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Furtwängler conducts Brahms

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Previously unpublished, this recording qualifies under house rules for consideration alongside some selected comparisons. If I append none it is because, so far as the current catalogue is concerned, the performance is incomparable...

The reading is full of such insights. Nothing is wasted, not even the *Allargato e grazioso* third movement which Furtwängler treats as a microcosm of the symphony, a movement of great equanimity which becomes grand, tense, and troubled before dropping us down into the dark well of the finale's opening phrases. Above all, the difficult first movement is superbly shaped. The opening is magnificent and yet finely proportioned. True, the orchestra is not together at the start but before we begin our rhapsying we should note that Furtwängler belonged to a school which often liked to build choirs strategically. There's nothing very strategic about the opening chord, but there are some strikingly successful examples later on in the movement. What is remarkable about the opening, apart from the glorious *sottovoce* sound of the high-lying violin line, the perfect, ominous flow of the rhythm and the judicious regulation of the drum, is that it is all, in retrospect, germane to what is to follow. You need no sleeve or text-book analysis to follow the organic nature of Brahms's arguments as Furtwängler unfolds them for us, whether we are thinking in terms of tonal structures, the canonic treatment of key motifs or, simply, the huge mass and disjunctive force of the development's end. No conductor today, except perhaps Gullin, seems able to exert so much downward pressure on choirs, fully, amply sounded and yet sustain a singing line and a forward-moving rhythm. Certainly, it is tempting, faced with a performance like this, to write a jeremiad on the state of conducting in the post-Furtwängler age. To do so would, however, be unproductive. Furtwängler's is not the only way with Brahms's music, as Sir Adrian Boult, among others, has admirably demonstrated. For the moment, though, I confess I know no performance of this symphony which more strikingly illuminates those points where this symphony is palpably at its greatest.

R.O., Gramophone March 1985 - *excerpts from review of Symphony No. 1*

Transfer notes

If I could nominate whole of this album as a showcase not only for superlative historic performances but also for the astounding sound quality occasionally to be found lurking in the gloomy grooves of older recordings then I would. The tone of the Vienna Philharmonic both in the live 1952 concert recordings and the earlier studio recordings, after Pristine's 32-bit XR remastering, is finer than I could have believed possible when I started the project. The live recordings do have the edge over the older *Hungarian Dances*, which retained a degree of 78rpm crackle that was tricky to remove. It's also interesting that most discographies and reissues have followed the error in the original release and titled one of them as Hungarian Dance No. 3 in F - it's not, it's No. 10 in F. Analysis of the pictures and residual electrical hum in each of the recordings, from three separate sources, consistently pointed to a tuning used by the VPO at the time of around A4=446.4Hz. I have accurately pitched each recording to this to give the most accurate picture possible of both the sound and pace of these performances. **AR**

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Furtwängler

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Brahms

Symphony No. 1

Haydn Variations

3 Hungarian Dances

Vienna

Philharmonic Orchestra

Live & Studio recordings, 1949/52

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on photographs of
Wilhelm Furtwängler and Brahms

Furtwängler Brahms

BRAHMS Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Op. 68

- 1 1st mvt. - Un poco sostenuto - Allegro (14:26)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante sostenuto (10:17)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Un poco allegretto e grazioso (5:07)
- 4 4th mvt. - Adagio - Più andante - Allegro non troppo ma con brio (17:08)

BRAHMS Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56a

- 5 Theme - Chorale St. Antoni - Andante (2:14)
- 6 Variation I. Poco più animato (Andante con moto) (1:20)
- 7 Variation II. Più vivace (Vivace) (1:06)
- 8 Variation III. Con moto (2:06)
- 9 Variation IV. Andante con moto (Andante) (2:55)
- 10 Variation V. Vivace (Poco presto) (0:58)
- 11 Variation VI. Vivace (1:29)
- 12 Variation VII. Grazioso (3:20)
- 13 Variation VIII. Presto non troppo (Poco presto) (1:05)
- 14 Finale. Andante (4:12)

BRAHMS Three Hungarian Dances

- 15 Hungarian Dance No. 1 in G minor: Allegro molto (3:05)
- 16 Hungarian Dance No. 2 in D minor: Allegro non assai - Vivace (2:32)
- 17 Hungarian Dance No. 10 in F major: Presto (1:46)

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra Wilhelm Furtwängler

Symphony No. 1

Transfer from EMI LP 27 0124 1

Haydn Variations

Transfer from EMI LP SG 153-53669 M

Symphony No. 1 & Haydn Variations

Recorded live, 27 January 1982,
in the Großer Musikvereinssaal, Vienna

Hungarian Dance No. 1

Recorded 29-30 March 1949
Issued as HMV DB.6976, Matrix No. 2VH.7168

Hungarian Dances Nos. 2 & 10

Recorded 4 April 1949
Issued as HMV DB.6934 Matrix No. 2VH.7167

Hungarian Dances recorded in the Großer
Musikvereinssaal, Vienna, transferred
from EMI LP SG 153-53665 M

Total duration: **75:06**

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