "tangents" at the end of the key levers; the pitch of the note was determined by the point at which the tangent struck the string, somewhat like the fingers on the fingerboard of a violin. In the harpsichord the strings were not struck but plucked; a jack with a piece of quill was forced past the string, the quill plucked the string, and when the key was released, the jack would descend and the quill would pass the string without touching it again; the tone volume could not be regulated by the strength of the finger stroke upon the key.) Cristofori's new instrument which he called "gravicembalo col pian' e forte", larger

harpsichord with the faculty of producing soft and strong tones by touch, gave the performer control of the tone volume through the force with which his fingers struck the keys.

The modern nine-foot concert-grand piano has come a long way since Cristofori's invention. It is a sturdy yet delicate machinery with an iron frame capable of withstanding a strain of over thirty tons, with two-hundred-twenty-odd thin and thick strings strung crosswise over brass plates, an intricate system of levers and hammers known as "action," and with three pedals. It is able to express sonorous tones, dynamic power, great brilliance, fast speed, has easy response and subtle nuances. But the fact is - and has recently been proved by extended researches - that the pianist, no matter what he seems to be doing by way of sheer magic, has only two means of regulating the quality and strength of his tone: namely the manner in which his fingers strike the keys and in which his feet touch the pedals. (The pedals set in motion the dampers, a device to suppress the vibration of the keys.) There have been countless arguments, methods, treatises, books and tricks as to how a singing tone could be coaxed from what is basically a percussion box.

"To produce a singing tone," Rubinstein now said to me, while he played a simple Schubert melody, "you press the keys and use your pedals. Your fingers set in motion the three parts of the levers at the end of which the hammers strike the strings. Your muscles control the loudness of the tone. True, you may control certain time factors - the length of a tone and its blending with other tones - through the dampers, through

the touch of your feet on the pedals, and partly also by the manner in which you touch the keys - but nothing else counts. And not only must you produce a singing tone but also one that keeps floating through air since by its very nature the piano tone fades away the moment it is produced. I have neither the singer's breath nor the fiddler's bow. Still..."

Rubinstein looked up at the ceiling and his face seemed suddenly transfigured. The lovely Schubert melody came out of the piano, singing, floating through air, the luscious, mellifluous Rubinstein tone. There was of course in addition to the technical tone production another mysterious element - call it personality, power of communication or artistic temperament - which Rubinstein hadn't mentioned and which transcends all technique.

"There!" Rubinstein shouted. The melody broke off in mid-air. He came back and sat down. "No soul, what? No singing tone! Hah! Some of the great violinists of my days - Kreisler and Heifetz among others - have said to me, 'Arthur, you make the piano sound like a violin.' Casals and Piatigorsky told me that I make it sound like a cello. My singer friends agree that I sing on the piano. They're right and they're closest to the truth. The fact is that I think of myself as a singer and of the piano as my voice. I treat myself as part of my instrument which is exactly what a singer does. I do things naturally. This morning I did vocalizing exercizes, like a singer who warms up his singing machinery for the evening. I've always closely studied the technique of the great <u>bel canto</u> singers - their breath control, legato, phrasing, styling - and I've learned a lot from them."

Before a recital Rubinstein doesn't practise the program he's going to perform. He feels this might spoil the freshness of his approach and dampen his enthusiasm. Instead he may practise a piano concerto that he's planning to perform weeks later. Mostly he just plays anything that helps him to get in the mood. In one of his recent London concerts he performed the second Saint-Saëns concerto which he hadn't touched for almost a year. He remembers everything he's ever played - practically the entire piano repertory. A few years ago he gave a recital in New York without making up a program. It was no publicity stunt; Rubinstein simply wanted to play the things that would reflect his mood and the mood of his audience that night. His favorite piece of music is always the one he happens to be playing, and he gives himself over completely to the work he's performing, the spirit of the music, and to his audience.

As a result of "doing things naturally" Rubinstein is now less tired after a performance than thirty years ago. He has learned the secret of economy. His fingers used to be so tense that their strength would give out in the middle of a performance, and he had to strain. Today he avoids all excess of strength. His fingers don't wiggle while playing the fastest passages. When his hands are to overlap, he turns up the outside of his palms a moment before he overlaps his hands. His timing is perfect. He uses his strong body advantageously, throwing its full weight softly - never in a hard way - at the piano, somewhat as an experienced actor falls down on the stage. Rubinstein plays with his body, not against it. His movements are never abrupt; there is a floating motion about him

even when his hands crash down from high up on the keyboard. His phrasing is natural and normal, as a singer's breathing technique. He exhales with the phrase; he says, "I sing out the phrase on the piano."

These seemingly simple truths are major discoveries which every pianist must make for himself; no one else can make them for him. All a good teacher can do is to make his pupil understand the complicated physical and physiological factors of the art of piano playing: to make him sit correctly and breathe normally, to use one's arms and hands advantageously. Good piano playing, like good declamation, demands clearness of enunciation, intelligent phrasing, eloquence and power. Not two players are alike; one pupil's meat may be another one's poison. Rubinstein claims that the best teachers are those who are able to pinpoint a pupil's shortcomings: one may sit too high and lowers himself too much toward the keyboard, another keeps his hands too flat to the keys, and so on. A good teacher considers each pupil a special problem. He should never force his own personality upon his pupil. Such teachers, however, are as rare as a royal flush. Alexandre Glazounow, the Russian composer once told Rubinstein he was the only pianist who didn't show the influence of his teacher.

Rubinstein doesn't enjoy talking about the technicalities of piano playing. He feels an artist should not discuss what Dinu Lipatti, the brilliant young Rumanian pianist who died much too young, called "the artisan side of our profession." Rubinstein is often approached - and made acutely uncomfortable - by fellow pianists eager to discuss

technical problems or showing him their "kitchen tricks." Pianists need them as much as magicians, chefs and acrobats but an artist shouldn't talk about them. "It's not decent," Rubinstein says. Few of his intimate friends are pianists or musicians. Many are artists or writers and some, like Jean Cocteau, are men of considerable diversity.

One of the highest paid contemporary instrumentalists, Rubinstein is also one of the most popular. He has played as many as a hundred and sixty concerts in a single season and still plays an average of a hundred and five. His recordings for RCA Victor have sold in the astronomical class, well over three million albums. He recorded music for motion pictures - in M-G-M's "Song of Love" he ghosted three different styles of piano playing for the actors playing the parts of Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt and Johannes Brahms - and appeared in person in two pictures, "Carnegie Hall" and "Night Song"; with Heifetz, Piatigorsky and Jan Peerce made "Of Men and Music"; and he was seen on TV screens in the NBC spectacular "Festival of Music." For years his income has been in the six-figure bracket, and he is able at last to afford the "royal gestures" of his predecessors, performing for charities or for friends in need and for causes he likes. He takes no money for his performances at the Leeds (England) Musical Festival. Last year he performed with the Israel Symphony under Leonard Bernstein at the opening of the new auditorium in Tel Aviv, dedicating his fee and some additional money to establish an Arthur Rubinstein Prize for gifted young Israeli pianists. Keeping some of his earnings has always been a particularly difficult problem for Rubinstein, a proverbial

spendthrift. He has what his wife calls "a peasant's mind in business matters;" he distrusts orthodox investments and prefers to put his earnings into paintings, comfortable living, chinese sculptures, gifts for family and friends. Of late he has become more conservative and agrees to put some of his money "into his stockings" but in his uninhibited bachelor days he would continuously fluctuate between starvation and redundance. He once slept two nights on a park bench in Paris when his hotel turned him out for non-payment. As soon as he would make some money though Rubinstein would entertain extravagantly. The food was delivered by the great Parisian restaurants which he patronized during his periods of affluence. The fish might come from Prunier's, the entrée from Larue, the dessert from the Café de Paris. The host was pleased when Baron Edouard de Rothschild would turn to his wife in the course of the dinner, saying with slight reproach, "Now why can't we have such food at home?" Once a celebrated restaurant failed to deliver the soup and Rubinstein's valet ordered it from a housewife in the neighborhood who was locally reputed as a potagière. When the soup was brought to the table, Rubinstein saw a ghastly brew with fat stains swimming on top which gave off an evil odor. With rare presence of mind he removed the turreen from the table, explaining to the assorted counts, dukes and ambassadors that it was une grosse erreur.

