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Furtwängler conducts Beethoven

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Furtwängler

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By a curious coincidence, on the evening of November 30th, 1954, I happened to be knob-twiddling on my radio set, to see what I could pick up in the way of music; and when I got Berlin, I was immediately startled to hear a solemn voice announcing what seemed to be, from the slow and utterly dejected delivery, some great national or even perhaps international calamity. As I listened, I realized that, from the artistic point of view, it was in fact both: Wilhelm Furtwängler was dead. Never again would we see that tall, austere-looking figure, loose-limbed like a gigantic marionette, the long frowning face bobbing on the long neck, the long legs giving at the knees, the long right arm describing the most fantastic patterns in the air with a constantly vibrating stick, but drawing from the orchestra a uniquely massive and glorious sound...

As for Beethoven, anyone who accepts Furtwängler's monumental conception of this composer as the true gospel has difficulty in admiring any other conductor's (Schneiderhan obviously accepted it for this performance of the Violin Concerto, which is really Furtwängler's rather than his). All these are tremendous experiences, so long as one remembers that they are, after all, only the views of one man, and of a particularly extraordinary man at that. If I had plenty of money, I would buy two different discs of any great work recorded by Furtwängler - his own and one by an equally great, but more 'normal' conductor. The latter would be to live with, the former for re-inspiration at long intervals...

D.C., *The Gramophone*, December 1963 (*excerpts*)

Producer's Note

The present recording of the Beethoven Violin Concerto with Schneiderhan and Furtwängler is among the most elusive of the conductor's performances on CD. First released in 1964 as part of a series of Deutsche Grammophon LPs marking the tenth anniversary of the conductor's death, this broadcast has received less attention over the years than his three recordings with Menuhin (two studio, one live) and the wartime version with Erich Röhn taped at the last BPO concert in the old Philharmonie before it was destroyed. It has been transferred here from a 1970s monaural Heliodor LP pressing, as has the Grosse Fuge, which has a similar release history.

The pitches have been left as they appear on the LPs at around A4=445Hz when played at 33.3 rpm, which is in line with what is known about the BPO's higher tuning during this period and the evidence of their other contemporaneous recordings.

Mark Obert-Thorn

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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Obert-Thorn

Live recordings, 1952-53

BEETHOVEN Violin Concerto Große Fuge

Wolfgang Schneiderhan violin
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

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BEETHOVEN VIOLIN CONCERTO, GROßE FUGE
SCHNEIDERHAN, BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, FURTWÄNGLER



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Producer & Audio
Restoration Engineer:
Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on
photographs of Furtwängler
and Schneiderhan

Violin Concerto

Recorded during the
performance of 18 May 1953 in
the Titania-Palast, Berlin
First issued on Deutsche
Grammophon LPM 18855

Große Fuge

Recorded during the
performance of 10 February
1952 in the Titania-Palast, Berlin
First issued on Deutsche
Grammophon LPM 18859

Total duration: 63:09

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Furtwängler Beethoven

Violin Concerto in D major Op. 61

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo (23:59)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Larghetto (10:39)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Rondo - Allegro (9:53)

Wolfgang Schneiderhan violin

- 4 **Große Fuge Op. 133** (18:38)

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

Wilhelm Furtwängler conductor

BEETHOVEN VIOLIN CONCERTO, GROßE FUGE
SCHNEIDERHAN, BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, FURTWÄNGLER

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