

ABSTRACT

"ROLL OVER BEETHOVEN": The Reaction of Classical Music Recording Divisions to the Continuing Emergence of a Consumer Culture in America between 1956 and 1982

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As the musical world looks at decreasing sales of classical music recorded on solid media, alarm bells sound. Why is there such a disparity between sales of classical recordings and those of popular music? This study seeks to understand if the situation in today's record market is a result of actions taken by classical recording companies in the critical time period between 1956 and 1982. Profound cultural, as well as technological changes occurred during this time period, necessitating reaction by classical music recording labels. Highlighting these developments, this study seeks to determine the sufficiency of actions by American classical recording companies with the overarching goal of understanding whether or not the seeds for the present situation of classical records were sown in this era.

"ROLL OVER BEETHOVEN": The Reaction of Classical Music Recording Divisions to
the Continuing Emergence of a Consumer Culture in America between 1956 and 1982

by

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A Thesis

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CHAPTER ONE

"So Lonely": A Brief Look at the Present Situation of the American Record Market and the Position of Classical Records

A term that could easily describe the American musical scene in 2007 is "saturated." Music, much of it pre-recorded, is everywhere. Recorded music travels with people in their cars, provides background noise at the mall and on television, and emanates from personal audio devices. This auditory onslaught is nearly inescapable in modern American society. Fifty years ago, this complete integration of music into American life would never have been considered a possibility. However, in the time since the mid-twentieth century, recording technology burgeoned, which allowed for a proliferation of pre-recorded music, creating this super-saturated musical landscape. This changing musical landscape profoundly affected not only popular music, but also classical music, which was a key player in many of these developments. However, classical music today in 2007, after being such a predominant participant in the initial development of the American recording industry, is increasingly seen as a niche market and, statistically, has little impact on the American record market as a whole. Therefore, this study seeks to evaluate these changing circumstances in the years between 1956 and 1982, with the overarching goal of determining if actions taken by the classical industry during this time were causes for the increasingly isolated position of classical music in the American recording market.

One would be incorrect to portray the American musical scene as merely a dichotomy between popular and classical music. The reality is much more complex.

With the numerous genres that pervade the music market, such as classical, rock, jazz, reggae, rap, oldies, pop, and the various sub-genres which derive from these, it is difficult to keep track of the musical offerings on the American record market today. The American music scene is diverse and the recording market ever-changing. With the addition of new genres in the past fifty years, as well as fusion and crossover genres, the competition for market share in America is far more than a fight between popular and classical.

The subject of this study is classical music, and specifically its involvement in the American record market. For purposes of this study, classical music will be defined as Webster defines it: any "music composed in the educated Western European tradition that includes such forms as art song, chamber music, opera, and symphony as distinguished from folk or popular music or jazz."¹ Popular music can be defined as anything not falling under the guise of "classical" but, for this study, statistics and evidentiary conclusions will be drawn from the rock genre, which is intended to serve as a representative popular genre. The choice of rock is predicated on the fact that it emerged as the first overtly successful recorded genre in the second half of the twentieth century, and the fact that it is the most successful genre marketwise to date, carrying over a third of American record sales. That is not to downplay the significance of other genres in creating the present situation in music, but serves to limit the scope of this study.

America currently operates on a consumer-driven ideal, which has been heavily researched and documented. This consumer culture mindset is largely a product of the Post-World War II era, and it reflects a revolution of American musical life, made

¹"Classical," *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*. Merriam-Webster (Accessed 15 May 2007) <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com>.

possible by the advent of new durable and marketable recording technology accompanied by the aforementioned emergence of multiple new genres, as well as general post-war affluence. Therefore, the focus of this study is the reaction of the American classical music industry to technological advances, the emergence of rock as a representative popular genre and its rise in market share, and, most importantly, the development of the consumer-driven ideal, encapsulated in the years between 1956 and 1982. 1956 marks the firm arrival of rock in American society, and 1982 cuts off this study with the commercial introduction of the compact disc. Focusing on the emergence of a consumer culture, this time period is an ideal one as it represents an era of fundamental change not only in the American music market, but also in American society, notably the solidification of a consumer-based culture and the adolescent rebellion phenomenon. This thesis revolves around the belief that the actions taken in this era by American classical labels were the key causes behind the present situation of classical records.

What is the present situation of classical records in America? In 2005, according to the Recording Industry Association of America's (RIAA) *Year-End Report*, American record manufacturers shipped some 748.7 million units of music recordings. This statistic reflects solid media forms including: compact discs (CD), digital video discs (DVD), as well as vinyl singles and cassette tapes. In addition, some 383.1 million units² were shipped via online digital downloads.³ Since this statistic reflects corrections based on returns, it can be said that the American record market is capable of consuming over

²Approximately 200 million of these units were full albums, and the other 180 million were single tracks. *2005 Year-end Statistics*, Recording Industry Association of America (Accessed 21 November 2006) <http://www.riaa.com/news/newsletter/pdf/2005yrEndStats.pdf>.

³Ibid.

one billion recording units a year at an estimated value of 12.2695 billion dollars.⁴ No doubt, the American record market, despite recent declines in certain sectors, has a hold on the American consumer market. The RIAA reports that recording sales occur through a variety of means including specialized record stores, general retail establishments, recording clubs like BMG, and more recently, digital downloads. Americans certainly have access to recorded music on an unprecedented scale. Americans' ears are already saturated with music in everyday life, and recorded music is widely available to any Americans with the means and tastes for such.

But, even with this vast exposure to recorded music, only 2.4% of the total unit sales and the accompanying monetary income belong to classical records.⁵ This statistic simply looks poor, especially when considering the fact that this percentage includes crossover albums which present classical music in a more popular manner in addition to traditional recordings of older classical music.⁶ A more recent report by the NPD Group, which does not include crossover albums in its calculations, states that classical music sales fell by 28% in 2006, topping off a 54% drop over the past five years.⁷ The same report shows that 91% of the top-selling classical albums in 2006 were of the crossover variety.⁸ Clearly, these percentages reflect poorly on the activities of American classical music industry as a whole. Two and a half percent is a meager share of the American

⁴Ibid.

⁵*2005 Consumer Profile* (Recording Industry Association of America). Online (Accessed 21 November 2006) <http://www.riaa.com/news/marketingdata/pdf/2005consumerprofile.pdf>.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Bob Tedeschi, *E-Commerce Report: Amazon Seeks to Fill Classical Recording Niche*, New York Times, March 19, 2007. (Accessed 15 May 2007) <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=technology&res=9903E2D91630F93AA25750C0A9619C8B63&n=Top%2FNews%2FTechnology%2FColumns%2FE-Commerce%20Report>.

⁸Ibid.

market *relative* to the share of popular music, which holds roughly 75.6% of the market. Other genre categories like "Christian" and "Other," which includes big band, spoken word, and ethnic music, also outsell classical music. Again, these statistics do not incite a favorable opinion of the business actions of the American classical music industry.

Despite unfavorable-looking statistics and the fact that classical music lovers may well be "the refugees of the retail world,"⁹ one cannot claim that classical music is dead. It certainly is alive and well. The classical industry has been and remains a viable part of the American musical scene. More classical music exists on record today than ever before. Similarly, unprecedented access to recordings, in both hardcopy and digital forms, exists just as much as it does in the popular sector. Towerrecords.com alone lists 53,815 entries under its "Classical Store" section¹⁰ and Arkivmusic.com lists over 70,000 classical media items.¹¹ Therefore, this is not a study bemoaning the "death" of classical music; instead, it seeks to understand the actions of the American classical music industry in the formative years of the consumer-driven society and to determine whether the trends of today are a result of those actions. There is no doubt that the influence of classical music and the sheer size of the American record market changed drastically in the years between 1956 and 1982. But the effects of these changes and the response from the classical industry are worthy of investigation. Since the American music market as a whole reacted favorably in the time to changes in recording technology and a new

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰*Classical Store* (Tower Records). Online (Accessed 21 November 2006)
<http://www.towerrecords.com/Classical/Default.aspx>.

¹¹*About Arkivmusic*. Online (Accessed 21 November 2006)
<http://www.arkivmusic.com/classical/about.jsp>.

widespread availability of recorded music, it is important to see *if* and *how* the classical industry addressed these changes.

