

Rubinstein in Life and on the Screen

By JOHN ROCKWELL

"I love to be at a performance where I don't have to play the piano," said Arthur Rubinstein to an admiring crowd.

The occasion was the 8 P.M. showing yesterday at the Festival Theater of "Love of Life," a documentary movie about the 89-year-old pianist at its premiere.

"We just found out two days ago that he was coming tonight explained Daniel Talbot, president of New Yorker Films, which is distributing the docu-

mentary. "It was his idea to come. It's been a big fantasy of his to get this film up on a screen before he dies."

The 550-seat theater wasn't full, but to judge from the fervor of the fans who were there, it would have been had more people known that Mr. Rubinstein was coming.

Mr. Rubinstein who said afterwards that he had seen the film three times already, already, arrived by limousine at 7:40, and was immediately caught up in a press of ad-

mirers. Somebody worried that he looked frail, but to this observer he seemed lively and alert indeed.

He was handed a bouquet by a representative of New Yorker Films, chatted amicably in French with Francois Reichenbach, the film's director, and dealt graciously with even the most pushy fans. "Yes I can do it," he said politely but firmly to a particularly insistent autograph-hunter. "But I won't."

During the film, the audience applauded performances and on-screen remarks continuously, in deference to Mr. Rubinstein's presence. Afterwards, he spent a good 15 minutes chatting with admirers as he moved slowly out of the theater.

Carol Lubetkin, a pianist who lives in Oberlin, Ohio, and teaches in Cleveland, booked space on a 5 P.M. flight to La Guardia Airport. "I heard Horowitz in Cleveland and in New York last year," she said, "but I missed Rubinstein. My plane was held up in a holding pattern over New Jersey, but I made it."

If most of those at the theater had come to see Mr. Rubinstein as well as the film, there were some who had no idea the pianist was to be there.

"We just saw the movie twice and we're staying to see it a third time," said John Hendrickson, who was with Judy Stillman. Both study piano at the Juilliard School of Music. "I just now heard this rumor that he was coming tonight, but we would have seen the movie this many times anyway. We just worship him."

MISS ZYKINA SINGS RUSSIAN FOLK SONGS

Bravos may abound—and justifiably—when the Lenin Prize winner Ludmila Zykina takes the stage, but credit must also go to the cohesiveness of the 13-piece Moscow Balalaika Orchestra, which provides the sometimes fragile, sometimes tough backgrounds to her Russian folk songs. So it was at Carnegie Hall on Sunday afternoon with Miss Zykina, something of an institution on the Soviet folk scene, on another American tour.

The industrial revolution has not yet caught up with her repertory. Her songs deal with ducks on meadows, speeding troikas and mountain ash, all delivered impeccably in a voice equally capable of a glottal sob and a long, long held note. Her folk music is certainly not untutored or improvised.

And behind her the orchestra explores the properties of the balalaika, whether the piquant pick or the soft whirr. When Aleksandr Federov steps out of the ensemble to wail into a couple of folk songs, his rapid-fire technique is comparable to an American country fiddler or banjo player moving through the changes of some reel or jig.

IAN DOVE

Screen: De Sica Finale

Sympathy for Poor Is Evoked in 'Vacation'

By NORA SAYRE

The late Vittorio de Sica's sympathy for and identification with those who are desperately dependent on their deadening jobs and gaunt wages emerges strongly in his last movie, "A Brief Vacation," which opened yesterday at the Little Carnegie. The movie revolves around Clara (Florinda Bolkan), a young factory worker who's exhausted by the job that barely supports her surly, disabled husband, their three children, her lazy brother-in-law and his senile mother.

Awakening to broken plumbing, the nagging relatives who regard her as a money machine, and the anxiety of being late to work, she struggles against the accumulative fatigue of the days behind and the months ahead, along with her helpless anger against a poverty that seems insoluble and a social system that's stacked against the poor. There's a gentle but profound pessimism here that harks back to de Sica's earlier work. This movie is in no way as painful as "The Bicycle Thief" or "Umberto D," but the characters do mean it when they say it's a rotten world.

When it's discovered that Clara is tubercular, she's sent to a mountain sanatorium, where she's refreshed and renewed by good care and then by a love affair. It's ironically clear that her daily life was so bad that illness and convalescence are preferable to health. Surrounded by kindness, she gains a confidence that she never had before, discovers her own independence, and finds herself nourished by a new awareness. But she's left with the prospect of losing her nascent freedoms.

