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Wilhelm Furtwängler conducts Schumann & Beethoven

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Gramophone (Rob Cowan - 2018.06.01)

GRAMOPHONE

[…] Another first release featuring a fêted maestro arrives via Audite as part of its Lucerne Festival series: Wilhelm Furtwängler conducts the Swiss Festival Orchestra in Schumann's Manfred Overture—a dark, malleable performance that rages or relaxes according to the dictates of the moment. Schumann's Symphony No 4 was also on this August 26, 1953, concert programme, and it's fascinating to compare it with Furtwängler's famous Berlin Philharmonic recording (DG) from a few weeks earlier. The overall timing is more or less identical, as is the interpretative approach, but the contrast between 'studio' and 'live' is at its most marked in the transition to the finale, where the Swiss performance—though comparatively raw in tone—generates more tension. The third work is Beethoven's Eroica Symphony, and here there are many Furtwängler-led alternatives, some darker-hued than this one, though few (if any) achieve such an overwhelming sense of release at the close of the first movement (from 14'13"). The transfers are superb.

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