I am not the first to notice that classical music is currently in seeming dire straits of decline. Authors Norman Lebrecht and Joseph Horowitz have both written in-depth studies on the subject.¹² However, both Lebrecht and Horowitz's books deal largely with the live performance end of the classical music world. Lebrecht subtitles his work "Maestros, Managers, and Corporate Politics," which are the three main things he believes have soured classical music. Lebrecht cites tales of an industry that ignores the sexual fetishes of big-name conductors, pays exorbitant fees for artists that often ignore contractual obligations, and is racked by talent-managing agents and agencies which consume inappropriately large sums of money from the coffers of orchestras and opera companies, which have often been filled by government subsidy or private donations.¹³ Lebrecht also realizes the important role of the classical recording, discussing specifically the mid-90s reaction of classical labels to the contraction of the classical record market following the initial boom created by the introduction of the compact disc.¹⁴ However, to Lebrecht, the majority of the blame for the "downfall" of classical music belongs to those on the performance side of the industry. Joseph Horowitz's study is much the same in that he focuses on the live and public side of the industry. Horowitz's study differs, though, because he presents a chronological and historical view starting from the late 1800s and moving through the year 2000. The idea of personality cults surrounding big-

¹²Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of its Rise and Fall* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005); Norman Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music: Maestros, Managers, and Corporate Politics* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1997).

¹³Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music*, Chapter 1, "Sex, Lies, and Videodiscs" Online (Accessed 06 June 2007) <http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/l/lebrecht-music.html>.

¹⁴Ibid.

name conductors and performers in the classical field is a prevalent theme in Horowitz's book, even more so than in the Lebrecht: Horowitz argues that these cults of personality so pervaded public perception of these figures, that all manner of corrupt and nefarious behavior was overlooked. This oft-ignored behavior, however, is what Horowitz sees as one of the main destructive forces in the classical field. Other factors, like changing attitudes toward classical music, and the effect of the phonograph and radio, in that it diminished amateur music making in the home, are also chronicled by Horowitz.¹⁵ But again, like Lebrecht, Horowitz ties the "fall" of classical music to internal, largely under-the-table, activities within the performing community.

Though this study is not diametrically opposed to those of Horowitz and Lebrecht, it does offer a different perspective on the classical field's actions in the latter half of the twentieth century. The live, symphony-hall side of classical music in America is not the focus of this study. Instead, the transferring of symphony halls into the living rooms of America by means of solid recordings will be addressed, particularly the classical industry's development of technology, recording production, and recording promotion. It is my belief that, although the performing side of the classical industry certainly has had detrimental effects on classical music in America, the recording industry played an even bigger role in the 60s and 70s because of the *potential* audience it could reach. Not everyone in America could step into a performance venue and see Arturo Toscanini or George Szell conduct or hear Pavarotti or Vladimir Horowitz perform. However, following the post-WWII economic boom and the proliferation of musical recordings, most Americans with the means and desire could purchase pre-recorded music. Because the scope of the recording industry is and was so much larger

¹⁵Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 395-400.

than that of the live performance arena, I believe that the recording industry, in the time limits discussed above, had a more profound, and more *visible* effect on classical music in America.

Overall, this is a study performing what is largely a *business* evaluation of the classical industry. The aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural quality of music is assumed. This assumption is coupled with the simple understanding that there *are* fundamental differences between classical and rock music.¹⁶ These differences go beyond sound and style, but are not as important to the core of this study.

The marker of success for this study is commercial success. The primary question is: did the American classical music industry effectively react to the voluminous changes which occurred in American culture and technology between 1956 and 1982? The term "commercial success" refers to profitability. The company, or sector of an industry, which controls the largest portion of that industry's market share or garners the most profits, in this case popular music, is the (more) successful company. Because it controls roughly two percent of the American record market, a level which has characterized the industry since at least the 1980s, the American classical industry is understood to be the loser in the competition for market share.¹⁷ Is the classical industry at fault for its present position? Did the American classical industry do all it could in this time period to assert its products in light of an ever-widening total market?

¹⁶Bruce Baugh and James Young published an exciting set of arguments in the mid-90s in *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism* as to whether classical and popular music are written (and therefore should be evaluated) with a differing set of aesthetics.

¹⁷*Consumer Purchasing Trends*, RIAA (Accessed 3 May 2007)
<http://www.riaa.com/news/marketingdata/purchasing.asp>.

Although classical and rock music have differing aesthetics, and often a different class of listeners, both genres and their associated industries have had the opportunity to entice the *entire* American listening population to purchase their products. Therefore, both industries can be evaluated according to the same standard for commercial success. The developing idea of niche marketing and other approaches to addressing a heavily-segmented consumer population will also be discussed. However, technology and the vast technological developments which occurred during the era in question influenced equally both classical and rock record labels.

CHAPTER TWO

"Thirty-Three and a Third": Audio Format Innovations and the Involvement of Classical Record Labels

Shedding the Shellac

In the midst of listening to the first movement of this record, a terrible thing happened. There was a click, silence, and strange noises and then the movement continued. This happened again and again. I counted twelve sides for the four movements and eleven interruptions, of which eight were unplanned by Brahms. So eight abominable times during the rendition I was in turn enthralled and jarred, like having the phone ring at intervals while you are making love. Gritting my teeth, I asked my friends to play the concerto a second time only to relive the horror.

My initial interest in the LP arose out of my sincere hatred of the phonograph. I am sure Thomas Edison never thought of it just this way, but to me the phonograph was a machine that learned how to talk but never learned how to play music.¹

In these words, Dr. Peter Goldmark, head of Columbia Broadcasting System's (CBS) research laboratories for thirty-six years, explained his inspiration for developing the long-playing record (LP). Goldmark was frustrated because of the constant changing of records necessary to hear his friends' new recording of the Brahms *Second Piano Concerto* with Arturo Toscanini conducting and Vladimir Horowitz at the piano.² Of course, constant disc shifting was a perennial problem in 1945, when this was written, as

¹ Quoted in Mark Coleman, *PLAYBACK: From the Victrola to MP3, 100 Years of Music, Machines, and Money* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2003), 51-52.

² Edward Zwick, "An Interview with the Father of Hi-Fi: Dr. Peter Goldmark." *Rolling Stone Magazine*, 27 September 1973, 44.

it had been since the early twentieth century, due to the dominance of the 78 shellac record as America's primary means of pre-recorded music distribution.³

Although this study focuses on classical music companies between 1956 and 1982, it must be understood that the technological developments contributed to the rise of rock; hence, the era in question came from the technology that immediately succeeded and ultimately replaced the 78 disc. Thick, heavy, and easily breakable, a single disc by itself was difficult to handle; and, with a playing time of only three to four minutes a side, listening to a piece of any significant length required the use of multiple discs.⁴ The astute decision made by the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1904 to start pressing *both* sides of the record gave one around eight minutes of playback time per disc.⁵ However, for classical works especially, the available time was not near enough to contain an entire work on a single disc. For example, a 78 recording of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1* in C Major required four discs, and necessitated seven disc or side changes in order to hear the approximately twenty-eight minutes of music in its entirety.

Aside from providing a logistical nightmare for any piece longer than four minutes, the disc itself was problematic. Composed primarily of shellac, processed from a waxy secretion of the South Asian lac insect, and infused with fillers, mostly limestone,⁶ these records were of questionable durability. A fall of only a few inches

³William H. Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xii.

⁴Peter Martland, *Since Records Began: EMI; The First 100 Years* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1997), 151.

⁵Jim Dawson and Steve Propes, *45 RPM: The History, Heroes, and Villains of a Pop Music Revolution* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2003), 8.

⁶Andre Millard, *America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 202-203.

could shatter a 78. The highly breakable nature of these shellac composite discs also made a home changer for multiple discs impractical. And, even if one managed to acquire a 78, get it home, and place it on the turntable without destroying it, only one of multiple problems had been overcome.

The rather crude process of harvesting shellac in South Asia meant that often the actual lac insects were gathered with the shellac, which resulted in the exoskeletons of thousands of insects being processed into the pressing material for records.⁷ This meant that even before those unavoidable scratches developed, records possessed ready-made pops and cracks right from the press. Secondly, 78s produced a loud “buzzing” surface noise while being played. This sound resulted from the actual surface of the record grooves being worn away, due to the heavy weight of the magnetic pickups for the needle. It is estimated that on Victor company record players, the pressure of the needle on the shellac was around 50,000 pounds per square inch, which was not conducive to longevity. Shellac records only had an estimated life of 75-125 plays.⁸ Even with record companies adding abrasives to the shellac compound to slough away the needle as opposed to the grooves, these records still had an extremely short life span.⁹ Also of concern was the nature of the recording process. Until the advent of magnetic tape-based recording post-World War II, master recordings were cut directly from the performance. Aside from a lack of editing, the consistency of the recording was questionable. To accommodate the capacity of the 78, longer movements had to be broken up into, at best,

⁷Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 16.

⁸Millard, *America on Record*, 203.