Rubinstein is rarely unnerved by life's minor disasters. He once played the entire slow movement of a piano concerto squatting an inch above a piano chair which had suddenly broken under him. Not long ago

he and some friends were served a bouillabaisse at a restaurant when suddenly all lights went out. When the lights went on again a few minutes later, everybody began to eat the bouillabaisse - except Rubinstein who had placidly finished his soup in total darkness.

Early in 1956 Rubinstein gave a stunning demonstration in sangfroid and pianistic fortitude when he performed at Carnegie Hall five concerts within twelve days playing seventeen major works of his repertory - all the piano concertos by Beethoven and Brahms, and major works by Mozart, Schumann, Chopin, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Franck and de Falla. (During the same time he also had seven rehearsals and two recording sessions.) Rubinstein let it be known that he didn't consider himself the only contemporary pianist able to perform this marathon, and that the fact that it coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of his American debut, early in 1906, was incidental. Rubinstein dislikes anniversaries ("Some people inevitably will say, 'Rubinstein? I thought he's been dead for years,'") and he abhors eulogies which read "like obituaries." Rubinstein hired an orchestra made up of members of the New York Philharmonic Symphony, a conductor, Alfred Wallenstein, and underwrote the considerable cost of his venture. He made no money on it though all concerts were sold out but he proved to himself that "after all these years of banging the piano" he had accomplished something. "I thought I played these works a little better than in the past," he said afterwards. The critics agreed. "If he doesn't play everything better than anybody, there are very few who play anything as well as he does," wrote Irving

Kolodin. The onetime playboy pianist had fully matured into a great musician.

The Carnegie Hall marathon had been preceded by an even more formidable tour de force the previous summer when Rubinstein played twenty different piano concertos in ten concerts within fourteen days in Paris and London. The Parisians were skeptical at first; London was enthusiastic from the beginning. Rubinstein commuted by plane between the capitals; at night he had rehearsals and put in several recording sessions. Mrs. Rubinstein got into the act by giving five parties at their Paris home and two in their London hotel suite. There were hectic moments when airplanes arrived late owing to fog and taxis were held up by traffic lights since Rubinstein's movements were timed to the minute, and at the end of the second week Rubinstein's entourage was close to a nervous breakdown but he had never felt better in his life.

Among contemporary concert artists who must have a robust physique and rugged stamina to cope with the vicissitudes of their profession - practising, flying, rehearsing, being interviewed, recording, televising, performing, autographing, going without sleep, eating indigestible food - Rubinstein is acknowledged as a champion. He can eat anything and sleep anywhere - during a hot summer in New York City he slept on the third floor of the Madison Hotel while the street was being torn up underneath his window - and his fingers are strong and healthy. He's never suffered from anything worse than calluses; a bad backache two years ago disappeared together with an infected tooth. He dearly loves good food and

good wines but nowadays keeps his weight down to a hundred and seventy pounds, drinks little, sleeps eight hours a night. His energy is bewildering. During a particularly hectic eleven-month period he once went from California to Europe, gave seventy concerts, sailed to South America for sixty concerts, went back to Europe, flew to Australia for several concerts, went back to Paris, took his family for a vacation, flew to London to make recordings and returned to California, where he recorded piano trios with Heifetz and Piatigorsky who were exhausted after a day's work; only Rubinstein, older than his partners, wasn't tired at all. His friend Edwin H. Knopf, the motion-picture producer, remembers a typical Rubinstein week a few years ago in New York. "It began with a good lunch at the Pavillon. In the afternoon Arthur went off to do some RCA recordings. We dined at night and went to see 'South Pacific'. Next morning he returned to RCA to select takes. In the afternoon he flew to Boston and performed that night with the Boston Symphony under Koussevitzky. Back to New York the next morning where we had a good lunch at the Brussels. That evening I picked him up and took him to the Met where he played an all-Chopin concert which would still sing in my mind if I lost my hearing tomorrow. At the end of the concert I was exhausted and thought Arthur would be put on a stretcher but he was full of life and informed me we were going to a party. By two in the morning I'd had it but Arthur remained until four. And he made the nine a.m. plane to Detroit where he was performing the following evening."

Last year Rubinstein recorded Beethoven's five piano concertos

with the Symphony of the Air orchestra under Josef Krips in several all-night sessions in New York, and inbetween acted as best man at the wedding of his older daughter Eva and the Reverend William Sloane Coffin Jr., Professor and Presbyterian Chaplain of Williams College. Of his Beethoven recordings Abram Chasins wrote, "he produced the ineffable tranquillity that was the crowning achievement of Beethoven's spiritual evolution." Guests at the marriage ceremony noticed that Rubinstein produced no ineffable tranquillity in church and that his famous platform poise seemed to falter. A doting father, Rubinstein later confessed that he didn't cherish the thought of his daughter leaving their home.

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Mrs. Rubinstein, a handsome, charming, vivacious woman, came in from the kitchen, taking off the white apron which she'd worn over her black dress. Mrs. Rubinstein has strict if somewhat out-moded notions of hospitality. The Rubinsteins have a good French cook but Mrs. Rubinstein prefers to do her own shopping in the markets of Paris and she loves to cook for her husband and for their friends. Rubinstein told me that his wife had spent the past two days - since they'd returned from London where he'd given two concerts - making the dishes for her supper party following his concert to-night to which the Rubinsteins had invited just a few intimate friends, not more than forty-five. (Most of them were really that, I was astonished to find out later that night.) Mrs. Rubinstein is as fond of her large, modern American kitchen as her husband is of his concert-

grand. During the preceding forty-eight hours she'd also unpacked their bags, repacked hers (she was flying to New York the next day to join her two younger children there), and his (he was flying to Spain for several concerts and would join his family in New York later), had talked to managers, piano tuners, friends and strangers (who wanted tickets though the concert was sold out), written letters and telegrams (it had been her idea to have me stay with them on the day of his concert), reminded her husband to get a haircut, and attended to the odds and ends of a smoothly running household, showing no symptoms of strain whatsoever, except for a few moments later that evening.

Unlike other Rubinstein myths - the myths of his being a boulevardier, raconteur, expert on European nobility and Cognacs, Paderewski's pupil and Hemingway's best friend, wit and gourmand which are only in part or not at all borne out by the facts - the myth of the successful Rubinstein marriage is fact though it sounds like women's magazine fiction. Last summer the Rubinsteins celebrated their silver wedding anniversary by giving a nice little party at the Casino of Deauville for their most intimate friends from all corners of the globe, not more than three hundred. An unreformed sentimentalist despite age and success, Rubinstein had bought his wife at Van Cleef & Arpels a set of earrings and matching ring, showing two love birds, made of diamonds. The Rubinsteins think of their marriage as a legalized affair passionel (= affaire passionnelle (=French)) in the grand style of Frèdèric Chopin and George Sands. They've never taken each other for granted; there was never, as Mrs. Rubinstein puts it, any "slipper business"

between them. She spoils him and he spoils her and it has worked out perfectly. When Rubinstein married her, he was forty-three, had been given up as unattainable by legions of would-be-brides, and his belief in the holy institution of matrimony had been severely shaken by the experiences of his bachelor days. But having decided at long last to take the chance he was firmly determined to make a success of it, and it was. Rubinstein's marriage is inseparable from his career as a mature artist; Rubinstein, the artist, is inseparable from Rubinstein, the man, husband and father. He discusses everything with his wife; when she doesn't travel with him, she talks to him almost every day on the telephone no matter where he is. She is his adviser, manager, secretary, accountant, chef, travelling companion, private physician, house psychiatrist, chauffeur, his favorite audience and severest critic. Rubinstein respects his wife's musical judgement. "I couldn't fool Nela," he said to me. "She knows when one note in a complicated pianissimo chord doesn't respond." Mrs. Rubinstein grew up in a musical home. Her father Emil Mlynarski was a prominent conductor, founder of the Warsaw Philharmonic orchestra and general director and conductor of the Warsaw Opera where the family occupied a large apartment, always surrounded by music and musicians. In 1902 the thirteen-year-old Rubinstein performed as soloist in a concert conducted by his future father-in-law, eleven years before his future wife was born.

