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# FURTWÄNGLER

## Brahms - Symphonies 3 & 4

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# Furtwängler

conducts **BRAHMS**



## Symphony No. 3 Symphony No. 4

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

Live recordings, 1948 & 1949

Wilhelm Furtwängler created his own sense of occasion. For him the Third Symphony was a work of sudden surges, delayed charges and buried detonations. 'Subjective?' asked Michael Oliver in Gramophone of Furtwängler's Brahms. 'Certainly. If one of a conductor's functions is to realise the composer's intentions, another is to convince you that those intentions matter.' Furtwängler conducted the symphony many times, yet by a happy chance his two extant Berlin-made recordings are complementary. The 1954 performance (*Pristine PASC 342*) is the more serene, the 1949 – an experience unique in the annals of the work on record – the more impassioned, an essay in what Furtwängler himself called 'the energy of becoming, inexorability and the force of onward motion'. So caught up is Furtwängler in Brahms's tragic mood, he even adds to the composer's own careful revisions of the orchestration by providing minatory timpani rolls either side of the arrival of the finale's second subject. Furtwängler's is a forward-moving performance built on an epic scale, a point underlined by his decision here (though not in 1954) to take the exposition repeat.

The sound here is fragile and the audience intrusive, but this is a performance like no other. You may not sleep for nights after hearing it, but you'll be richer and wiser for the experience.

**"Brahms Symphony No 3: which recording is best?"**

Features, gramophone.co.uk website, 28 January 2014

This Brahms Fourth is also a rarity—having been issued only by Tahra and by the Japanese Wilhelm Furtwängler Center\*. Once again, the sound quality here is superb—opening up our ears to the drama and thrust of this performance. There are some ensemble problems, but they do not detract from a performance of enormous momentum and cumulative power. The wartime Brahms Fourth may be even more dramatic, but the richer sound here makes this my own favorite of the Furtwängler recordings of this work.

**Henry Fogel**, Fanfare magazine, September/October 2009 (*excerpt*)

\*NB. The recording also appeared on several LPs, including an Italian EMI box set and at least two other EMI LP issues

### Producer's Note

When I remastered a set of Brahms recordings for Pristine release in 2012, a number of difficult choices had to be made, not least in selected a single recording of each of the fourth symphonies for the set (*PASC 340, 341, 342, 344*). In making these choices a number of factors came into play alongside the performances themselves: availability, sound quality, durations and so forth all played a part in the final choices made at the time. The series featured a single symphony on each disc, coupled with other recordings of music by Brahms. It is almost certain, therefore, that a primary reason the two recordings presented here did not feature in that series was the simple fact that they could be accommodated together on a single disc: to be returned to at a later date. Happily, that date has now arrived!

The XR remastering techniques used on these recordings have gradually evolved over the 8 years since they were first developed, helped along by technological advances in the fields of audio restoration and digital signal processing, and the results of these gradual advances can be heard to full effect here, especially in the marvellous 1949 recording of the third Brahms symphony presented here. It is interesting to note the remarks of an uncredited reviewer for Gramophone's website, who remarks on the sound being "fragile" and the audience "intrusive". Whilst the latter was certainly true of the original recording, I've taken out a large number of coughs and sneezes from that December Berlin audience, and where not possible to entirely eradicate them, the vast majority have been reduced in volume to a non-intrusive level. As for the sound? Here you will find no fragility: the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra is full, clear, rich and vital in this XR remaster, fully conveying 'the energy of becoming, inexorability and the force of onward motion' Furtwängler identified with this work.

The earlier recording of the Fourth Symphony, from October 1948, proved slightly more troublesome from a sonic perspective, with slightly more hiss and less top end extension, but I've managed to make those differences almost imperceptible - certainly the fullness and richness are both there to be savoured, with all the "drama and thrust" of the performance fully present. **Andrew Rose**

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a  
photograph of FurtwänglerBrahms Symphony No. 3  
Recorded 18 December, 1949Brahms Symphony No. 4  
Recorded 24 October, 1948

Live performances, Titania Palast, Berlin

Total duration: 79:47

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FURTWÄNGLER *conducts Brahms***BRAHMS Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90**

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (13:10)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante (9:38)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Poco allegretto (6:21)
- 4 4th mvt. - Allegro (9:24)

**BRAHMS Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98**

- 5 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (12:36)
- 6 2nd mvt. - Andante moderato (12:16)
- 7 3rd mvt. - Allegro giocoso (6:29)
- 8 4th mvt. - Allegro energico e passionato (9:53)

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra *Wilhelm Furtwängler*