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FURTWÄNGLER *Der Freischütz*

Pristine
XR

This is not only for Furtwängler fans. It has general interest for all those who respond to Weber's colorful score. The cast reads like a "Who's Who" of Music in Vienna in the 1950s. Every role is superbly sung with the exception of Max; Hans Hopf actually brings a good deal of style and sensitivity to that role, but the whiny character of his voice, and his tendency to bark and hoot when under vocal pressure, somewhat offset the positive qualities. Once beyond Hopf, though, you will hear some of the finest singing Weber has ever been treated to. Grummer's Agathe is the most successful assumption of this role I have ever heard; it has tonal warmth and complete ease with the difficult tessitura—she floats the high notes so ethereally in "*Und ob die Wolke*" that I confess to putting the stylus back and listening to it again on more than one of my complete times through this set. In addition, Furtwängler's accompaniment to that aria is so poignant and so tender, marked as it is by really eloquent cello playing, that it becomes a truly unique experience.

Furtwängler's way with this score is completely unfussy. He pays a great deal of attention to chordal weighting and voicing, not to make the music too heavy but to obtain the sinister and dark colors that are so important to Weber's concept, and are so often lacking in otherwise good readings. One example of this is the ferocious weight given to the chords that precede the return of the Hermit in the final scene. Besides the telling dramatic touches, Furtwängler brings a lovely lilt to the bridesmaids music, a wonderfully heavy-footed feeling to the rustic waltz, and sheer terror to the Wolf's Glen scene.

With even the small role of the Hermit being well cast (Otto Edelmann), and with the great care and attention to detail that mark the performances of all participants, this performance qualifies as a landmark.

Even those who usually do not always respond to Furtwängler should enjoy this performance; it represents him at his considerable best, without eccentricities. Despite the joys of the various commercial recordings by Kubelik, Keilberth, Heger, and Carlos Kleiber, this performance is the one I will most often turn to.

Henry Fogel, *Fanfare Magazine*, Jan/Feb 1983 (excerpts, review of German News LP issue)

Producer's Note

This recording has appeared on a number of labels, large and small, over the years. The present transfer was taken from mint 1982 Italian LP pressings on the Fonit Cetra label, and - I believe - presents this superb performance of *Der Freischütz* in by far the best overall sound it has ever received. Significant improvements in the pitch anomalies present in the original have now been possible, thanks to technological developments unavailable to previous restorers, but more than this, the application of Pristine's 32-bit XR remastering process has brought forth a rich tonal quality and depth that appears to have evaded all previous issues. Gone is the often thin, sharp, unappealing sound heard elsewhere - in its place the full glory of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under maestro Furtwängler can be fully appreciated at last. Likewise the singing, surprisingly well captured for a stage performance, rings through clearly and beautifully, with none of the unpleasant hard edge to be found in previous issues. The aim here has been realism, above all. I believe this issue comes significantly closer to this goal than any that has gone before it. **Andrew Rose**

Furtwängler conducts *Der Freischütz* by Carl Maria von Weber Live in Salzburg, 1954

Elisabeth Grümmer
Rita Streich
Hans Hopf
Alfred Poell
Karl Dönsch
Oskar Czerwenka
Kurt Böhme
Claus Clausen
Otto Edelmann

Chorus of the Vienna State Opera
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

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WEBER *Die Freischütz*

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- CD 1
- 1 Overture (11:18)
 - 2 **Act I** - Introduction - Victoria! (8:55)
 - 3 O! diese Sonne (7:32)
 - 4 Waltz and Aria - Nein! Langer trag' ich nicht die Qualen (12:07)
 - 5 Hier im ird'schen Jammerthal (6:51)
 - 6 Schweig! (4:02)
 - 7 **Act II** - Schelm! halt fest! (6:07)
 - 8 Kommt ein schlanker Bursch gegangen (5:23)
 - 9 Wie nahte mir der Schlummer (12:31)
- CD 2
- 1 Wie? Was? Entsetzen! (7:48)
 - 2 Finale - Die Wolfsschlucht (18:55)
 - 3 **Act III** - Entre-Acte (2:09)
 - 4 Und ob die Wolke sie verhülle (8:27)
 - 5 Einst traunte meiner sel'gen Base (7:13)
 - 6 Wir winden dir den Jungfernkranz (5:25)
 - 7 Was gleicht wohl auf Erden (4:22)
 - 8 Finale - Schaut, o schaut! (21:52)

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Wilhelm Furtwängler and the original manuscript of the overture of *Der Freischütz*

Recorded 26 July 1954
Festspielhaus, Salzburg

Total duration: 2hr 30:58

Elisabeth Grümmer - Agathe
Rita Streich - Aennchen
Hans Hopf - Max
Alfred Poell - Ottokar
Karl Dönsch - Kilian
Oskar Czerwenka - Kuno
Kurt Böhm - Kaspar
Claus Clausen - Samiel
Otto Edelmann - A Hermit

Chorus of the Vienna State Opera
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
Wilhelm Furtwängler, conductor

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