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Now Rubinstein gallantly straightened out the pillow behind his

wife's back and filled her glass. Mrs. Rubinstein said that the movers would come at five for the concert grand on which Rubinstein would perform tonight at the Palais de Chaillot. These days Rubinstein always travels with his own piano. Once he had three Steinways shipped by air freight from New York to Buenos Aires, at a cost to him of thirty-six hundred dollars, after he got in an argument with the government of Dictator Juan D. Perón and was refused permission to unload the piano that he'd brought along on the boat from New York.

"Early each season Arthur goes into the basement of the Steinway Building on Fifty-seventh Street to select his piano from the fifteen or twenty concert-grands there," Mrs. Rubinstein said. "It's rare when he finds more than three he appreciates and one he's really crazy about. He's quite a sight hopping from one piano to the next, with that gleam in his eyes I've often noticed on our violin friends when they look at each others' Strads."

"Unlike fiddles pianos don't improve with age," Rubinstein said. "After a few years of being abused even the best concert-grand loses its incandescence. At Steinway's Centenary I gave a concert for the master craftsmen who build these great pianos with loving care for us who destroy them. When they cheered me at the end of the concert I suggested that we applaud to the piano as well. I know right away whether one of these concert-grands is right for me. Few of them have resonance and power, and respond easily. Usually the choice is between a piano that is easy on my fingers but doesn't give me the full range of tonal

expression, and one that has perfect sound but is hard to play and won't express the most delicate nuances. You play ten octaves in a row and are tired. After a while the piano gets easier to play but has lost some of its brilliance. This one here has beautiful resonance but is a little stubborn."

"You chose it because we liked the tone so much," said Mrs. Rubinstein.

"Yes. Nela and I always go together to the Steinway basement and usually we agree on our choice. I don't know where Nela gets the energy to do all these things. She did nearly everything you see in this house - remodeled it four years ago when we sold our big house in California, brought over carpets and furniture, put in new rooms and bathrooms, a new kitchen and heating system. It's now a comfortable American house in a comfortable part of Paris which isn't bad. You wouldn't have recognized the house after the war. We bought it in 1938 but the following year we went to America, and during the Occupation the house was taken over by the Gestapo as a dental laboratory - and maybe for other things. Our friend Georges Mandel was tortured out there in the lovely, tranquil Square du Bois de Boulogne before they killed him in the Bois de Vincennes."

Rubinstein passed his hand in front of his face as if wiping out the memory. "Everything was stolen. I had five thousand volumes of rare books, the memories of the first fifty years of my life I can never replace, beautiful first editions of Gogol, Pushkin, Dostojewski, and

a few paintings that meant much to me. A drawing of myself by Picasso with whom I spent so many nights in the Butte Montmartre. A self-portrait of Picasso from his blue period given to me by an English friend, showing Picasso in blue trousers and blue blouse, holding a knife behind his back as he approaches a bed with a beautiful nude on it. The picture probably hangs somewhere in the neighborhood but we'll never know. The Germans stole some things and French collaborationists stole others. The concierge was a Pétainiste. Then people moved in and it took us years of litigation and a lot of money to get them out. When we came back in 1954, the house was cleaned out. Nelda made the rounds of the antique shops trying to find some of our things but she had no luck."

The Rubinsteins spend summer and fall in their Paris house and the rest of the year in New York where they have a large, comfortable apartment on Park Avenue and Sixty-sixth Street - their thirty-third home - which is filled with paintings, carpets, couches, pianos, children, noise and confusion. Of the four Rubinstein children their oldest, Eva, twenty-~~five~~ four, who gave up a promising stage career when she got married (her last part was that of the older sister in the Broadway production of "The Diary of Anne Frank") now lives in Williamstown, Massachusetts; Paul, twenty-~~four~~ three, ~~is a student~~ in California; and the younger two children, Alina, ~~twelve~~ 13, and John Arthur, ~~ten~~ 11, who look like Hansel and Gretel, go to school in New York. When the Rubinsteins are in New York, they try to spend as much time as they can with their children. While life in the Square du Bois de Boulogne is sometimes flavored with

the refined tastes of Rubinstein's literary and artistic friends, the Park Avenue home is happily down-to-earth. During the holidays the older children come to New York, and Mrs. Rubinstein's old mother who now lives in America, may visit with them and other relatives and friends drop in and there is bedlam in half a dozen languages.

"In New York we spend much time with the children and have early dinner with them," Mrs. Rubinstein said. "We supervise their homework. They play the piano for Arthur. The older children aren't very musical, but have no talent for piano Paul rarely went to Arthur's concerts when he was little but he was quite impressed when his father was asked for his autograph by the Quiz Kids after a radio show, and when they went to a Rose Bowl game and so many people seemed to know his father. But the younger children are gifted musicians. Arthur already talks on his own terms with them and shows them how to do things on the piano. He's not teaching them but he got them a good teacher. Maybe someone will continue the family tradition. We bring the children to bed and read them stories. On Sundays we have enormous meals. Afterwards we sit around the large dining room table and play games or solve crossword puzzles. The floor is covered with tons of newspapers. We listen to the radio and to recordings, or the whole family sits on my oversized bed and watches television. Arthur loves to perform for the kids as a mimic."

"They think I'm funnier than most comedians they see on TV," said Rubinstein.

"And their letters when we're gone!" said his wife. "They make

drawings for us and write books and illustrate them, and there's always a small heart somewhere. The heart is the Rubinstein trademark. When Arthur spends a few weeks in New York, we go out with friends and see the shows - Arthur likes to see the better plays several times. When he's on tour, I have no social life. I spend my evenings with the children and go to bed with them early. Arthur and I often wish we could spend more time with the children. When we are not there, our Kathryn Cardwell looks after them. We met her seventeen years ago in Brentwood. It was a lucky day; I don't know what we would have done without Kate. She's been a Godsend of efficiency and kindness."

I asked about the Rubinstein romance which, I'd read, began one day in the spring of 1928 in Warsaw, during a recital of Arthur Rubinstein. It seems that Nel[illegible]a Mlynarski, age fifteen, was sitting in the first row. It was love at first sight, followed by the complications that occur in the better operettas. Boy met girl and boy lost girl because Rubinstein had old-fashioned ideas about having to make some money before asking Nel[illegible]a to marry him. He went away and stayed away four years, never even sending a postcard, and the heroine, after a great deal of crying, came to the conclusion that the whole thing had just been a beautiful dream. When a serious-minded suitor appeared, she hurriedly married him before she might change her mind. Re-enters Rubinstein, a wealthier, wiser, sadder man, somewhat like Eugen Onegin in the last act of Tchaikovsky's heart-breaking opera. Great scene. Nel[illegible]a's first marriage was terminated amicably. This time Rubinstein knew better and married her as soon as

she was free. We fade out with a storybook wedding in London, in July, 1932.