⁹Zwick, "An Interview with the Father of Hi-Fi," 44.

four-minute twenty-second segments.¹⁰ Often these segments required multiple takes, often mastered days, or even weeks, apart. Additionally, sometimes specific movements or sections would be played much faster than usual in order to fit the entire movement on one side. In the end, a compiled recording requiring multiple sides would be incongruous, with sections of the same movement or piece having vastly different tempos and characters.¹¹

However, even with the shortcomings of the 10-inch 78 disc, these cumbersome entities remained the primary means for the dissemination of recorded music in America up until the mid-1950s. The popular term "album," which later referred to a single record, comes from the 78 era, when, literally, bound books of multiple records had to be issued for a single work.¹² Electronic amplification increased sound production and added the benefit of playback volume control in 1925,¹³ but durability remained a concern. During World War II (1941-1945), the US Government instituted the "V-Disc" program ("V" for "Victory"), which shipped thousands of 12-inch, *vinylite* 78 discs¹⁴ of new recordings to United States troops overseas, because the government was wary of standard 78s arriving either broken, or unplayable due to weather damage after the long sea journey.¹⁵ This highly successful program lasted through 1949, beyond the earliest introduction of the LP, and proved that more durable means of recording were feasible.

¹⁰Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 34-35.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 18.

¹³Coleman, *PLAYBACK*, 34-35.

¹⁴Ibid., 47-49.

¹⁵Millard, *America on Record*, 205.

Additionally, vinyl discs, as well as the 33 1/3 rpm speed, had been in limited use since the 1930s in discs for the soundtracks to motion pictures and for radio, but these technologies were too complex, too expensive, and too ungainly for consumer use.¹⁶ Therefore, what inspired the push from this incipient technology to a consumer-friendly long-playing record?

Undoubtedly, the primary answer to the previous question can be summed up in the lyrics from a more recent popular song, "Money, money, money, money, money." Oddly enough, however, it was also classical music that provided much of the drive for the technological advancements in the American recording industry. Classical art music has never been the bulk of the recording market, American or otherwise; nonetheless, it *has* influenced the business. Peter Martland, historian for Electrical-Musical Industries (EMI), states that, though comprising a small percentage, classical music remains a "good and profitable trade" and brings "prestige" to record companies.¹⁷ This notion of prestige was even truer in the 1940s. Peter Goldmark, Ted Wallerstein, and William Paley of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) believed that a base of classical music lovers and audiophiles existed and would appreciate the introduction of a longer playing record.

In the immediate wake of the Great Depression, before the beginning of the Second World War, the United States record market sagged considerably. After all, why would one purchase recorded music in such a society, when the 78 was cumbersome, and music played on the radio airwaves for free? The need to bolster this sputtering market led to the first work in earnest on a longer-playing record, started in 1939 by engineers

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Martland, *Since Records Began*, 272.

for CBS.¹⁸ CBS had acquired the American Record Corporation (ARC), owner of Columbia Records, for a mere \$700,000. This inexpensive acquisition¹⁹ allowed for development of a long-player to commence. As Edward Wallerstein, the newly appointed chairman of Columbia Records, recounted, there was "immediate" discussion on developing a new, longer-playing record upon the joining of the two companies.²⁰ World War II unfortunately interrupted that development after only a year, as it also disrupted the entire United States recording industry. Aside from the aforementioned and highly-successful V-disc program, commercial record production slumped, aided by a strike by the American Federation of Musicians (AFM). On top of all this, a shortage of shellac occurred after French Indochina, the United States' main supplier of shellac, was conquered by the Japanese. Although the record market resurged after VJ day, as did virtually every market outside of the defense industry in America, the mid-war slump, and lack of record material, undoubtedly instilled a further drive in CBS's researchers to create a more durable recording medium.

As previously stated, classical music played a large role in this development. By 1946, CBS/Columbia engineers, headed by Peter Goldmark, delivered an eight-minute per side duration record.

¹⁸Ward Botsford, "Creating the LP Record," *High Fidelity and Musical America*, April 1976, 57.

¹⁹\$700,000 in 1939 is equal to about \$9.5 million in 2006 dollars. This is a relatively inexpensive amount for a fully-functional and highly successful record company. For example in 1998, PolyGram records was sold for \$10 billion. "Overview: PolyGram," Caslon Analytics (Accessed 12 June 2007) <http://www.ketupa.net/polygram.htm>.

²⁰Botsford, "Creating the LP Record," 57.

However, Chairman Wallerstein rejected it, and other twelve- and fifteen-minute versions between 1946 and 1948, much to the chagrin of William S. Paley, the head of CBS.²¹ The reason behind Wallerstein's insistence on longer times was that he had personally timed many standard classical works, and insisted on a disc with at least seventeen minutes per side duration. Wallerstein claimed that this duration would accommodate ninety percent of the classical repertoire on two sides of a single platter. In his own words, Wallerstein states that "our [Columbia Record's] thinking had been geared completely to the classical market rather than to the two- or three-minute pop disc market." Peter Goldmark was also inclined towards classical music, saying he "remotely" desired to shift the "musical taste of the nation" to the classical end of the spectrum.²² Therefore, classical music was certainly an impetus to the key developers of the long-playing record.

Columbia's determined engineering team's vision of success in the classical sector was initially realized and may have outdone the popular music industry if not for the developments that quickly occurred after the release of the long-player. For, in fact, Columbia Records was well prepared for the unveiling of the LP. Due to Wallerstein's clever foresight, everything recorded for Columbia after the 1939 purchase of ARC and pressed on 78s was dually recorded on 33 rpm, 16-inch blank discs. That way, by 1948, Columbia had a sufficient back stock of high-quality masters from which to press an impressive catalogue of long-players.²³ When the internal announcement of the development of a longer-playing record occurred, CBS held a company-wide contest to

²¹Ibid., 58.

²²Coleman, *PLAYBACK*, 52.

²³Botsford, "Creating the LP Record," 57.

name the new disc. Unfortunately, out of the twenty-five names that survived the initial cut, none was deemed appropriate.²⁴ Fortunately, for Columbia, Peter Goldmark happened to let the acronym "LP," for long-player, slip in front of Wallerstein, who reacted, "That's it!" Much like the now generic terms "Kleenex" and "Band-Aid," "LP," even though proprietary to CBS, quickly became the standard reference for 12-inch, 33 1/3 records.

On June 20, 1948, in a crowded room at the posh Waldorf-Astoria hotel in Manhattan, Peter Goldmark, along with Ed Wallerstein, first publicly unveiled the "LP" 33 1/3 RPM vinyl record.²⁵ Recorded music would never be the same. The photograph below shows Peter Goldmark standing holding a new LP above about a 15-inch stack of the same, flanked on both sides by enormous stacks of 78s.²⁶ Members of the press were taken aback to learn that all of the music on the roughly eight-foot stacks of 78s was contained on the 15-inch stack of LPs, with, astonishingly enough, all unbroken movements. Columbia Records and its parent company, CBS, had, at least momentarily, taken the musical world by storm.

Columbia's new invention had remained a secret right up until its release.²⁷ Thus, CBS and Columbia were well prepared. Prior to June of 1948, Columbia had already partnered with the Philco Company to produce an attachment to play the new LP, which, incidentally, Wallerstein and Goldmark employed in the initial unveiling. Although it was really a self-contained turntable, Philco cleverly marketed it as an "adapter."

²⁴Coleman, *PLAYBACK*, 54.

²⁵Botsford, "Creating the LP Record," 60.

²⁶Zwick, "An Interview with the Father of Hi-Fi," 44.

²⁷Botsford, "Creating the LP Record," 58, 60.



Fig. 1. Peter Goldmark at the official unveiling of the LP, June 20, 1948²⁸

Columbia also introduced, simultaneously with the LP itself, a sufficient catalogue of recordings, mostly classical. This new catalogue showcased 101 recordings, including three full operas, seven of the nine Beethoven symphonies, and a little Frank Sinatra thrown in for good measure, all on LP.²⁹ With such preparation, the LP quickly surged ahead in the American market. Wallerstein himself recounts how Capitol,

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Coleman, *PLAYBACK*, 60.

Mercury, and Decca, as well as most of the smaller American record companies, quickly jumped onto the LP bandwagon. So successful was the LP, Columbia had only to subcontract the LP player attachments to Philco for the first year, since by mid-1949, most other American electronics manufacturers were producing LP players.

Fighting with the 45

Despite the initial success of the LP, and a host of classical recordings, March of 1949 marked the beginning of the divergence of classical music, and specifically recordings, firmly separating it from the popular music market, and seemingly placing classical music out of the public eye of America.

In April, 1948, shortly before the public release of the LP, CBS President William Paley allowed Wallerstein to privately demonstrate the new LP to David Sarnoff, and an entourage of engineers from RCA Victor.³⁰ RCA, the "Radio Corporation of America," was CBS's chief rival. Since 1946, RCA had been RCA Victor, after purchasing the Victor Talking Machine Company, giving them an undeniable advantage in the American music market. As RCA and CBS were sworn enemies, it is amazing that Sarnoff, the President of RCA, was even invited to this unveiling. However, William Paley had collaboration in mind and wanted to license out his new LP technology to RCA, in exchange for monetary profit. However, only a few days after the private meeting at Columbia, Sarnoff called Paley with a flat rejection of any kind of licensing offer; the battle was on.³¹

³⁰Botsford, "Creating the LP Record," 60.

³¹Ibid.

