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WILHELM FURTWÄNGLER

conducts Beethoven's Fidelio

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So here it is at last, a complete recording of *Fidelio* with the dialogue omitted except in the "melodrama" of Act 2 and the brief sentences for Jaquino and Rocco after the second of the trumpet calls in this act ... The glory of this performance is in the orchestral playing under Furtwängler, whose reading of the score is as superb, and as well recorded, as it was in *Tristan*. That becomes evident at once in the Overture, in which the great conductor gives an interpretation which shows us (as it seems to me) the two sides of Leonora's character, heroic resolution and feminine tenderness and how enchanting is his treatment of a secondary theme that has so strong a flavour of Czech music ... The ensemble of soloists and chorus in this finale is well balanced and the end, when the prisoners return to their cells, has the moving quality I missed at the start of the finale. Furtwängler gives a marvellous and spine-chilling interpretation of the introduction to Act 2 and Windgassen catches the mood exactly in his opening recitative and, if not yet a Patzak, sings the aria very well. The atmosphere of deadly cold and darkness in the dungeons is well maintained by Modi and Frick in the melodrama ... Orchestrally one could not want anything grander or more noble than Furtwängler's conception of the sublime score, whose "chastity" (as Berlioz said) hindered the success of the music in France. The recording, as such, is extremely good and vital.

A.R., *The Gramophone*, May 1954 - *excerpts*

Producer's Note

Furtwängler's only studio recording of Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, took place in Vienna's *Musikvereinsaal* between 13th and 17th October 1953, and followed a performance on 12th October in the *Theater an der Wien* with almost the same cast (Alwin Hendricks replaced Hermann Gallos for the recording). The recording was certainly well made for its era, though it's no surprise to find most of the dialogue absent in a studio recording of its time. Remastering it has, however, brought far more musicality out of the performance than was previously apparent. In addition to curing some small pitch anomalies (early tape machines frequently drifted up and down in speed), I've used XR remastering techniques to completely open up the sound, with a far more even frequency response than could be captured at the time generating a much more natural tone across both instruments and voices. The lower end is fuller and richer, the top end clear and brighter, whilst the latest digital noise reduction techniques have helped reduce tape hiss without damaging the clarity of the sound. Ambient Stereo processing has worked wonders to bring out the natural acoustic of the recording venue, and is highly recommended for this recording.

Andrew Rose

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
SARL Pristine Audio, 144 Rue de l'Eglise, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France

FURTWÄNGLER

Beethoven - Fidelio

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Martha Mödl
Wolfgang Windgassen
Otto Edelmann
Gottlob Frick
Sena Jurinac
Rudolf Schock
Alfred Poell
Alwin Hendricks
Franz Bierbach

Vienna State Opera Chorus
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler

STUDIO RECORDING, 1953

BEETHOVEN *Fidelio, Op. 73***Act 1**

- 1 Overture (6:37)
- 2 No. 1 Duett - Jetzt, Schätzchen (5:13)
- 3 No. 2 Arie - O wär ich schon (4:42)
- 4 No. 3 Quartett - Mir ist so wunderbar (4:47)
- 5 No. 4 Arie - Hat man nicht (2:59)
- 6 No. 5 Terzett - Gut, Söhnchen (7:26)
- 7 No. 6 Marsch (2:16)
- 8 No. 7 Arie mit Chor (3:25)
- 9 No. 8 Duett - Jetzt, Alter, hat es Eile! (5:00)
- 10 No. 9 Rezitativ und Arie - Abscheulicher! (8:02)
- 11 No. 10 Finale - O welche Lust, in freier Luft (7:28)
- 12 Nun spricht, wie ging's (6:03)
- 13 Ach! Vater, eilt! (7:48)

Act 2

- 1 No. 11 Introduction (4:07)
- 2 No. 11 Arie - Gott! Welch Dunkel hier! (7:34)
- 3 No. 12 Melodram - Wie kalt ist es hier! (2:17)
- 4 No. 12 Duett - Nur hurtig fort (4:38)
- 5 No. 13 Terzett - Euch werde Lohn in besser'n Welten (6:43)
- 6 No. 14 Quartett - Er sterbe! Doch er soll erst wissen (3:53)
- 7 No. 14 Recitative - Vater Rocco! (1:33)
- 8 No. 15 Duett - O namenlose Freude! (2:50)
- 9 Overture - Leonore III in C, Op. 72a (15:28)
- 10 No. 16 Finale - Heil sei dem Tag (2:01)
- 11 No. 16 Finale - Des besten Königs (3:55)
- 12 No. 16 Finale - Du schlossest auf des Edlen Grab (3:54)
- 13 No. 16 Finale - Wer ein holdes Weib errungen (4:02)

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra *Wilhelm Furtwängler***CAST**

Leonore - Martha Mödl
Florestan - Wolfgang Windgassen
Don Pizarro - Otto Edelmann
Rocco - Gottlob Frick
Marzelline - Sena Jurinac
Jacquino - Rudolf Schock
Don Fernando - Alfred Poell
First Prisoner - Alwin Hendricks
Second Prisoner - Franz Bierbach

*Vienna State Opera Chorus*XR remastering by
Andrew RoseCover artwork based on a
photograph of **Furtwängler****BEETHOVEN FIDELIO, Op. 72**
An opera in 2 Acts with libretto by
Joseph Sonnleitner & Friedrich
Tritschke after Jean-Nicolas BouillyRecorded 13-17 October 1953
Musikvereinsaal, Vienna
Producer: Lawrence Collingwood

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