Somehow much of Rubinstein's earnings had quickly gone on gifts, parties and honeymoon happiness, and the couple moved into Rubinstein's bachelor quarters in a ~~run-down building~~ little pavillion in Rue Ravignan, a celebrated if somewhat disreputable neighborhood across the street from the Bâteau Lavoir, where Utrillo, Van Dongen and Picasso had carried on in the manner of "La Bohème", just a few steps from Utrillo's "Château d'Eau" and Renoir's "Moulin de la Galette," high up in the Butte Montmartre. There Rubinstein lived in a large study with a bathroom, and his valet-cook prepared the food on a single gas-ring in a nook, but the inconvenience was balanced by an old, charming, quaint garden. The young bride rented a regular kitchen and dining room in the old house across the garden, and when the Rubinsteins returned the following year with their first child, born in Buenos Aires "between the seventeenth and eighteenth concert of the 1933 tour", they rented another room in a different part of the house for the baby and her Polish nurse. The arrangement created logistical questions for Mrs. Rubinstein who set up a regular shuttle service across the garden. Mrs. Rubinstein's major problem in life has been her inability to be in several places at the same time. She's constantly torn between her duty to her husband and to her children. Should she go with him on his trips or stay with them at home? It's a perpetual dilemma.

"When our first two children were very young, I would leave them with my parents in Warsaw, or with the Edouard de Rothschild's in Paris,"

Mrs. Rubinstein said. "Once I accompanied Arthur on a six-month tour of the Soviet Union and the Far East seventeen days after our second child, Paul, was born in Warsaw. People said I was crazy. We wanted to be back for Eva's second birthday, On August eighteenth, and had to cut short the tour."

"I turned down several offers, including an invitation to play before Joseph Stalin," Rubinstein said. "Not that I ever regretted it."

"We began our Odyssey home in Manila by plane and wound up in Warsaw by foot, walking from the railway station to my parents' home and we got there just a few minutes before midnight of August eighteenth," Mrs. Rubinstein said. "Eva woke up and put her hands around us and said, 'Don't go away!' Arthur and I broke into tears. And Paul had become a big baby. We had the terrible feeling that we'd missed something that would never come back."

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The French maid with the starched apron announced lunch. Rubinstein got up quickly, took his wife to the table, showed me to my seat, poured the wine, just a drop for himself. "Tonight, after the concert, I can have all the champagne I want," he said. He enjoyed himself despite his regime. Mrs. Rubinstein had given loving attention to our lunch. We had fresh mushroom soup, her husband's favorite, the way it was made in Poland.

"I left Poland when I was eight and have never been back for

any length of time but I've never lost touch," said Rubinstein.

"A lot of Arthur's friends have come to this house in the past years when they are in Paris," Mrs. Rubinstein said. "Some took quite a chance. We'll go to Warsaw next summer for the first time in 20 years ~~for the Chopin Festival~~. It will be exciting, and very moving. Arthur talks a lot of his father as he gets older. So many things come back to him now."

Rubinstein nodded. "I even eat caviar now as Uncle Jacub did. He was a bachelor, always involved with fascinating femmes fatales. His sisters would sigh when they talked of him. They adored him. Uncle Jacub had caviar for breakfast, smearing it thickly on a roll. That's the way I like it best now. The finest caviar I ever had was in Astrakhan where I gave a concert in the 'twenties. The local Maecenas was a man named Zishin. Fetched me at the station and invited me to a party after the concert. He talked more about his party than about my concert which bothered me but later I understood. What a party! It started at midnight and lasted until six o'clock the following afternoon. A Tartar a cappella choir sang a Polonaise. A corps de ballet danced a Mazurka. And the food! They brought in a large ice block, with the form of a sturgeon holed out, filled with fresh, unsalted, gray caviar. They didn't served you like in those fancy restaurants " - Rubinstein knocked his spoon nervously against his plate, in the manner of a maître d'hôtel serving the precious stuff - "you had all you wanted and when it was gone, they brought in another block. By three in the morning Zishin offered me his eternal friendship, his house and his mistress. 'Go on, sit on Arthur's lap!' he yelled at her."

"What did you do?" Mrs. Rubinstein asked with sudden interest, switching to Polish.

"I moved away."

"Why? Wasn't she pretty?"

"Very pretty. But I didn't want to wind up with a knife in my back in Astrakhan."

"Arthur should have written a diary," Mrs. Rubinstein said to me, in English.

"Yes," he said, in English, "I've got material for half a dozen books. But I can't do it." Rubinstein has a slight Polish accent that shows in the guttural "h", sounding like the German "ch", and in his open "o". That afternoon he spoke Polish to his wife, English and German with me, French with the maid, Russian and Italian on the telephone; he did not speak Spanish and Portuguese which he also speaks fluently, and he reads half a dozen other languages. The Rubinsteins switch with no effort whatsoever from one language into another as if they were using merely different idioms of the same language. Garson Kanin, the stage director, a friend of the Rubinsteins, recently attended with Mrs. Rubinstein his concert in Zurich, walking down the aisle behind her. "By the time Nela had reached her seat, she'd greeted people in eight different languages," Kanin says.

The mushroom soup was followed by another Polish dish, partridge rolled in bacon with red cabbage which Mrs. Rubinstein passed up because of a new, narrow Italian dress she was going to wear tonight. The food

set off Rubinstein on more reminiscences. "I've always been in love with Warsaw's physical beauty," he said. "The buildings and parks, the flowers and pretty girls in the street, and the cafés. Warsaw was a bewitching lady. The Philharmonia was one of the best orchestras in Europe. Nel#a's father would have both Paderewski and Kreisler as soloists at the same concert. And the opera house was first-rate. I would give a couple of concerts each spring and loved to spend a week there, seeing my friends and playing billiards at the Café de l'Europe. But they wouldn't let me. After three days my friends began to whisper, 'Rubinstein must be on his way out - he has no more concerts.' After five days even my enemies would say that Rubinstein was all washed up. Once I got so angry that I asked my manager to arrange for me a concert in Vienna the day after my Warsaw recital. When my friends came to my dressing room after the concert I told them there was going to be no party as usual. I would leave on the midnight train for Vienna where I was playing the next evening. The silly fools were delighted. 'Did you hear what he said?' they said, slapping their backs. 'Rubinstein is so busy now he can't even spend a week with his old friends in Warsaw.' Took me to the train and gave me a terrific ovation.

"Warsaw audiences were finicky but the worst were my relatives. One of my aunts specialized in unfavorable bits in my reviews. She would discount an excellent write-up in the London Times or the Paris Figaro but was delighted to read in the Johannesburg Courier or St. Galler Tagblatt that I'd played the second movement of the Brahms D Minor concerto

too fast. She would read to me from an obscure Austrian monthly, Echo der Musik: 'Rubinstein dazzled his audience with the Chopin etudes.' She gave me a hard stare. I crouched. 'He performed Liszt with virtuosity.' Another stare. I knew the blow would soon fall. 'He played the Tchaikovsky with brilliance. But something was amiss in the slow movement. No soul.'"

Rubinstein was pleased when we burst into laughter after his impersonation of the melancholy aunt. There's something of the ham in him. The late Max Reinhardt once told him, "If you hadn't become a pianist, Rubinstein, you would be a damn good actor." He admits to being an unmitigated extrovert.

"I always need an audience," he said now. "I need people to play for, talk to, eat with... Isn't Nellie's chocolate pudding wonderful? One of my favorites!... Yes, I need people; I need their enthusiasm; they help me to believe in myself. My audiences work with me; I am merely their spokesman. They make a deposit with my which I try to repay with interests. Sometimes when I play a soft, beautiful, melodic piece - a Chopin nocturne, for instance - there comes a supreme moment when a spell seems to fall over the three thousand people in front of me and it is so quiet in the large auditorium that I can hear my own heartbeat. I feel I've got them right there in the palm of my hand; I'm in heaven. I'm just a born performer. Sometimes I practise in my hotel room when the waiter brings in the breakfast. Suddenly I no longer practise; I perform for the waiter. Dammit, I'm going to make him listen to me. I am pleased when he gives me an appreciative glance. John, our youngest boy, is that way too.

I am mesmerized by my public and I watch my audience constantly. I know when Nel[illegible]a isn't attentive and I get worried."