Although Sarnoff's rejection proved trying in the first several years, the decision ultimately stood correct. Sarnoff himself had been a pioneer in the communications industry all his life. In fact, he was the first man to announce the *Titanic's* relayed telegraph message, "Ran into iceberg; sinking fast" after hearing it in the Wannamaker Department Store's wireless station in New York City in 1912. Eighteen years later, by 1930, he had worked himself to the Presidency of RCA. No pushover, Sarnoff was affectionately referred to as "the General" by many of his employees, and it was his keen leadership and insight that led RCA to the dominating position it held at the time.

"The General" wasted no time in pressuring his RCA engineers to counter CBS's LP. In a few weeks, RCA engineers presented a showcase to CBS on the possibilities of marketing magnetic tape players on the consumer level, but apparently this was a bluff, since RCA did not go forward with the idea at that time.³² However, RCA had some shelved record technology, which had been abandoned in 1938, and which they quickly brought back into the lab and finished developing into a working product. The results were foretold in a *Billboard* magazine article on January 8, 1949, and the product was made available on March 31, later that year.³³

The result of RCA's quick work, which astonished CBS and everyone else, was the 45 rpm, 7-inch microgroove record. Unlike the LP, the 45, which came to be universally known as the "single," was obviously *never* inspired by classical music. It was inspired by strict competition, with an eye to, if anything outside of competing with Columbia, popular music. In short, the 45 offered all of the advantages of the LP in a smaller package. Better sound quality and durability were a given because of the vinyl

³²Ibid.

³³Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 19-20.

medium, but side length was not an advantage of the 45. 45s, like their 78 cousins, could only provide around four to five minutes of playback per side. This doomed classical music on the 45, but conversely made the single rather ideally suited for the popular song market. RCA alleviated the problem of brevity by pre-designing the 45 to work with a special spindle, called a "stacker" in public jargon, that would automatically change from one record to another by dropping a new record from a stack onto the platter once the current record had finished.³⁴ The 45 also contained a large center hole, meant to accommodate these spindle changers, which earned the nickname "Doughnut Disc" for the 45 rpm record. Interestingly enough, the large hole made the new record unplayable on a 78 or an LP turntable without an adapter, which also might have influenced the large center hole design. Continuing the speculation, there is also a popular urban myth that RCA engineers arbitrarily subtracted 33 from 78 to get the "magical" speed of 45 rpm. However, this has been proven false, since the 45 had been on the drawing board since the late 1930s.³⁵

Although the ensuing battle between RCA and Columbia/CBS over recording medium is interesting, it is not the focus of this study, but rather sets up what would be a continuously emerging stream of technology with which classical labels would have to cope. Overall, it can be said that the emergence of the 45 single spawned a technological revolution in music and the availability thereof, which had a profound impact on classical recording.

Initially, however, the 45 versus LP "Battle of the Speeds" resulted in a draw. Classical music lovers proved reluctant to accept RCA's "Red Seal" classical boxed sets

³⁴Ibid., 13.

³⁵Ibid., 14.

of 45s. Even with RCA touting Red Seal 45s with their ruby red colored vinyl, and the RCA "trigger-action speed" spindle changer (in actuality it took about 3-8 seconds between records) classical music lovers and performers gravitated toward the near-uninterrupted play of the LP.³⁶ Consequently, only nine months after the 45's release, David Sarnoff announced, on January 4, 1950, that RCA would begin releasing its classical catalogue on 33 1/3 long-playing records.³⁷ Holding out only slightly longer, William Paley of CBS announced, near the end of 1951, that Columbia would be releasing its Christmas singles on 45s.³⁸

Even though the "Record Wars" were effectively over, the battles over music-distribution technology had barely begun. By 1951, three means of distributing music to the consumer existed, the LP, the 45, and the venerable 78. The 78 remained a viable part of American record sales well into the mid-50s, though it was continually losing ground. In fact, during the "Battle of the Speeds," although it had pressed some of its classical catalogue on LPs, Decca Records campaigned on a new 78 record with a whole five minutes per side, rather than touting the new microgroove technology.³⁹ Home turntable technology improved alongside record technology. Though both RCA and CBS entered the microgroove market with so-called "adapter" turntables, by the early 1950s and the end of the speed war, American electronics manufacturers were wisely producing dual-speed turntables, with both the 45 and 33 1/3 speeds, although most players required that 45s use a center-hole adapter, to fit on the standard quarter-inch spindle. Because of

³⁶Ibid., 25.

³⁷Ibid., 36.

³⁸Coleman, *PLAYBACK*, 66.

³⁹Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 22.

the 78s' remaining presence, tri-speed models also came into fashion. For a time there were even a few quad-speed models, as yet another new speed was introduced. This was the 16 2/3 rpm long-playing record. Oddly enough, this was typically marketed as "15 rpm" to the general public, and though it held more music than a 12-inch 33 1/3, it was a commercial flop.⁴⁰ It is difficult, in the big picture, to place development of home playback technology as a high priority for record companies. As in the record wars, the playback technology developed concurrently with, though it was overshadowed by, the development of the medium.

However, significant recording medium developments largely disappeared until the early 1970s; for the period that this study addresses, the 45 and the LP were the chief players. Although it would be difficult to label them competitors after the end of the record wars, the technologies did, in the course of their distribution, benefit certain genres, particularly rock, creating the buildup to the present situation in American recorded music.

By 1956, both the LP and the 45 had become fixtures in American musical life; the 78 was still hanging on by a thread. In May 1954, RCA Victor, Columbia, Decca, Capitol, MGM, and Mercury announced that they would begin, in June of that year, shipping 45 promotional copies, instead of 78s.⁴¹ This signaled the firm arrival of the 45, somewhat overshadowing the LP, and sounded the firm death knell for the 78. 45s were smaller, lighter, and more durable, and possessed better sound reproduction than the best shellac 78, making their takeover of the radio industry a certainty. They were also much cheaper to ship, due to the lighter weight, and because of the increased durability,

⁴⁰Millard, *America on Record*, 207.

⁴¹Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 41.

distributors did not have to send two or three spare records, as they did with the shatter-prone 78s. Another development which further enhanced the acceptance of the 45 was the jukebox. Jukeboxes like the Seeburg Company's "Select-o-matic" of "Happy Days" fame, which held fifty 45 rpm discs, contributed vastly to the continuing emergence of the 45. As Jim Dawson and Steve Propes point out, there have been many variations of jukeboxes over the years, "but none of them ever played vinyl [LP] albums."⁴² A raw vinyl shortage, and subsequent price hike, in the early 50s brought on by the Korean War certainly did not aid the LP. 45s were cheaper to produce, since they used less vinyl per record, and thus fared better during the shortage, though RCA did have to switch to pressing in all black vinyl, as opposed to its original color spectrum of 45s.⁴³ The increased musical playing time of an LP seemed to matter little in the eyes of the purchasers or producers of the time. LPs also suffered a disadvantage in public exposure. A teenager in the mid-1950s could stand next to the jukebox and watch the 45 platters spin, and he or she could hear the radio DJ playing the newest "singles," while the LP remained largely a home-bound technology.

Nonetheless, despite varying degrees of exposure, both the LP and the 45 gained major headway in the recording market. Between 1956 and 1958, LP sales rose from 1.7 million to 2 million per annum and 45 sales jumped from 1.3 million to 7 million.⁴⁴ The above figures indicate stability of recording medium, and this stability continued through the 1960s. The 45 dominated the popular music market, while the LP held the classical market, as well as carrying popular music compilation albums. EMI of England, and its

⁴²Ibid., 39-40.

⁴³Ibid., 38.

⁴⁴Martland, *Since Records Began*, 154.

American subsidiary Angel Records, was the last major record label to cease 78 production, stopping in 1961.⁴⁵ Even with this production halt, new 78s could still be found hanging around in record shops up until the mid-60s.⁴⁶ By and large, though, the 45 and the LP remained the main means of distributing recorded music up until the mid-1970s, when the cassette was ready for public consumption. In fact, most record companies maintained the notion that consumers were not "discerning" enough to adapt to new technology like the cassette as evidenced by the general confusion caused by the introduction of the LP.⁴⁷

Handling High-Fidelity

Despite relative consumer and producer satisfaction with the LP and 45, a few upstart technologies tried to gain a foothold in America. In 1963, Philips' American affiliate Mercury Records began to market a "Compact Audio Cassette,"⁴⁸ which proved a complete failure, since the quality was poor and the mechanics of the playback machines even worse.⁴⁹ Though the public rejected the above medium, the desire for even more-improved sound quality gained the attention of American record labels.

In an effort to acquiesce to consumer demands, American labels began to tout new higher-fidelity recording techniques, accompanied with a fair share of catchy names.

⁴⁵Jaco Witteloostuyn, trans. Antoon Hurkmans, Evelyn Kort-Van Kaam, and Shawm Kreitzman, *The Classical Long Playing Record: Design, Production, and Reproduction: A Comprehensive Survey* (Rotterdam: A. A. Balkema, 1997), 25.

