

“How To buy Classical CDs” by Steve Larsen

By far, the best way to buy classical CDs is over the internet. Most retail stores don't even carry a selection of classical recordings anymore, and even those that do have a very limited selection (Borders on Perryville has a classical section; Barnes & Noble on State doesn't, although stores in other cities often do). Problem is, the list of classical CDs available for sale is impossibly huge compared to that of “Top 40” artists. Want to buy Christine Aguilera's *Back to Basics*? You've got one choice: RCA 82639. How about a recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5? There are at least 1,000 recordings available for purchase somewhere in this universe.

The internet is the perfect way to shop for classical recordings. With a few taps on the keyboard and a click of the mouse, you can search the world for titles, compare prices, and have them delivered in a couple of days. Some waive shipping charges for orders over \$25, and most don't charge sales tax.

Here are some suggestions.

www.amazon.com. Click on “Browse Music”, then select “Classical” and you're almost there. Enter a composer, artist or composition title in the search bar, and then check out the selections listed. You can even listen to short audio clips of most of the tracks on the CD. Best of all, you can usually buy your choice used for substantial savings.

www.borders.com Surprise! Borders has teamed up with Amazon, so you're right back at the top of this list.

www.towerrecords.com Tower Records is in bankruptcy, and I don't know how long they'll stay in business, but you often can find great recordings that Amazon doesn't seem to notice. Make sure you click on the “Classical” tab first. I like to then use the “advanced search” tool, but you can also browse by composer, conductor, etc. Audio excerpts are also available for most tracks.

www.barnesandnoble.com This is a fantastic site for browsing. Select “Music” from the top bar, then “Classical Store” along the left side. An easy way to find DVDs, books and scores, too.

www.naxos.com Naxos calls itself “The World's Leading Classical Music Label”, and not without justification. You can only buy Naxos recordings here, but the selection is huge. Highly recommended! Barnes and Noble's website also has a link to Naxos.

www.berkshirerecordoutlet.com An eccentric warehouse operation located in Stockbridge, MA, they are a great source of out of print and difficult to find CDs. Their browser interface isn't as slick as those listed above, but their inventory is huge. Patience will be rewarded.

www.arkivmusic.com Classical only, and great if you know what you're looking for.

www.parnassusrecords.com "Parnassus Rare Classical Compact Disks and Rare Classical Vinyl LP Records" is the title, and says it all. This firm has barely made it into cyberspace, however, and you'll have to search by downloading one or several catalogs. They'll mail you paper copies, too, if you prefer.

www.cedillerecords.org This may be at the bottom of the list, but don't skip it. Cedille Records is, to my knowledge, the only not-for-profit classical CD company in the country. Because of this, you won't find their CDs for sale on any other website. They specialize in Chicago artists, and their roster includes live performances by the Grant Park Symphony, as well as recordings by past RSO soloists such as Rachel Barton Pine and David Schrader.