One night Rubinstein came on the stage of the vast Palermo opera house after intermission and knew instinctively that his wife wasn't in her box. (He couldn't see a thing in the large, dark auditorium.) He played the first piece nervously. Suddenly, he was relaxed; he knew she was there now. Afterwards she told him she'd met friends on her way to the box and had chatted with them during the first piece. Rubinstein is glad when he knows "at least one person" in the audience he can play for. If he knows no one, he selects a person. In a large French city he played for an old lady in the front row. Afterwards she came backstage, a majestic Sarah Bernhardt figure in Black. She said quietly, "Maître, vous avez joué pour moi," and when Rubinstein nodded, she thanked him and left.

Several years ago, Rubinstein was giving a concert in Manchester, England. He was "in good voice" and reasonably satisfied with himself when all of a sudden he felt "being choked." Trying to find the disturbing influence, Rubinstein noticed two men way up in the gallery, an old one with a beard and a younger one. Rubinstein was certain they wished him bad luck. Later he found out that they were a lawyer and his protégé, a young pianist who had hoped to perform that night instead of Rubinstein. During a concert in Craców, Poland, Rubinstein became suddenly nervous sensing that his friend the composer Szymanowski must be in the audience. Szymanowski was interested only in his own music and bored with everything else. After the concert, Szymanowski came to see him; he had appeared at the hall exactly the moment when Rubinstein had sensed it.

We moved back for coffee into the drawing room and Rubinstein talked about pianist-composers. Like other celebrated performers he has often wished he could write his own music. Unlike other first-rate pianists however who are now remembered chiefly as second-rate composers, Rubinstein had enough sense to quit after his juvenile efforts. "I wasn't good enough," he was saying now. "At the time I wrote these little pieces I was very fond of them though. Especially the one I wrote when I was ten or eleven."

"You never played it for me," said Mrs. Rubinstein, and she sounded hurt. "And now you've forgotten it."

"I haven't." He went to the piano and played a short, charming piece that showed the influence of Chopin. To me the remarkable thing was that he remembered it - after some fifty-nine years! He came back to the table and chose one of his beloved cigars. They are made for him by the Upmann people in Havana. The gold band has his signature and his name, spelled "Rubistein", as they pronounce it in Latin America. We talked about audiences. Having performed in almost all countries on earth where a piano and an audience were available, "practically all except Tibet and Afghanistan," Rubinstein knows that some audiences are warm and effusive while others are restrained and unresponsive though they may be just as appreciative. The map of Rubinstein's private world is dotted with enthusiastic, lukewarm and cold audiences. In some cities people are told by pompous critics that they must not applaud after the earlier movements of a piece and never, God forbid, in the middle of

a movement, but Rubinstein thinks there's nothing wrong with applause at anytime as long as it is genuine.

"Saint-Saëns who had known Liszt told me that Liszt had loved applause after a difficult cadenza as tenors love it after a ringing high C. This business of applause made life hard for me in Spain before I came to know the Spanish. They would greet me with deadly silence. Not one hand clapping. They would sit there, stone-faced, challenging as if saying, 'Let him show us what he can do!' They treat you as a toreador, but if you 'show them,' the sky is the limit. The Spanish adopted me."

Rubinstein and Spain have carried on a love affair since he was a boy. He was deeply impressed by the haunting harmonies and strong rhythms of Spain's music. A simple song, "La Paloma," was always in the back of his mind; he sensed the colors and exuberance of Spain, and its misery and suffering. For years he tried to go there "but the Spaniards wouldn't have me." During one of his prolonged-starvation periods in the First World War Rubinstein was invited to lunch at the Paris town house of a wealthy, Chilean matriarch and patroness of the arts, Eugenia de Errazuriz. After lunch he played for her the entire score of "Salome," this being his Richard Strauss era. She was moved and asked him what he would like to do. "Go to Spain," Rubinstein said unhesitatingly.

"This remark started a chain of miracles," Rubinstein said now, drawing happily on his Rubistein, exhaling the smoke. "Sometimes I think that more miracles have happened to me than to Saint Sebastian. An impresario called and offered me to play the Brahmns D Minor concerto in

in ~~Santander~~ Sebastian. Of course, there was the passport problem. My entire early life was beset by passport troubles because as a Polish patriot I'd avoided military service in the Czarist Army. For years I had to travel under a false Russian passport. Complications arose when I was offered a tour in Russia but with the help of a brother of Tchaikovsky and the Russian ambassador in Rome, who liked pianists, I got a diplomatic passport. At the Russian border two gendarmes approached me. I thought they were going to arrest me; instead they offered to carry my luggage. And the Polish government ~~under Paderewski~~ gave me a diplomatic passport inscribed "On a Mission of Art for Poland" ... But back to Madame ~~Errazuriz~~! My passport wasn't good for Spain but she straightened it out with two ambassadors, and then she called Harold Nicolson, got him to talk to Sir Edward Gray, ~~First Lord of the Admiralty~~ the foreign minister at the time, and I went to Bilbao on a British warship because I couldn't travel through France. In ~~Santander~~ Sebastian I discovered that the name of another pianist had been scratched out on the program and my name substituted in ink, and also that they hated Brahms. But I was asked to give a second concert and played the Tchaikovsky concerto. Queen Victoria Eugenia asked me to her box. The rest was easy. A local croupier who doubled up as impresario offered me a tour of twenty concerts. By the time I left Spain, I'd given a hundred and twenty concerts - six in Madrid were sold out in forty-eight hours - had money, fame and confidence in myself, a picture from King Alfons XIII, inscribed 'to the best friend of Spain' and a diplomatic passport 'for Arthur Rubinstein, Polish pianist' that got me to South America where they loved me."

Rubinstein was loved on both sides of Spain's political fence. His aristocratic friends offered him the brotherly "thou"; members of the revolutionary groups dedicated to him a new revolutionary march. He played in big cities and small towns. Shopkeepers refused to take his money and hotel-owners refused to give him a bill. For years he didn't play Spanish music which, he thought, only the Spaniards could play, until he came to Mallorca and met the widow and daughter of the composer Isaac Albéniz whose music Rubinstein loved. He played Albéniz' "Iberia" suite for the two women. They were in tears and a few times the daughter exclaimed, "Did you hear, Mama? Exactly as Papa used to play it." From then on Rubinstein played Albéniz, de Falla and Granados everywhere.

He didn't return to his beloved Spain for twenty years after Franco came to power. Last year he gave two benefit concerts in Barcelona and Madrid for old musicians many of whom had once performed with him. He was happy to discover that his popularity had survived the Civil War, the Second World War and Franco's dictatorship. A few months ago he gave a concert in Santander - in the town square, the only place large enough to accomodate all his fans. The police chief assured Rubinstein that no sound from the four thousand listeners would disrupt his al fresco performance. "You will make the noise, Arturo," he said, "and I will make the silence." Afterwards the fans carried Rubinstein on their shoulders to his hotel, and a local paper headlined, APOTEOSIS DE RUBINSTEIN EN LA PLAZA PORTICADA.

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Later in the afternoon - Rubinstein was going to work and rest a while before his concert - Mrs. Rubinstein made me accompany her on a couple of errands. "Arthur is getting a little tense," she said, as we were riding in her small Aronde toward Etoile. "Usually, we have no visitors on the day of his concert. We have a quiet lunch, just the two of us, and Arthur reads or walks or goes to a movie; anything to take his mind off the concert. He loves his work but atones for it before each concert. After performing for sixty years, he's still keyed up and a little panicky at the approach of eight:thirty p.m. He compares it to a sort of pregnancy. I begin to notice it during the afternoon of the previous day. Arthur stares into space and lapses into silence. He has a genuine sense of obligation to his audience; he claims they've paid and are entitled to hear him at his best. Last year in New York he had a splitting headache on the day of a recital but refused to take a pill which might dull his perception. I'm a little tense myself today. Paris is a tough city; so are New York, London, Rome, Chicago, Boston. On such nights Arthur may step up to the piano at home just before leaving the house to play a few scales with a lot of wrong notes in them and I get terrified though I should know that his fingers are cold and all will be well when he's onstage. There's a tension in the air wherever Arthur gives a concert. It builds up for days, people calling, strangers writing letters; everybody is a little excited, in a festive spirit. They know they won't just hear another piano recital but get some of Arthur's warmth and personality."

