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Furtwängler conducts Beethoven

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"To Furtwängler the even-numbered symphonies were not lesser but different, and his performance of the Second Symphony demonstrates the strength he found in the narrow of this work. It may be less formidable than the Third and Seventh Symphonies, but it is no less muscular and represents a broadening of Beethoven's horizons compared to the First Symphony. For some reason, Furtwängler rarely performed the Second Symphony; it was not until 1979 that this recording was discovered and issued. But though the recorded sound is poor, it is adequate enough to demonstrate what a singular approach Furtwängler took with this music. His tempos are tempestuous and brisk (even in the opening *adagio* and the second-movement *larghetto*), and his concept of the music is incisive and vivid. Apart from the fleetness and brilliance of the performance, its most interesting aspect is the way Furtwängler broadens the trio section of the third movement to create a foil for his breathless pacing of the scherzo, where all repeats are taken; only the first-movement repeat is omitted."

The Furtwängler Record, John Ardoin - *excerpt concerning the recording of Symphony No. 2, pp. 118-119*
(Clarendon Press, 1994)

Transfer notes

In this release, we bring together a recording from Furtwängler's final concerts of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 (the programme was repeated over two nights and the recording dates from the first of the two - the second was his very last appearance on the concert stage), with the only known recording of Furtwängler conducting Beethoven's Symphony No. 2, at the Royal Albert Hall in London in 1948. The companion piece to these two symphonies is a studio recording of the third *Leonore Overture* made during the 1953 recording of *Fidelio*.

Whilst the studio overture recording presented few difficulties, I'm pleased to report that it has been possible to make considerable improvements to the sound quality, filling out the orchestral texture considerably and bringing the whole performance to life. Likewise his final recording of the First Symphony, which was somewhat dull and flat in its original incarnation. XR remastering has worked wonders in teasing out the full impact of the Berlin Philharmonic at this historic final concert - the sound is bright and full, with real depth. I've deliberately not attempted to remove all traces of tape hiss from this recording so as to preserve as much fine detail as possible in the upper treble.

The only known recording of the Second Symphony was first discovered and issued in 1979, and despite repeated reissues, little has ever been achieved in attempts to improve the dismal sound quality of the original discs. This new XR-remastered transfer aims to change that. Whilst one must still bear in mind the abysmal state of the original, here at last is a full-bodied orchestra, with surprising upper-end extension and a far more even sound, allowing the performance to be better appreciated than ever before. A major effort has been undertaken in stitching together tiny gaps in individual notes and dealing with hundreds of bumps and clunks. Despite the loss in the quietest sections of fine detail, overall it's a truly astonishing transformation of this historic document. **AR**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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Symphony No. 1 Symphony No. 2 Leonore Overture No. 3

**Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra**
live & studio recordings, 1948-54

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph
of **Furtwängler** conducting at the
Royal Albert Hall, 3 October 1948

Beethoven Symphony No. 1

Recorded 19 September 1954

Titania-Palast, Berlin

Transfer from Japanese JVC RCL-3333

Pitched to A4=447.43Hz

Beethoven Symphony No. 2

Recorded 3 October 1948

Royal Albert Hall, London

Transfer from Italian EMI 3C 053-03635 M

Pitched to A4=446.36Hz

Beethoven Leonore Overture No. 3

Recorded 18 October 1953

Musikvereinssaal, Vienna

Transfer from Italian EMI 3C 053-03635 M

Pitched to A4=446.16Hz

Total duration: **72:20**

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BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 1 in C, Op. 21

- 1 1st mvt. - Adagio molto - Allegro con brio (7:36)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante cantabile con moto (6:51)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Menuetto: Allegro molto e vivace - Trio (3:45)
- 4 4th mvt. - Adagio - Allegro molto e vivace (6:25)

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Wilhelm Furtwängler

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 36

- 5 1st mvt. - Adagio molto - Allegro con brio (10:10)
- 6 2nd mvt. - Larghetto (11:14)
- 7 3rd mvt. - Scherzo: Allegro - Trio (4:04)
- 8 4th mvt. - Allegro molto (6:57)

9 **BEETHOVEN Leonora No. 3 - Overture, Op. 72b** (15:18)

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra Wilhelm Furtwängler

NB. All recordings have been pitched to match as closely as possible the original performance pitches, using highly accurate analyses of the low-level electrical hums found in each recording.