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Furtwängler conducts Beethoven

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"In Furtwängler's hands, the Pastoral became remarkably expressive clay, to which he brought a plasticity vouchsafed no other conductor. There is a clarity to his performances (including the few prosaic ones) in which every note speaks. Even while weathering the storm of the fourth movement, Furtwängler's performance conveys a feeling of chamber rather than symphonic music and always implants a sense of serenity and well-being. Textures are transparent, bowings are light and subtle, and dynamics are carefully monitored. A *fortissimo* here is not the same as one in the other symphonies, the Third or Fifth, for example, it is more a matter of weight than decibels, with accents more a surge than a sharp delineation. It is only with the third-movement scherzo that the music grows in girth and momentum, as clouds start to gather at the end of the movement."

"The Eighth Symphony, both in actuality and in Furtwängler's approach, continues much in the spirit of the Sixth, though the music is (like the performances) more concentrated in a temporal and formal sense. But the same outpouring of well-being permeates both. In the three performances available, Furtwängler opens with a grand gesture, a musical embrace that attempts to reach out and gather in everyone and everything. It is like a shout of joy at being alive. There is an abundance of the brio Beethoven asks for, and a true vivace, in the sense of a vivacious, living organism."

The Furtwängler Record, John Ardoin - excerpts: p.133 (*Symphony 6*) & p.137 (*Symphony 8*)
(Amadeus Press, 1994)

Transfer notes

John Ardoin lists seven Furtwängler recordings of Beethoven's *Sixth* and three recordings of the *Eighth Symphony* in his discography, and though it appears that a fourth, partial 1932 recording of No. 8 exists, he is most insistent that the present, 1953 Berlin recording easily trumps the rest. Here the full benefits of XR remastering can be heard, with dramatic improvements in sound quality, orchestral tone and texture immediately apparent to the listener used to the previous boxy and constricted acoustic of earlier issues. This issue is also considerably brighter in tone, a result of the careful analysis of remnants of electrical hum in the original recording, pointing to a far sharper tuning than the "standard" orchestral 440Hz - the 453Hz tuning of the orchestra is however not unusual for Furtwängler.

It's no great surprise to find less room for improvement over EMI's "studio" recording of the 6th Symphony, yet this too yielded far greater tonal colour than the original might lead one to believe, and the XR remastering of this recording does seem to have injected a degree of life into it that Ardoin found lacking when comparing it to contemporary live performances. Once again I found that the original pitching was sharper than concert standard - EMI have it at around 446Hz though my own measurements suggested 451Hz was closer to the orchestra's actual tuning. In both recordings I've been able to minimise the use of additional noise reduction processing to keep as open and glorious a sound as possible. AR

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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Furtwängler

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Beethoven Symphony No. 6 Symphony No. 8

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

Studio & Live recordings, 1952 & 1953



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BEETHOVEN SYMPHONIES 6 AND 8
FURTWÄNGLER, VIENNA AND BERLIN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS

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XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based
on a photograph of
Wilhelm Furtwängler

Beethoven Symphony No. 6
Recorded 24-25 September
& 1 October 1952
Großer Saal, Musikverein, Vienna
Transfer from HMV ALP 1041
Pitched to A4=451.59Hz

Beethoven Symphony No. 8
Recorded 14 April 1953
live at Titania-Palast, Berlin
Transfer from Cetra FE 4,
Pitched to A4=453.16Hz

Total duration: **70:12**

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BEETHOVEN SYMPHONIES 6 AND 8
FURTWÄNGLER, VIENNA AND BERLIN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS

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Furtwängler conducts Beethoven

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 6 in F, "Pastorale", Op. 68

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo (11:43)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante molto mosso (13:17)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Allegro (5:54)
- 4 4th mvt. - Allegro (4:05)
- 5 5th mvt. - Allegretto (9:28)

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra Wilhelm Furtwängler

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 8 in F, Op. 93

- 6 1st mvt. - Allegro vivace e con brio (8:00)
- 7 2nd mvt. - Allegretto scherzando (4:30)
- 8 3rd mvt. - Tempo di Menuetto (5:33)
- 9 4th mvt. - Allegro vivace (7:42)

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Wilhelm Furtwängler