



- “This is an extraordinary addition to the Jorge Bolet discography. The six-disc Marston set of live performances (‘Ambassador from the Golden Age’ Marston 56003) appeared on two 2015 **FANFARE** Want Lists, mine and Mark Medwin’s. This new release might just wind up on my 2019 list. Bolet’s career was important but not at the

superstar level his playing merits. One reason for this might be that his studio recordings have a certain reticence that is completely lacking in his live performances. Bolet most admired pianists from a bygone era who exhibited extraordinary interpretive freedom and flair, pianists like Sergei Rachmaninoff and Josef Hofmann. While one would not sense this affinity from most of Bolet’s studio recordings, it is clearly evident when one hears his live recordings. At his best Bolet managed to balance an improvisatory freedom that gave the impression of music being made up on the spot with a sense of architecture and structure that prevented him from distorting the music’s shape more than it could take.

The present recital from Indiana University in 1970 captures Bolet at his best and also demonstrates the remarkable scope of his artistic sensibilities. His performance of Beethoven’s Op. 110 (what a work to choose for the opening of a recital!) conveys the excitement of virtuosity integral to the second movement and parts of the finale, while at the same time probing very deeply into the spiritual content of the Adagio, *ma non troppo*. His singing tone emphasizes the marking *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo* of the first movement. In fact, *cantabile* is one of the consistent features of this recital, running through the Liszt etudes and transcriptions and everything else.

Bolet plays with a wide range of color, consistent beauty of tone, and an ability to clarify complex textures without ever sounding fussy. The fugal voices in the Beethoven are perfectly clarified, and later we get a vivid sense of all four singers in the **RIGOLETTO** Quartet that is the basis of Liszt’s Paraphrase.

Bolet performs the twelve Transcendental Etudes not in the published order but in an order he was presumably more comfortable with. The rearrangement should not be a problem for anyone as there is no real overall structure or shape to the series beyond key signatures, and by ending with #8, ‘Wilde Jagd’, Bolet creates a highly dramatic theatrical conclusion. His ability to balance the theatrically extravagant and the introspective elements of these etudes makes this a very special recording, comparable with the best....

The remainder of the recital, an unusually generous one at 108 minutes, is similarly successful. Godowsky’s transcription of Saint-Saens’ ‘Swan’ from **CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS** is played with rippling notes that show no evidence of their technical difficulty. At the same time, Bolet’s lyrical shaping of the melody is what one might expect from a singer of *bel canto*. The Mendelssohn gives us a similar *bel canto*-like line in the Andante and then recalls the fairies of **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM** in the Rondo capriccio. The trick in Liszt’s transcription of Schubert’s ‘Die Forelle’ is to

balance clarity in the melody amidst all of the keyboard trickery with which Liszt surrounded it while not hiding that trickery. Bolet, as you might expect, achieves this as well as I have ever heard.

The monaural sound is natural, with the piano neither too close to nor too far from the microphones. St. Laurent Studio recordings, available from Norbeck, Peters & Ford, provide no program notes but do have complete information about the contents and track listing. Most importantly, the company chooses material with a keen eye to preserving the legacy of important artists. Their service in this regard is to be admired with gratitude.”

- Henry Fogel, **FANFARE**

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