The movie is rich with small revelations about ordinary experience, as when two strangers who are potential lovers discuss the difficulties of their jobs—which is

The Cast

A BRIEF VACATION, directed by Vittorio de Sica; screenplay (Italian with English subtitles) by Cesare Zavattini; photography, Ennio Guarnieri; music, Manuel de Sica; released by Allied Artists. At the Little Carnegie Theater, 57th Street east of Seventh Avenue. Running time: 106 minutes. This film is classified PG.

Clara	Florinda Bolkan
Husband	Renato Salvatori
Luigi	Daniel Quenard
Cirenni	Jose Maria Prada
Gina	Teresa Gimpera

an unusual scene for a first meeting in a movie, or when someone who rarely has the chance to be alone savors the luxury of solitude. "Vacation" also explores the friendship and mutual support among sick people, the awkwardness between relatives who haven't met for awhile—the close-ups that reveal uneasiness are particularly good—plus the ravages of destructive family relationships.

And de Sica excelled at incongruities: the ludicrously free associations that occur during moments of deep emotion, as when a woman remarks that there's no butter in butter cookies and then immediately weeps from the fear that her lover will reject her, or when another woman (who attempted suicide) says that she had a vision of baked lasagna after she shot herself.

Clara, who began as a dingy, despairing woman begrimed by the world, goes through subtle physical changes as she comes alive. De Sica resisted the spectacular overnight flowering that might have tempted another director, and his sensitivity to women's feelings is impressive. The only flaw in this modest, touching film is that the adoring young man whom Clara loves is simply too good to be true: He's merely a device, and has no character at all.

"A Brief Vacation" doesn't evoke de Sica's major works, and the emotional impact isn't on a par with that of "The Garden of the Finzi-Continis." But the director's personal warmth is unwavering throughout, and the film makes an honorable ending to his career.



The New York Times/Paul Heseffros

Arthur Rubinstein greets Anita Colby Flagler at 'Love of Life.' With Mrs. Flagler is Countess Jan Dembinski.

Film: 'Arthur Rubinstein'

Pianist, 89, Subject and Star of Documentary

At this late date it is obviously idiotic to "discover" Arthur Rubinstein's virtuosity. The 89-year-old pianist has been enthusiastically proving himself all over the world for more than 70 years. But "Arthur Rubinstein—Love of Life" succeeds in turning the rare trick of revealing an extraordinary human being as well as an amazing artist. The documentary, which was made in 1968 and won an Academy Award, had its belated theatrical premiere here yesterday at the Festival.

Francois Reichenbach and S. G. Patris, the directors, and Christian Odasso, the photographer, were obviously fortunate in having a photogenic and multilingually articulate performer to focus on. And what would first appear to be an episodic, somewhat haphazard approach evolves as a personal memoir and musical document that speaks volumes without touching on every detail of a long and outstanding career.

In combining vintage black-and-white clips and home movies with the film's superb color footage, the producers follow Mr. Rubinstein along a concert tour that includes Iran, Paris and Israel. If these stops include only excerpts from rehearsals and recitals, an intimate, heartfelt and vigorous musicianship is still evident in every area of the classics

The Program

ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN—LOVE OF LIFE directed by Francois Reichenbach and S. G. Patris; photography, Christian Odasso, edited by Catherine Mouvins; music, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Villa-Lobos and Liszt; produced by Francois Reichenbach and Bernard Gyoly; a Midem Production; distributed by New Yorker Films. At the Festival Theater, Fifth Avenue at 57th Street. Running time: 91 minutes. This film has not been classified. With the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra directed by Mafire Inbali; the Paris Orchestra directed by Paul Klezki.

played—Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Falla.

But the producers have not merely recorded a musical dossier. Mr. Rubinstein, man and boy, is recalled by himself (in English and French mostly) in sometimes serious, sometimes humorous reflection.

These intermittent interruptions of the music recall, among other things, early struggles in Berlin as well as successes in Carnegie Hall in 1944 and other points in a worldwide itinerary. They also unveil a contented family life in Paris, Beverly Hills, New York and Marbella. "My kidshave learned to be happy," Mr. Rubinstein notes to the accompaniment of appropriate scenes.

"Arthur Rubinstein" may vividly illustrate a physiological phenomenon through extreme close-ups on his hands in action. But the 89-year-old master also puts the love of his life in close-up when he says "One must play what one feels with all one's heart." And, he adds with obvious relish, "but one must be born with talent." Both the destructible talent and the rare man are strikingly seen in "Arthur Rubinstein." A. H. WEILER