⁴⁶Millard, *America on Record*, 207.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 209.

⁴⁸*History*, Royal Philips (USA), (Accessed 22 December 2006)
<http://www.usa.philips.com/about/company/local/history/index.html>.

⁴⁹Witteloostuyn, *The Classical Long Playing Record*, 25.

Mercury Records launched so-called "Living Presence" recordings. London Records boasted "Full-Frequency-Range-Recordings" (FFRR) which utilized a technology that had been around since the mid-1940s. Columbia also marketed its "360° Sound" and RCA Victor promoted its "Living Stereo" and "New Orthophonic High-Fidelity" recordings.⁵⁰

These technologies were all from the same vein, since they were dealing with monaural recording (one channel of sound reproduced identically through one or two speakers). However, the classical music loving and audiophile community clamored for even higher-quality sound reproduction. Classical music lovers were not content with the monaural LP and desired higher-fidelity playback. The logical answer to this was stereo sound; that is, sound recorded and then reproduced in two separate and distinct channels, to simulate three-dimensional sound.⁵¹ EMI was the first to develop a viable stereo recording technique for discs in 1954, which put one channel on each side of the v-shaped groove. The Western Electric Company (Westrex) adopted this same technique, called the 45/45 method, and introduced it to the United States in 1957.⁵² At that time, the Record(ing) Industry Association of America (RIAA) officially accepted this new Westrex system as the standard for American stereo recording.⁵³ Although this new system necessitated an equipment upgrade, Americans seemed more secure with the idea than they had when the LP and 45 were introduced, and started purchasing the new stereophonic discs immediately with their official release in December, 1957. Only three

⁵⁰Coleman, *PLAYBACK*, 69.

⁵¹Christ Sheridan, "Stereophonic Sound on Tape and Disc," *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 22 December 2006) <http://www.grovemusic.com>.

⁵²Martland, *Since Records Began*, 22-24.

⁵³Millard, *America on Record*, 215.

years later, in 1960, stereo discs accounted for one-fourth of all record sales in the world.⁵⁴ Of course, some of these records were "simulated" stereo, where record producers took old mono recordings and simply added a purposefully distorted copy of the original mono channel to produce a quasi-stereo sound. Shortly after 1957, with the success of stereo, monaural recordings became rather blasé, and did not see a resurgence until reissues began to appear in the 1970s.

The logical progression from stereo sound involved the continued addition of more and more distinct channels of sound, such as the 5.1 (5 regular audio channels plus a subwoofer channel), 6.1, and now even 7.1 channel surround sound systems that grace the market today. However, the microgroove disc and the upcoming cassette were not capable of convincingly reproducing more than two channels of sound. In fact, affordable multi-channel home technology would not be available until the mid-1990s. There was an attempt to enhance stereo sound with "quadraphonic" recordings which appeared in 1971.⁵⁵ Quadraphonic recordings contained four different tracks, that echoed the standard right and left channels in reverse in a second set of "rear" speakers, creating a more realistic and enveloping sound. Due to a lack of standardization of playback equipment and a general lack of consumer appeal, quadraphonic records never achieved commercial success,⁵⁶ although they remained, in very limited production, available up until 1977. Traditional stereo ruled the day, and, for the time being, still lives strong.

⁵⁴Martland, *Since Records Began*, 24.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁶Timothy Day, *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 21.

Coping with the Cassette

The introduction of the LP had largely been inspired by classical music lovers and audiophiles; these two are often one and the same. The cries of audiophiles for higher-fidelity and uninterrupted playback convinced Columbia Record's researchers of the viability of a longer-playing record and thus spawned the development of microgroove technology. As Timothy Day has pointed out, the 33 1/3 LP remained the main vehicle for classical music from the mid-1950s through the mid-1980s.⁵⁷ Thus, the outright development of the cassette is not of much importance to this study; more important is the competition that the cassette offered, and its importance to expanding popular music, which is the cassette's real effect on the classical market. By the close of this study, 1982, the cassette was the top-selling recording medium, while the LP quickly moved from stabilized to obsolescence.⁵⁸ Of course, as Day reinforces his point, sales of cassettes did not overtake LP sales until after the introduction of the compact disc, which soon after overtook cassette sales as well.⁵⁹

The impetus for the development of the prerecorded cassette largely came from a desire for convenience in size and with that, portability. Neither higher fidelity nor playback time influenced the cassette's inception. As already mentioned, reel-to-reel tapes never achieved success in the home market. The self-contained cassette came to be the successful alternative. The cassette provided the longevity of magnetic tape contained within a package whose convenience outweighed every other available

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Michèle Hung and Esteban Morencos, *World Record Sales 1969-1990: A Statistical History of the World Recording Industry* (London: International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), 1990), 61.

⁵⁹Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 21.

medium. William Lear, famed inventor of the Lear Jet, conceptualized the first commercially successful cassette, the now infamous 8-track tape. Motorola designed the first player, and RCA encoded the first offered tracks from its catalogue of *popular* music.⁶⁰ Although the 8-track was designed for home use also, the automobile brought the cassette to popularity. The 8-track carried well, at least compared to the LP, and was convenient for drivers on the road, requiring the use of only one hand to load the cartridge and operate the player. Indeed, even though some car manufacturers had managed to squeeze 45 turntables into limousines and similar luxury autos, the cassette made recorded audio in the automobile a truly viable option. Ford first offered the 8-track player as a luxury add-on in 1966, and its use in automobiles steadily increased. By 1975, 8-track tapes accounted for a quarter of all recorded music sold in America.⁶¹

The 8-track and its later cousin the "Compact Cassette" certainly possessed portability, though their playback quality was limited. The 8-track, as the name implies, only held four paired audio tracks, resulting in eight three to four minute songs per cartridge. These pieces were played on a continuous loop of tape, meaning that there was no cueing of particular tracks. 8-tracks had no rewind feature, which means one had to listen to, or fast-forward (only offered on some expensive player models) through all seven other tracks to replay a track. If the unending loop was not bad enough, the fidelity proved even worse. Aside from the inescapable hiss most often associated with cassettes, the 8-track featured clicks and interruptions of playback as the magnetic heads moved over partitions in the audio tracks. Also, to pair the tracks, selections were sometimes played faster or slower than their original recorded tempos, and even occasionally

⁶⁰Millard, *America on Record*, 316.

⁶¹Coleman, *PLAYBACK*, 157.

chopped short, resulting in a not-necessarily true to life reproduction of the studio recording.⁶²

Interestingly enough, the compact cassette of 1970s and 80s fame differed little from the original cassette developed in 1963 by the Norwegian company Philips. Though it took longer to assert itself into the American market, the compact cassette outdid the 8-track in both playback time and access to music on the tape. Consisting of a miniaturized reel-to-reel tape inside a plastic casing, the cassette offered both rewind and fast-forward features, allowing the operator to cue up any selection on the tape. And, with a playback time of up to forty-five minutes per side, the compact cassette even outdid the LP with the amount of music a solitary unit could contain. Of course the compact cassette, like the 8-track, hissed unendingly and had less life than a well-cared for LP. Dolby Noise-Reduction technology, developed in 1966 by English Decca, significantly reduced tape hiss, and was slowly adopted across the board on all cassette players.⁶³ Unfortunately for the cassette, it took longer to be incorporated into automobiles, which hampered its acceptance over the inferior 8-track.

Not until 1983 did cassette tape sales (8-track and compact combined) overtake LP sales.⁶⁴ In 1983 the shiny new compact disc slowly began to draw away classical and audiophile LP devotees, which allowed cassettes to break the LP's hold on the market. Although major American labels eventually began to release, or often, re-release, their classical catalogues on cassette, it was never a marked success until the interim shift between the LP and the CD. Even at this, classical labels were the main proponents

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 21.

⁶⁴Hung and Morencos, *World Record Sales 1969-1990*, 61.

behind the new compact disc technology, once again showing that classical music was still alive and well. Classical cassette releases were only a holdover in the uneasy market shift to new technology, as the 78 had been in the shift from shellac to microgroove vinyl. The late-blooming success of the cassette occurred because of its inherent portability. In 1979, Sony Corporation of Japan revealed its "Soundabout," later "Walkman," personal cassette player. Although the Walkman debuted in America with a hefty starting price of \$199.99, it eventually and unexpectedly catapulted the compact cassette to popularity.⁶⁵ Again, the cassette never proved to be a contender in the classical sector. By the time the cassette achieved its popularity, classical companies had already shifted focus to the compact disc.

