

RANCHO SANTA FE REVIEW

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Maestro's Podium

Starting a great classical music collection

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When I began writing this article, I actually wrote a different title, "Starting a Great Classical CD Collection." However, it's a fact of life that CDs are quickly becoming obsolete, giving way to iPods and other digital media. The opening of the floodgates that now provide access to great music and wonderful performances via the Internet has given anyone with a computer or cell phone instant gratification.

In the not-so-distant past, classical music fans showed off their record collection like the great white hunter displaying the trophy room. A collection consisted of stacks upon stacks of LPs ("Long Playing" vinyl!) that were as much fun to look at for their large and imaginative covers as they were to listen to. While cumbersome and environmentally disastrous, records held a certain charm.

The Internet has become everyone's "record collection," acting as a vast warehouse for the world's sound recordings, as well as videos. Unless you read the classical music blogs (and there are hundreds) or buy the trade magazines, it's difficult to find the recordings that might appeal to you most. Notice I didn't say "that are the best," because like a glass of wine, a quality interpretation is extremely subjective...good taste is in the tongue (or ear) of the beholder.

The first step to being a fine collector or appreciator is to devel-



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op your own opinion. Don't trust anyone's feelings other than your own. If you like it, it IS good. If you find it boring, it IS boring. You don't need years of experience or a doctorate degree in music, but rather just a curious mind and an open heart. Being a consumer of what you listen to empowers you, and places the responsibility of pleasing you upon the performer, and even the composer. Just because a recording has the name "Beethoven" or "Mozart" or "Berlin Philharmonic" on it does not guarantee a good experience. Taking ownership of your own reactions is the first step to being a true connoisseur and aficionado.

There are a lot of resources out there to help deepen the understanding of classical music, and much of it is free. Even starting with wikipedia.org will give some historical and musicological context for the casual interest. You'll discover that the world of classical music is about much more than just the music. It's about fascinating people with amazing stories. Becoming a fan can become an extremely rewarding journey!