And Mrs. Rubinstein smiled to herself, placidly ignoring a frantic traffic flic who waved, whistled and finally gave up. "Every summer," she said, "Arthur takes off a couple of months. Toward the end of the summer he is in a deep state of gloom wondering whether he still has that magic touch. The first concert of the season is an ordeal and afterwards Arthur is quite surprised when people cheer him. Enthusiasm often makes him uneasy. 'I wasn't that good,' he says to me. He was happy last week in London. All these young people who crowded around his piano after the concert! Arthur doesn't want to become a monument and a source of nostalgia to his older listeners. He wants to be accepted by the young people for what he is today, and he doesn't mind their criticism which can be cruel. But in his happiest moments he is alone with his piano. One night last year in New York I'd been out with friends and came home late. Everybody was asleep except Arthur. He was in the dim living room playing Chopin. His face was transfigured by a happy, divine glow; he was completely dedicated to the music and absolutely happy. I was so moved I went into our bedroom and began to cry."

On the way to Montmartre where she was going to show me their first home, Mrs. Rubinstein filled me in on Rubinstein's Conquest of America, a saga spanning a period of thirty-one years. He first came to the United States early in 1906, at the invitation of the Knabe Piano Company people who had been told about the boy wonder by the music critic Apthorp, Paderewski's friend. On the boat the seventeen-year-old boy wonder took a short-order course in poker and lost every cent of the two hundred

dollars he had on him. He made his debut in Philadelphia, and a few days later in Carnegie Hall, with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Fritz Scheel. He irritated the conductor and the ~~musicians~~ by playing two encores ("today Arthur would know better than to do that"), but ~~left~~ had the audience shout with enthusiasm but ~~totally unimpressed,~~ ~~and~~ the consensus of critical opinion was that he was "no longer a prodigy and not yet an adult." His only good notices were in Chicago, where he gave a return engagement on April 16 which changed his schedule and may or may not have saved his life; originally he'd been scheduled to play that night in San Francisco - the night of the earthquake. Elsewhere he gave generally unnoticed and widely unattended matinee recitals in various theatres belonging to the Shuberts who had organized the tour. He would look for a piano in the theatre where he could practise but when he opened a door there would be some chorus girls which didn't exactly put the boy wonder into a practising frame of mind. In New York he played at the old Casino Theatre. In St. Louis he was offered partnership by an artist who could imitate musical instruments with his mouth.

Rubinstein was so depressed at the end of his first American tour that he went into temporary retirement in Europe and re-appeared only four years later. At the beginning of the First World War he tried to enlist with the Polish Legion in ~~London~~ Paris but instead wound up as interpreter at Allied headquarters. Later he and Eugene Ysayë, the great Belgian violinist, made a tour of Allied army camps and became friends. In 1919, Rubinstein made his second trip to America, under the management

of R.E. Johnston. His friend Ysaÿe, conducting the Cincinnati Symphony Ochestra, didn't help matters when he made the orchestra play a fanfare at the entrance of his soloist. The audience thought such an encomium was a prerogative of royalty. Rubinstein wasn't much of a success on his second American try. After a Carnegie Hall concert on February 20, the New York Times called him a miniaturist and his style "casual." The improvisations that had gone over so well with the excitable Spanish and South-American audiences made no hit with his more dispassionate listeners in the States. The critics berated Rubinstein for dropping too many notes and the managers for asking too much money. The Big Four - Paderewski, Godowsky, Rachmaninoff, Hofmann - dominated the concert halls. Inevitably Rubinstein was an also-ran. Disgusted he went back to Europe and said he was never going to return to the United States. That he did eventually return, eighteen years later, in 1937, was due to several circumstances. For one thing, the "new" Rubinstein had reformed, worked hard and matured. His rise coincided with the ascendancy of the modern phonograph, and a growing number of record fans in America knew him from his recordings of Chopin and Tchaikovsky, made in London for His Master's Voice; the ranks of the great ones had been decimated by old age and death; and Sol Hurok, who had met Rubinstein in Chaliapine's house in ~~Paris~~ New York in 1923 sensed that Rubinstein was ready for America and that America was ready for him. What clinched the deal was Hurok's willingness to attend to all distracting detail - promotion, publicity, business conferences, taxes - that Rubinstein didn't want to be bothered with so he could concentrate on playing the piano.

Rubinstein's third try in America, when he performed the Tchaikovsky concerto with the New York Philharmonic Symphony on November 21, 1937, in Carnegie Hall, sent off the critics in search of suitable superlatives, doubled his fees instantly, and made Tchaikovsky (in Freddie Martin's version of "Tonight We Love") a victim of Tin Pan Alley and the composer of the number one Hit Parade song. American audiences have remained loyal to Rubinstein ever since and he, in turn, has become fond of them. Where else, he says, can you give a concert for three thousand people in a town with a population of fifteen thousand? Small towns in the Midwest are more appreciative of good music than such old European cities as Lyon or Bordeaux. Rubinstein has seen this country come of age musically and there is nowhere the Barnum and Bailey attitude toward music that depressed him so much in 1906 and later in 1920.

"We left Paris and moved to New York in 1939," Mrs. Rubinstein was saying while she manoeuvered the small car through an improbable traffic jam toward Montmartre. "For a year we rented a charming house on the East Side, Forty-eighth Street, and then we moved to California where we were naturalized in 1946. Our two younger children were born there; they are the only native Americans in the family. We were lucky to have the second set of kids ten years after the first; they kept us young. We liked California, its climate and the people and the easy life. We had a house in Brentwood and later we bought a beautiful hilltop house in Beverly Hills that was paid for by Arthur's American recording royalties and which he called The House that Victor Built. The kids referred to it as The House Next to Ingrid Bergman's."

We were now going up Rue Lépic. Mrs. Rubinstein stopped the car in front of the large building that I'd seen on the paintings in the dining room. The door to the garage-like study, their first home in Paris, was locked; the paint came peeling off the dirty-gray façade. Mrs. Rubinstein touched the iron door knob which, she said, had been Ruth Draper's wedding present to them. Behind the study, separated by the garden, was a large, run-down apartment house filled with noise, the smell of garlic, with a dim lamp in the corridor. It was a cold, depressing place and it seemed thousands of miles away from the civilized comfort of the house in the Square du Bois de Boulogne.

"We've been terribly happy here," Mrs. Rubinstein said, with a smile, as she looked out on the small, neglected garden with its old trees, gray and silent in the wintry afternoon. "We had lovely parties in the garden. We hung up colored lanterns and hired a street trio, with a singer and accordion. The dukes and millionaires thought it was more fun than the elegant balls they gave in their palaces. All the people in the neighborhood were our friends, and when we went away for a couple of days, half a dozen women in that house would look after our children. Now we ~~don't even~~ hardly know our neighbors. When our older children are in Paris, they always come to look at the place, and Arthur often sneaks away from the Square du Bois de Boulogne and sits in that café down there, has a bock and watches the people." Mrs. Rubinstein gave a long, fond glance at the garden and said, "I think we'll have to go..."