The 12-inch, 33 1/3 speed microgroove long-playing vinylite disc revolutionized the way Americans listened to music. Its chief competitor, the 7-inch, 45 speed, single did the same. Various means of enhancing the fidelity of playback further developed a burgeoning American recorded music market. Classical music was the *key player* in the development of long-playing technology, and also the main influence behind developing higher-fidelity. The classical sector of the American music industry performed admirably in developing, implementing, and enhancing new technology for its consumer base. Of course, rival technology performed well too, and equally enhanced the popular music industry. The 45, the 8-track, the compact cassette, and radio all were the domain of popular music. Even the LP had to share a portion of its market with popular albums. Classical music, though, did not fail in regard to technology. If the classical sector failed, its failure came from something other than technology, for it held onto, and continually developed, the technology that most suited its repertoire. Notwithstanding this

⁶⁵Millard, *America on Record*, 324-325.

technological progression, the scope and makeup of the American record market changed markedly during the period of 1956 through 1982, bringing about an additional host of challenges that classical labels were forced to answer.

CHAPTER THREE

"It's Growing": The Changing Scope of the American Record Market between 1956 and 1982

As discovered in Chapter Two, by 1956, microgroove technology had pervaded the American musical recording scene and brought surprising rebound to what was a sagging post-World War II record market. Both classical music and popular music benefited from these new directions in technology. Though the market percentages for classical and popular records may have been more equally shared in 1956, the trend toward a pronounced dichotomy between classical and popular music was squarely in place and had been for some time. Some of this division had been brought about by the technological changes discussed in the previous chapter. How did the American record market respond in the time leading up to 1982? While it may seem convenient to boil down market competition in this period to simply classical versus popular, the reality is much more complex. Previous to 1982, the American record market not only grew exponentially in terms of sales figures, but also as new genres emerged, the American record market also began to cater to specific population groups. An understanding of this hodge-podge of influences entering the market scene is crucial to gauging the American classical industry's reaction.

The Teen Scene

In 1953, RCA general manager Manny Sachs announced that 45 singles were accounting for a little over half of RCA's popular recording sales. Overall, 45s

controlled a quarter of all record sales, and the LP stood solid at twenty percent. At this time, the 78 was still cornering fifty-two percent of the market, but its hold would not continue for long.¹ The interesting fact about these statistics is that the vast majority of 45s being sold were popular music, a trend which would only increase with the rapidly emerging rock genre. Classical music on 45s, like those of RCA's famous "Red Seal" line, were all but obsolete by the end of the 1950s, as RCA chose to convert its entire Red Seal catalogue to the more classical-friendly LP.



Fig. 2. Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* on RCA "Red Seal" 45s

The removal of classical works from 45 pressings left the 45 the domain of popular music. That is not to discount the influence of the LP, for in 1953 it was squarely covering twenty percent of the American market. However, LPs not only carried classical works, but also Broadway soundtracks, show tunes, easy listening, and popular music, which meant not all of that twenty percent market share belonged to classical

¹Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 41.

music.² For example, in 1956, of the seventy-two records that sold over a million copies, only seven were LPs, the rest being singles or 78s. Only *one* of these seven was classical; the venerable *1812 Overture* recording by Antal Dorati and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, which was released on the Mercury label.³ The LP record, though inspired by classical music, certainly carried more than just classical music into the market.

The marked success of the 45 single rested on two factors, cost and content. When the 45 became available to the public in 1949, it did so at the initial cost of sixty-five cents per single. Red Seal 45s sold for a few cents more, but their long-term influence on the 45's success would prove negligible. Average LP cost for the time was a dollar and twenty-five cents for a single-disc album.⁴ Both of these prices are fairly expensive compared to current recording prices, because a two-song 45 would retail at over five dollars per unit today, but it would stand to reason that the LP, containing roughly four to five times the amount of music as a single at only twice the cost, would outsell the 45. However, 45 sales in the 50s, gained ground, in certain periods, at over five times the rate of LPs.⁵ The smaller musical content of the 45 did not noticeably influence its reception with the general public, other than the classical music-loving community, and after RCA made the Red Seal line available on LP, the classical lovers' complaint was resolved.

²The original cast recording of *South Pacific* was the first "big hit" on LP, selling two million copies; other Broadway soundtracks such as *The Sound of Music* and *Oklahoma!* also buoyed LP sales. Botsford, *Creating the LP Record*, 61.

³Joseph Murrells, *Million Selling Records from the 1900s to the 1980s: An Illustrated Directory* (London: BT Batsford, 1984), 62-104. This album was certified *GOLD* (\$1 million in sales) by the RIAA in 1963.

⁴Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 30.

⁵Martland, *History of EMI*, 155.

The successful cost factor for the 45, rather than the length of its musical content, was clearly more important to the buying audience to which it was being marketed, the American adolescent. The socio-political upheaval caused by American involvement in World War II and the subsequent, post-VJ Day economic boom afforded American youth new freedoms and very quickly turned them into a viable part of the consumer community. Teenagers became the *sine non qua* American consumers, as they purchased everything from automobiles and drive-in food to sound recordings.

Even this new purchasing segment did not exist on an unlimited budget; therefore, the lower price of the single offered immediate appeal. A job as a carhop or a grocery clerk, or a parent's allowance, failed to provide teenagers with the resources for unbridled spending. Never mind that the single's length was limited to two songs; to a teenager on a limited budget, the *relatively* inexpensive 45 was the easiest and cheapest way to get immediate access to the hit platters that were being spun on the radio. It is also important to remember that RCA 45 turntables cost less than comparable LP players, partly because of their reduced size, and also because RCA purposely under-priced its playing attachments at their debut. The first RCA 9-JY speaker-less turntable adapter initially retailed for only \$12.95, or \$104.78 in 2006 dollars.⁶ The first LP adapter first sold for a hefty \$29.95, around \$260 in today's figures.⁷ This lower price for a playing attachment also helped to garner overall success for the single.

Cost was only one factor which influenced the 45's success. More important than cost, content provided for an explosion of sales for the American record market. On April 12, 1954, Bill Haley & His Comets cut a master of "Rock Around the Clock."

⁶Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 26.

⁷Botsford, "Creating the LP Record," 61.

Although the Decca-released single did not debut until July of the next year, "Rock Around the Clock" hit #1 on the *Billboard* and *Cash Box* charts, and remained charted for fifteen weeks.⁸ Of course, "Rock Around the Clock" was only the first smash hit of the emerging rock genre. Rock grew out of a hodgepodge of influences, most of them from African-American origins, especially rhythm and blues. Acts such as Bill Haley and Elvis Presley were often merely adoptions of musical styles that had long been a staple in black circles.⁹ Regardless of origins, rock took the American music industry by storm.

The year 1956 is a prime example of this voluminous growth in the American record market. In 1956, record sales jumped from \$100 million to \$331 million, a rise of forty-three percent.¹⁰ The emergence of rock caused this colossal jump in sales, and the American music industry knew it. 1956 proved to be a year fraught with hit singles as RCA released the Elvis classics "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Don't Be Cruel," Decca released the first version of Buddy Holly's "That'll Be the Day," and Chess Records released Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven." Though these hits represented only the tip of the iceberg for the genre, they signified that rock was not merely a fad.

Many books have offered explanations as to why rock so transfixed and guided the musical tastes of America. Suffice it to say, rock did take over the American musical

⁸Pat Downey, George Albert, and Frank Hoffman, *Cash Box: Pop Singles Charts 1950-1993* (Englewood, CA: Libraries Unlimited Inc., 1994), 149.

⁹Peter Fletcher, *Roll Over Rock: A Study of Music in Contemporary Culture* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1981), 84.

¹⁰Philip Ennis, *The Seventh Stream: The Emergence of Rocknroll in American Popular Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1992), 229.

scene, and still remains a viable force in the American music industry.¹¹ Of course, classical music, and other genres like country music and jazz, were not dead and continued to hold a place in the market, but rock was chief among the genres and continued to control the direction of the American music industry. Consumer appeal aside, corrupt practices also helped to generate success for rock music.

The Pay Day

The most striking impropriety within American recording was the so-called "Payola" scandal. Simply put, Payola was bribery by record producers and promoters to ensure that their products received radio airtime. By the mid 1950s, the days of live radio performances and syndicated network broadcasts were largely over. Therefore, as the radio industry fully transitioned to the disc jockey, a live person who aired pre-recorded music, much of the recording industry's income began to come indirectly from radio airplay.¹² As a result, radio airtime became a precious commodity for the record business. Most record companies shipped their products (mostly singles) to radio stations at little or no cost to the stations themselves. However, in such a competitive market in which the "Big Six,"¹³ record companies and numerous, smaller, independent labels shipped out free promotional copies, record producers were not assured adequate airplay. The solution to this problem became outright bribery, as artist and repertoire men (A & R) bribed deejays to provide airtime or extra airtime, to particular songs. Deejays were

¹¹Rock is the highest selling popular genre in American music at 34% of total sales. *Research and Data*. Recording Industry Association of America (Accessed 18 January 2007) <http://www.riaa.com/news/marketingdata/default.asp>.

¹²Charles Schicke, *Revolution in Sound: A Biography of the Recording Industry* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1974), 137-138.

