



Jorge Bolet: The Berlin Radio Recordings, Vol. III

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International Piano (Bryce Morrison - 01.05.2019)

Third and final volume of Jorge Bolet's Berlin recordings (1961-1974) provides ample confirmation that he was one of the finest pianists of the 20th century. For Gilles he was „the only great pianist in America“, while Alicia de Larrocha could only exclaim, with characteristic candour, „Jorge, you're wonderful. The rest, they're all sh*t“.

Bolet's playing ranges from „blow your socks off“ virtuosity (heard here in the Strauss-Godowsky paraphrase in *Die Fledermaus*) to a „safety comes first“ approach. His Emperor Concerto (with Moshe Atzmon) is as poetic as it is imperious, and his performance of Schumann's Third Sonata (the „Concert sans orchestre“) features tonal opulence and grand sweeping lines. Bolet may have been celebrated latterly for his „divine showiness“ but his way with the finale's wild prestissimo tells us that his speed and dexterity were no less divine. His intensity, too, in the shuddering tremolandi climax – like a sudden bolt of lightning – reminds you of music as anarchic as anything in Schumann.

There is sensuous magic in Bolet's Debussy, even when he is ponderous in *Masques*. His Chopin Etudes Op. 25 are among the most musical on mood, effortlessly crossing the Rubicon from pragmatism to poetry. Delectably light-fingered in No 6 and a true singer of the keyboard in No 5, he is magnificent in No 12, riding the ocean wave with idiosyncratic grandeur. His Schumann-Liszt *Frühlingsnacht* and Strauss-Godowsky blaze with a brilliance known to few pianists.

Transfers are admirable and these memorable discs come luxuriously packaged with several photos of Bolet, including one with Boston, his beloved pug.

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