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A concert pianist is an astonishing phenomenon of mnemonics and precision. He plays hundreds of thousands of notes during a single concert, more than any other musical performer; only an electronic brain could figure out exactly how many. But while an electronic brain is expected to make an occasional mistake, the pianist is not permitted to do so. His margin of error is monstrously small. If he hits five wrong notes among five hundred thousand, some people will say he's slipping. He must hit the right notes at the right moment in the right way with the right strength of tone, he must coax a singing tone and lovely cantilene from the recalcitrant machinery of the piano, and he must convey the mood and beauty of the music with good taste and in proper style. He is exposed to the scrutiny of audience, critics and competitors some of whom can hardly wait to take his place. The competition is terrific and the chances infinitesimal; there are about half a dozen pianists today who are able to maintain themselves entirely from giving concerts. The nervous strain is atrocious and would ruin many men after a couple of years. Rubinstein has been doing it for over sixty years, and was still going strong. I thought of all this when I came back to the house in the Square du Bois de Boulogne, at half past eight - half an hour before the beginning of the concert.

It was very cold, and the cold was made unpleasant by a chilly dampness that is typical of Paris in winter. A large black limousine, with a uniformed chauffeur, stood in front of the house, and the gate was open. In the entrance hall Rubinstein's fur-lined top-coat, black

Toulouse Lautrec

hat and silk scarf were lying on the chair below the ~~Gauguin~~; a small handbag with brush and comb were there, but I saw no scores. In the drawing room, the cook and maid, helped by two men from a catering service, set up small tables and gold-backed Empire chairs. The room seemed strangely empty. The concert-grand had been taken away, and the stop watch and metronome were now lying on the smaller piano, and also Ravel's "Tombeau de Couperin," opened on the same page as at noon.

Mrs. Rubinstein came down the stairway, wearing what I supposed to be the new, narrow Italian dress and a small black evening hat. The cook gasped in admiration and the maid said, "Ah, comme c'est jolie, Madame!" Mrs. Rubinstein turned around on her heels like a little girl showing off her first party dress. The cook asked whether she should put a little sugar into the choucroute. Mrs. Rubinstein said, no, put in a little pepper instead. The maid brought her a cup of black coffee and she sipped it absently.

"Arthur has started to shave only now," she said to me. "It's all my fault. The hairdresser came late, I didn't prepare his things in time, and now everything is late. I'm beginning to shake. What time is it?"

I said it was twenty to nine.

"Oh, my God!" said Mrs. Rubinstein and went upstairs again, leaving half the cup of coffee on the table. The house became very quiet but it was an uneasy quietness. The two men in the drawing room talked in nervous whispers. Everybody glanced at the clock whose fingers seemed to be

running terribly fast. I thought of Paris traffic at that hour, and of the three thousand people who were now getting settled in their seats in the Palais de Chaillot - and of Rubinstein still shaving upstairs.

He came down with his wife at ten minutes to nine. His face was fresh and pinkish against the white tie and shirt front. He gave us a smile but I noticed a tense look in his eyes and when he put on the top-coat and couldn't find the armhole right away, he seemed slightly ex-asperated.

The big limousine was gone. Mrs. Rubinstein's small Aronde stood there; it must have been behind the limousine all the time. I quickly got into the narrow back-seat, Rubinstein sat down in front of me, and his wife behind the wheel. The car wouldn't start. No one said a word while Mrs. Rubinstein pressed down the starter and fumbled with the choke. At last, the engine began to sputter and cough. Then the windshield wiper wouldn't work; I noticed only now that the windshield was covered by a fine film of ice that must have formed during the past hour. Rubinstein wanted to get out but his wife said sharply, "No, Arthur, not you!" She got out and tried to rub a small spot into the windshield but gave up after a moment and came back with a shrug.

"There's no time," she said. "Never mind. I can drive with the window open."

We passed a taxi stand and I suggested that we get into a cab but she shook her head. ("I too have a stubborn Polish mind," she said to me later when we talked about it.) We had to wait a long time for a

light to change before crossing Avenue Foch, and a few blocks farther away we narrowly escaped a collision with another speeding car at an intersection. A large, lighted clock showed two minutes past nine. Rubinstein sat motionless, hands deep in his pockets, hat pulled down over his forehead, silent and somewhat remote. Near the side entrance of the Palais de Chaillot, Mrs. Rubinstein kissed her husband and made a cross-like sign on his forehead. "I am always being blessed that way," he said, and then he was gone. We parked the car and went in through corridors, past water pipes and heating ducts, and down in a large elevator. The auditorium is below street level.

"Last year the elevator stopped between floors and we were trapped for ten minutes," Mrs. Rubinstein said. "Nothing works here."

We crossed a dim backstage, where two firemen sat reading their newspapers, and came into a small, cold, unfriendly room with a few chairs and an old upright piano. From the auditorium came the muted sounds of many voices. A bell was ringing. Rubinstein was pacing, massaging his cold fingers, trying to get his blood circulation going. He seemed lost and forlorn in the unfriendly room. His friends, his audience, his critics and his enemies were out there, his manager was elsewhere, and now his wife, after another kiss, left him, and he was all alone, and there was nothing anybody could do for him now.

The small door between the room and the auditorium was locked and the man with the key was gone. We had to walk all the way back where we'd come and go in through the main entrance which was now deserted.

The large auditorium - the largest in Paris which few artists are able to fill - was sold out and people sat in three rows of chairs on the podium behind the piano. Mrs. Rubinstein greeted several friends. At last we reached her box. She seemed exhausted as she dropped her mink coat over the back of her chair. "I'm still shaking," she said. "I'll know right away whether Arthur's all right."

The lights dimmed. People shuffled their feet and cleared their throats as the dapper, stocky figure of Rubinstein appeared on the flood-lit stage. People applauded, and he bowed, in the American manner, with his head, not from the waist, to all sides and to the people behind the piano. He grasped the lapels of his tailcoat, thumbs underneath, pulling them down with a gesture of determination, swept back his coattails and sat down behind the piano, erect and immobile. He placed his right hand on the keyboard, and sat there waiting.

Then there was an interval that must have seemed interminable to Mrs. Rubinstein who had stopped breathing - until a soft, singing, floating melody came out of the piano, the austere theme of the Andante of Schumann's Symphonic Etudes, opus 13. Mrs. Rubinstein relaxed, turned toward me and gave me a thank-God-all's-well look. But the audience wasn't ready yet for the melancholy mood of Schumann and there was a lot of coughing and stirring. Everytime somebody coughed next to us, the sound seemed to cut into Mrs. Rubinstein's flesh and I noticed that she winced. At the end of the piece there was polite applause. But with the next selection on his program, Schubert's two impromptus, opus 90, Rubinstein

immediately established communication with his audience. The music of Schubert enveloped the large auditorium in a halo of beautiful melody. People leaned back and began to enjoy themselves; some closed their eyes. Rubinstein gave the impression of performing for each listener especially; he seemed to change in mood and appearance with each piece he was performing. A moody sentimentalist during the Schumann, he seemed happy and elated as he "sang" Schubert's melodies, and when he began Liszt's B Minor sonata, he was the virtuoso in the grand romantic manner. Alfred Cortot, the French pianist wrote about this piece, "...une illustration du Faust de Goethe... Liszt a enfermé tous les sentiments de Faust dans cette sonate: le désespoir, l'ardeur, l'enthousiasme, le rêve, la tendresse, l'ironie." The virtuoso piece of many moods gave Rubinstein a chance to show his magnificent powers of transition; he played the sonata in the spectacular fashion of a twentieth-century Liszt that many people have come to see in him. The musical and technical difficulties were tremendous but at no time Rubinstein gave the impression of laboring.

There was a terrific ovation, and he bowed everywhere, to the left and right, the people in front and those behind him, and again he seemed to be thanking each of them separately just as he'd played for each of them. Mrs. Rubinstein said, "Quick, let's go backstage." This time the door was opened by a suspicious man who let us into the small dressing room. Rubinstein had just come in from the platform. His face was covered with perspiration, his shirt front was wrinkled, but he looked exuberant.

"Well?" he asked his wife.

"Oh, Arthur!" said Mrs. Rubinstein and embraced him. He gallantly kissed her hands. He was no longer tense; he was enjoying himself.