¹³The "Big Six" record companies were Columbia, RCA, Decca, MGM, Capitol, and Mercury.

notoriously underpaid, which prompted them to be more complicit with bribe offers; nothing was off limits for Payola bribes as cash, exotic vacations, profit percentages from songs, liquor, and in the most extreme cases, sex, were all used to push certain records into the public ear. Only after a series of very public trials and the early 60s advent of the "Top Forty" system, which based song airplay on local and national surveys of retail sales or national charts (*Billboard*, *Cash Box*, and others) was Payola effectively corralled.¹⁴

The overall effect of the payola scandal was to push those tracks which were specifically designed to attract youthful listeners into the forefront in terms of airtime. Clearly aesthetics were of little importance in determining radio airtime and corresponding popularity of pop music. Payola is a resounding reminder that the recording industry was driven by money, was an evocation of the emerging consumer ideal, and certainly had its internal problems.

Payola's effect on the classical side of the industry was negligible. The radio had never been the domain of classical music, except perhaps in early syndicated broadcasts. The medium of transmission for the radio industry was the 45, and since classical music was a flop on 45, radio power and the emerging prestige of rock and other popular genres provided new challenges to the classical divisions of the industry.

The Stat Chat

The important remaining observation of the changing scope of the American record market involves how classical records actually fared between 1956 and 1982. Much of this data comes from *Billboard.biz*, an interactive web-based subscription

¹⁴Ibid., 139-140.

service which allows access to the entire corpus of *Billboard Magazine* record charts from their beginning in 1948 to the present. For a general idea about the voluminous growth which the American market achieved in this time, consider the recording sales amounts from the time period. In 1954, American recording sales brought in \$205.1 million (1956 dollars).¹⁵ By 1969, that amount of sales had increased, in inflation-adjusted dollars, to \$1.221 billion, and by 1982 rose to \$1.84 billion.¹⁶ In 1982, record labels were selling music worth nine times as much as were their 1954 counterparts. Unit sales also increased concurrently with sales. In 1973, 614 million units were shipped between singles, LPs, and tapes. 1978 saw 725 million shipped. After 1975 there was a sharp recession in the economy that affected record sales, which would only be bolstered after the introduction of the compact disc. However, up until the late 70s, unit shipments were increasing along with sales.¹⁷

Ranking awards are of little consequence to this study, since only ten classical albums were certified "Gold" status (\$1,000,000 in sales) between 1956 and 1982; that is ten out of over two-thousand total "Gold" albums, or roughly .45%. Incidentally, these ten albums comprise *all* of the classical albums which have ever made gold status. All but three of these classical albums were of the popularized or "crossover" variety, such as *Hooked on Classics* and *Switched on Bach*.¹⁸ However, these two success stories, were, until recently, the most successful albums with classical connections to garner

¹⁵Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 41.

¹⁶Hung and Morencos, *World Record Sales*, 61.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 61, 64.

¹⁸*Switched on Bach* took J.S. Bach works and played them on a moog synthesizer and the wildly-popular *Hooked on Classics* series took classical works and recorded them in sync with a disco style beat. The success inspired a host of other "Hooked on ..." titled albums and other media, including the *Hooked on Phonics* reading system.

recognition with the general populace. *Switched on Bach*, released on Columbia, actually reached number ten on *Billboard's* popular charts as well as topping the classical charts.¹⁹ *Hooked on Classics*, a UK production, also made the pop charts, peaking at number four in 1982,²⁰ but it did not make the classical charts until re-released on compact disc in 1994. These two albums, despite their pretenses, are the most successful classical albums, at least in the public eye, to date, and both were originally released during the study period. However, it must be noted that these albums did not sell due to inherent musical quality; they sold because they had immediate popular appeal (the use of unique instrumentation in the Bach, and the tie-in with disco in *Hooked on Classics*), and, more importantly, because they were successfully marketed.

What about "Best Seller" rankings? These are of little help. There are no classical recordings, even in the crossover vein, which rank on the RIAA's all-time "Top 100 Albums" chart.²¹ But, how does one gauge the success of traditionally-performed and produced classical recordings against popular music? The challenge proves ominous, especially in light of the culturally reinforced dichotomy between classical and popular music that the recording industry echoes. Comparing apples to oranges might be easier than comparing the rankings of classical and popular music. No classical albums appeared on the end-of-the-year *Billboard* charts until classical music was given its own

¹⁹*The Billboard 200 – 1969*, Billboard.biz (Accessed 25 May 2007)
http://www.billboard.biz/bbbiz/charts/search/detailed_chart_display.jsp?g=a&f=The%20Billboard%20200&model.chartId=3068877.

²⁰*The Billboard 200 – 1982*, Billboard.biz (Accessed 25 May 2007)
http://www.billboard.biz/bbbiz/charts/search/detailed_chart_display.jsp?g=a&f=The%20Billboard%20200&model.chartId=3069631.

²¹*Top 100 Albums*, RIAA (Accessed 25 May 2007)
<http://www.riaa.com/gp/bestsellers/topalbums.asp>.

separate ranking charts in 1969.²² Classical music has since become more and more marginalized and separated from its popular counterpart; as one author says, "[classical music is a] specialization for an isolated minority."²³ Of course, this marginalization only echoes the larger trends in the industry, and has little to do with any abstract notions of musical quality. Therefore, how can the success of classical music be evaluated?

Classical recordings, except in the case of the instances above and crossover situations (hence the term), rarely will appear on both the classical and popular charts, especially during this time period, making a comparison virtually impossible. Even those albums which fill *Billboard's* "Top Classical" year-end album charts during this time are often of a lighter variety; for example *My Favorite Chopin* by Van Cliburn, or *Bach's Greatest Hits*. This seems to say, that in this era of booming recording sales, the more traditional recordings of classical music were not the best sellers. However, the prevalence of popularized classical albums indicates that the classical industry was making some effort to promote classical music. These types of albums sold well compared to traditional classical recordings, but still performed poorly in light of rock music.

However, classical music was not dead in 1982, nor is it dead today. In fact, classical music has grown. Classical music sales and production grew alongside, just not at the soaring rate of its popular counterpart. Because popular sales increased so much and at a higher rate, smaller increases in classical sales failed to forestall declining percentages of market share.

²²Various Paths, *Billboard.biz* (Accessed 15 June, 2007)
<http://www.billboard.biz/bbbiz/charts/index.jsp>.

²³James Koehne, "The Flight from Banality" in *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, ed. Christopher Washburn and Maiken Derno (New York: Routledge, 2004), 148.

The classical music industry, American or otherwise, has never given up its production of records. In fact, catalogue offerings have increased consistently,²⁴ and have been supplemented by re-issues. Many authors state that classical music has remained very consistent in production and sales throughout this time period, meaning that classical sales grew at a rate high enough to stay alive. However, popular music sales grew at a higher rate, in order to accomplish a higher sales percentage. It can be said with certainty that classical recording sales have hovered around the three-percent mark since at least 1989, when the Nielsen *SoundScan* system of monitoring the recording industry was just coming into play.²⁵ This is remarkable consistency in light of a constantly fluctuating record market; thus, the state of classical music in this era was consistent and stable, but far less profitable than its popular counterpart.

As a counterargument, it could be that increased profits attained from popular music sales, allowed record labels to keep their classical divisions in operation despite diminishing market share. As previously mentioned, many labels felt retaining a classical division was a matter of company pride and a boost to a label's prestige amongst certain segments of the population. The benefits which profits and established popular music networks brought to classical labels will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Popular culture and the consumerist mindset pigeonhole classical music. Because it retains a small percentage of sales, classical music is seen as a holdover from the past, and it is perceived as being ultimately on its way out. This phenomenon of

²⁴Scott Spiegelberg, *Classical Recordings: I'm Not Dead Yet* (Accessed 26 May 2007) <http://musicalperceptions.blogspot.com/2006/12/classical-recordings-im-not-dead-yet.html>.

²⁵*Consumer Purchasing Trends*, RIAA (Accessed 26 May 2007) <http://www.riaa.com/news/marketingdata/purchasing.asp>.

marginalization and the issue of perception will be discussed further in the subsequent chapters. For now, it must be understood that the era of recording expansion between 1956 and 1982 created a massive explosion of growth in the American record market. The emergence of consumerism as the primary business model determinant took hold of the way recordings were marketed to the American public. Also, the means of the public to purchase recordings, and numbers of available recordings both increased drastically during this time. New availability and new genres of music captivated American buyers. However, the majority of this expansion occurred in the popular sector, and classical music, though a stable minority, ultimately became a marginalized faction in American music. The question of how American classical companies reacted to this changing scope in the area of marketing and album production will be addressed in chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR

"I Know, It's Only Rock & Roll, But I Like It": Classical Music's Answers to the Changing Face of the Album and Music Marketing.

