RUBINSTEIN RECITAL

It would be humorless indeed to regard the handling of Artur Rubinstein's concert in Carnegie Hall last night as anything but a rather uninspired bid for extra press space. That was the business of ballyhooing that he would play, without previous announcement, the piano music best suited to "the climate of the hall, of its acoustics, of the always different quality of the piano placed at . . . (his) disposal" and so on. Since the hall was sold out two months ago Rubinstein risked nothing in the process.

All this fine talk, as the evening disclosed, nevertheless produced what is virtually the pianist's civil service examination—the Bach-Busoni "Chaconne," Franck's "Prelude, Chorale and Fugue" and the B flat minor sonata of Chopin. By the time he had reached the intermission Rubinstein was apparently sure that neither his nor the hall's temperature would change for the rest of the evening. In consequence, his representatives could inform the press that three pieces of Debussy, four mazurkas of Szymanowski and other works of Scriabin and Liszt would follow. Of course, if they banked the fire too soon in the cellar, he might have changed his mind. I wouldn't know.

If these vaudeville methods were unworthy of Rubinstein's reputation, the performances were in his most masterful mood. Of the major works, the Franck was especially impressive, for one has rarely heard a performance in which the radiant colors of the piano were so majestically blended on its behalf. Plainly Rubinstein has read a book, and knows that Franck was an organist; and there was every likeness of that huge instrument in the majestic rolling chords of the chorale, and the remarkable climax of the fugue. Here, as in the Bach and Chopin, Rubinstein was a pianist who conquered the listener not by persuasion but by domination. In this avenue of pianistic approach he has few neighbors, and none with more handsome properties. I. K.