"I had a little trouble with my piano in the Schumann," he said. He seemed to be talking to himself. He went to the upright and played a phrase, without sitting down. "Yes. I could have done it better on this one."

"You are soaking wet, Arthur," said his wife.

"Liszt gave me a workout." They were speaking Polish again. He said to me, in English, "You've got to give something to each person out there. Some want bravura and others want mood. One comes to hear lovely melodies and another likes polyphonous sweep. And in the end all of them should leave with a feeling of contentment and elation." And in Polish to his wife, "Which of the Chopin etudes should I play? The Revolution?" The program said he was going to play four (out of the twenty-seven) Chopin etudes. "M. Rubinstein va effeuiller quatre fleurs du bouquet choisies par lui à l'impromptu."

"No Arthur, not the Revolution. You've worked hard enough tonight. How about the sad one I like so much?"

"G flat Major?" He played the beginning. She nodded eagerly and suggested another one.

"It's not quite ready yet."

"But you've played it for fifty years."

"Yes, but it's not quite ready yet."

We were joined by several friends of the Rubinsteins. Rubinstein kissed the hands of the women, embraced the men, laughed, talked, enjoyed himself as if the concert were over and the party had begun. A women pianist asked him how he'd played a particular passage in the Liszt and he showed her on the upright piano. The room was filled with laughter, excited talk and expensive perfumes. Many performers shut themselves off during intermission but Rubinstein seemed to thrive on the cheerful bedlam around him. A child prodigy was presented by her mother and would have auditioned right away if Mrs. Rubinstein hadn't intervened and told them to come to the house the next morning.

The bell rang and the crowd began to thin out. Then there were only Mrs. Rubinstein and I with him. He said he was getting worried; he still hadn't decided which Chopin etudes to play. Mrs. Rubinstein said, "You will know when you are out there. You'll play the ones that are just right."

When we got back to our box, Rubinstein was already seated behind the piano. He played "Forlane" from Ravel's "Tombeau de Couperin" - not the pages that had been lying opened on his piano at home - and afterwards another Ravel piece, "Alborada del gracioso." Then he played Chopin. I noticed that the people around me had the happy air of kids at the end of a long dinner when cake and icecream are served at last. The four Chopin etudes he'd chosen <u>à l'impromptu</u> were "just right" and then he played the last piece on the program, Chopin's "Andante Spianato et Grande Polonaise," opus 22. It had become very quiet and the large auditorium

seemed to have shrunk to the size of a large living room. Rubinstein was playing his beloved Chopin for three thousand close friends. He was immersed in the iridescent harmonies and romantic melodies. You could feel the magic spell that went out from the white-haired man at the piano; the music was as much his as it was Chopin's. His face was lighted up, his lips parted; he looked up into space and he seemed to be listening to an inner voice as if he were lost in trance.

There was a moment of silence after he'd ended, as if the people couldn't find back their way from Chopin's dream world into reality, and then explosive applause and cheering. People wanted to tell him how grateful they were. Some shouted "A bientôt, Maître!", presumably being informed of Rubinstein's departure, and a tall, bony English woman called out in an imperial voice, "Do come back, Mr. Rubinstein!" Strangers smiled at one another, saying "Magnifique!" and when he came back to play encores, the people crowded around his piano on the platform, standing motionless and bewitched, a still life of dedication. An old woman in front of us was happily crying. No one wanted to go home; the Palais de Chaillot had become everybody's home and there was a large family party going on, and M. Rubinstein, a friend of the family, was playing.

Another encore, de Falla's "Ritual Fire-Dance." Mrs. Rubinstein said, "Now we can go home, this is always the last one." It's a stunt piece; during one passage Rubinstein alternately lifts his hands high above his head and lets them fall crashing down on the keyboard with infallible precision. Everybody looked as pleased as kids in the circus when the big acrobatics act has come off well.

Backstage there was cheerful pandemonium. Gushing ladies, kids with autograph books, policemen, admirers, old friends, and people trying to whisper into Rubinstein's ear. The two backstage firemen were still reading their newspapers, totally impervious to the brouhaha. A bearded man with the air of a conspirator handed Rubinstein a piece of paper. An elderly woman in black talked rapidly in Polish to "dear Arthur." A very old woman told Mrs. Rubinstein that she'd heard M. Rubinstein for the first time in Paris in 1909. "J'avais trente-cinq ans," she said wistfully. "Ah, Madame, les beaux souvenirs embellissent les vieilles vies. Merci." Somehow Mrs. Rubinstein made him put on hat and coat and managed to get him away from the crowd and into the car; while she started it, some persistent fans ran after it and knocked at the window, saying goodbye. Rubinstein slumped down in the front seat and exhaled with relief.

"Playing a concert is child's play compared to what happens afterwards," he said. "I remember faces but no names. Ghosts from the past appear and I'm embarrassed. Old ladies with their pretty, young daughters. I look at the daughters and forget that their mothers were young and pretty when they came to my dressing room forty years ago."

"The one in black who spoke to 'dear Arthur' in Polish must have been one of your friends forty years ago," Mrs. Rubinstein said testily.

"Wasn't she one of your friends?" he asked, surprised. "And that bearded man who wanted to sell me a Modigliani! They give me compositions and ask for letters of introduction. In Spain I was for months followed by a retired general with a commanding manner and a commanding wife.

He wrote military marches which she made him dedicate to me. I got so frightened once I escaped into the nearest bathroom. When I came out, there stood la generala. It was the ladies' room. She glared at me and thrust his latest march into my hands."

"If the marches had been any good, you wouldn't have run away," said Mrs. Rubinstein. "When Arthur believes in someone, he'll give him money, gets him a teacher and agent, does recordings with him, arranges for concerts. Arthur must have listened to legions of prodigies and young geniuses. He lets them play their prepared piece and then he gives them a simple thing by Schubert or Mozart to play for him, and usually they mess it up."

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The house in the corner of the Square du Bois de Boulogne was brilliantly illuminated by floodlights, like a Hollywood "premeer" theatre. About a dozen intimate friends were already milling around the living room, and Mrs. Rubinstein greeted them, while he went upstairs to change. More intimate friends kept arriving until both downstairs rooms were crowded. There were almost sixty people. A large buffet had been set up in the dining room, and there were the selections of Mrs. Rubinstein's "program," langoustines in aspic jelly, a pâté and choucroute, Polish style, and other good things. Champagne bottles on all tables.

Rubinstein came down in his tuxedo, looking fresh and relaxed, as if he'd just got up from bed and showered after a good night's sleep.

Everybody stood up and the guests raised their glasses to him. Applause and kisses and compliments. It was a charming scene of a by-gone era, as romantic and gracious as a Chopin Polonaise. Rubinstein exuded joie de vivre. He enjoyed his food, his champagne, his cigar, his friends; he moved from one table to the next, talking, laughing, charming, mugging, hand-kissing. Everybody had a good time but Rubinstein had the best. Some people began to yawn into their handkerchiefs but he was full of pep, a happy dynamo, showing no signs of fatigue. He was upset when some of the older people got up - "You can't leave now, it's only a quarter to two!" - and he was still going strong two hours later when he said good-bye to his last guests, a small group of loyal stalwarts who seemed more dead than alive, the men with stubbly chins (they hadn't shaved at nine p.m. as Rubinstein), the women with their make-up gone; and Rubinstein among them, cigar in hand, with his bright eyes and cherubic complexion, embracing the Marcel Achards, the Garson Kanins, Madame Bourdet, Professor ~~Pasteur~~ Valery Radot.

"You must come back one day and talk with Professeur ~~Pasteur~~ Valery Radot about Debussy," Rubinstein said to me, as he looked into the gray dampness of the early morning where his friends had disappeared. "He was in the house next door that day in 1918 when Debussy died..." Rubinstein was lost in thought for a while, and then he turned and said to me, "Come on, let's sit down for a while with Nella and have a last glass of champagne."

--JOSEPH WECHSBERG

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