Consumer Culture Shock

Merriam Webster's Collegiate Encyclopedia defines "consumerism" as "Movement or policies aimed at regulating the products, services, methods, and standards of manufacturers, sellers, and advertisers in the interests of the buyer."¹ Although this definition applies, consumerism can also refer to an infatuation with material possessions, or simply a materialistic outlook. In fact, "materialism," defined as "a preoccupation with or tendency to seek after or stress material things rather than intellectual or spiritual things,"² is the side of consumerism that is of most importance to this study. Materialistic consumerism is largely a product of the post-WWII era, and it continues to drive the American economy.

Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph and the impression of sound onto a tangible medium created the first consumer possibilities for recorded music. Recordings made a performance, not just the means by which to create a performance (sheet music and instruments), a commodity to be brought into the American home. Edison never envisioned the commercial possibilities of music; he saw the phonograph as a capable dictating machine, but never wholeheartedly bought into the idea of transmitting musical recordings until after he became aware of his competitors exploiting those commercial

¹Merriam Webster Collegiate Encyclopedia, *Consumerism* (Accessed 21 January 2007) <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com>.

²Ibid.

capabilities.³ Music recordings have since become almost synonymous with America's consumer culture, so much so that in the present, recordings have become more than a possession; recordings have become a facet of a person's identity, with individuals claiming entire genres, or the complete output of a single artist, as "their" music.⁴ This development of commercially distributed recordings in America is fundamental to understanding the challenge to the classical recording industry. Classical labels had to *sell* their product. It is important to investigate *if* and *how* the classical industry went about selling its goods.

A consumer society revolves around the wants of the consumer, whether they are real or perceived. These wants can run the gamut from essential survival needs such as food and shelter, to superfluous "needs" such as prestige. However, a company must appeal to a combination of all the needs in order to effectively sell its products.⁵ Numerous studies inform advertisers and company executives exactly *how* to go about marketing to existing human desires, and, in many cases, how to *create* new needs (wants).

Few would regard recorded music as a basic need in society. That is not to say, however, that music as a social function is not a basic need, since even the most primitive world cultures possess some type of music which fulfills a communal function. But the

³ William Brooks and George Frow, "Edison, Thomas," *New Grove Dictionary Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 4 May 2007)
http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=1098777023&hitnum=1§ion=music.08549.

⁴ Bowman, Wayne, "The Song is You: Symposium on Musical Identity," *Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education* 3, No. 1 (May, 2004) (Accessed 4 May 2007)
<http://www.siue.edu/MUSIC/ACTPAPERS/v3/BowmanIntro04.htm>.

⁵ Robert Settle and Pamela Alreck, *Why They Buy: American Consumers Inside and Out* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1986), 9-11.

possession of recorded music is more of a perceived need, and a product of only the last one hundred years. Recordings are a perceived need, but are, in actuality a non-necessity item. Recordings, though, can fulfill the need of belonging, since persons inclined to invest in the same types or genres of recordings are often drawn to one another. Items which are non-necessity, but associated with a sense of belonging receive the most marketing emphasis from companies.⁶ Since musical recordings qualify as a non-necessity but also as a perceived need, it is important to investigate how classical record companies marketed to and exploited that need.

The logical question is how did the culture that created and exploited this "need" develop? Global conflict is a large part of the equation. World War I's influence on a consumer culture, in that it shattered Victorian notions of an approaching Utopian society, can be seen in the "Roaring Twenties" idea, where a materialistic desire for certain goods, namely alcohol, drove an entire segment of society. Unfortunately, that desire could only be assuaged by engaging in illegal activities. In actuality however, the emergence of consumerism can be seen much earlier in America, with the establishment of mail-order catalogues in the late nineteenth century. In 1888, the most famous catalogue firm ever, Sears & Roebuck, issued its first mail-order catalogue. Although the first catalogue featured only watches and other jewelry, within ten years, the biannual catalogue offered everything from watches to bicycles to refrigerators and contained over three-hundred pages.⁷ All of these luxury offerings enticed the largely rural American society and only increased a desire in America for consumer goods.

⁶Ibid., 15-17.

⁷*Sears Chronology*, Sears and Roebuck Company (Accessed 23 January 2007)
<http://www.searsarchives.com>.

As unsettling for Utopian ideals about "establishing the Kingdom of God on earth" as the First World War had been, the Second World War and the end of the long economic depression proved to be an even greater impetus in the continuing development of America's consumer culture. The economic change from the interwar years to 1950 is a testament to the strength of the US economy, a strength which allowed Americans to become even more obsessed with consumer goods. Between 1935, in the midst of the Great Depression, and 1950, the height of the post-World War II economic boom, American wages in many sectors doubled, and in others more than tripled.⁸ Between the mid-1930s and 1950, household income rose 178 percent to a median of \$3,614 annually (in 1956 dollars)⁹, and with that increase came a 151 percent increase in consumer spending.¹⁰ By 1950, American families were spending a whole 32 percent of their household income on non-necessity items, which would have included those perceived needs of recorded music and the devices with which to play it.¹¹

Trends of this nature were only the beginning of the explosion of American spending. By 1960, household spending had risen to the equivalent of \$4,906 in 1956 value, with spending on non-essentials up another three percent. When 1970 statistics are considered, although household expenses topped out at \$5,486 in 1956 dollar value, an increase of 54.9 percent, Americans were then spending forty-two percent of that amount

⁸US Department of Labor, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *100 Years of US Consumer Spending: Data for the Nation, New York City, and Boston*, Report #991, 22.

⁹All monetary figures included herein are calculated for inflation and posted in 1956 dollar amounts to effectively illustrate the vast economic growth which occurred in this era.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹*Ibid.*

on non-essential items.¹² Although, post-1975, there was a recession in the economy sparked by the 1973 oil crisis and other factors, throughout this period, American's spending on non-essential items rose significantly. The ability to spend and an accompanying vast amount of articles available for purchase came to define America in the 60s and 70s and this culture of consumption is even more prevalent today in the twenty-first century. As James Twitchell has pointed out, as deplorable as it might sound, the ability and opportunity to purchase non-necessity goods may be one of the most cherished freedoms in America.¹³

By 1982, the average American had money to spend on non-necessity items; nearly fifty percent of the annual household income.¹⁴ The ability to buy also necessitated that there be objects to purchase and some of those objects were music recordings and related gadgets. In fact, America's spending on radios, televisions, receivers, and records rose from \$14.61 billion in 1950 to almost \$18.37 billion in 1960, an increase of twenty-six percent.¹⁵ With the understanding that between 1956 and 1982 Americans' capabilities to spend rose significantly, exactly how did American classical recording companies tap into this burgeoning market?

¹²Ibid., 27-39.

¹³James Twitchell, *Lead Us Into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 23.

¹⁴US Department of Labor, *100 Years of US Consumer Spending*, 42.

¹⁵H. S. Houthakker and Lester Taylor, *Consumer Demand in the United States, 1929-1970: Analyses and Projections* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 130-131.

The Marketing Milieu

Nickel-operated phonographs or "talking machines" were the first fully public endeavors that successfully marketed recorded music. Since early coin-operated players had the capacity to play only one wax cylinder, business owners who employed nickel machines clamored for more and different cylinders to continue to placate their customers. Thomas Edison, inventor of the phonograph, never considered the viability of selling recordings, but such requests drove him to reevaluate his original position and realize the profitability of distributing pre-recorded cylinders.¹⁶ This realization of potential for profit spawned all sorts of marketing techniques, from the Edison Phonograph Company stamping Edison's highly recognizable name on virtually every visible component of their phonographs, to the Victor Talking Machine Company's "His Master's Voice" logo, with the ever-attentive terrier "Nipper" listening to a Victor phonograph. However, with the advent of commercial radio in 1922, and the continuing rise in popularity of pre-recorded music, the focus of marketing, and in particular the target audiences, had changed much by 1956, necessitating new types of publicity.

"When they say 'The Radio' they don't mean a cabinet, an electrical phenomenon, or a man in a studio, they refer to a pervading and somewhat godlike presence which has come into their lives and homes."¹⁷ These words of famed children's author E.B. White echo the effects of radio on the music industry. The influence of radio as a medium of non-durable music distribution and radio airtime as a means of marketing cannot be

¹⁶Millard, *America on Record*, 42-44.

¹⁷Quoted in Tom Lewis, "A Godlike Presence": *The Impact of Radio on the 1920s and 1930s*, Organization of American Historians (Accessed 17 May 2007) <http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/communication/lewis.html>.

ignored. The music industry was well aware of the fact that radio airtime influenced record sales: enough to cause the Payola scandal discussed in chapter three. Indeed, radio airtime is just as important today as it was in 1956. The 2006 book *Record Label Marketing* states that: "In most record companies, the number one agenda for the promotion department is securing radio airplay."¹⁸ Of course, many of the dealings at the beginning of the rock era for securing airplay involved illegal activities. The classical side of the industry was no less subject to fighting for airplay. Classical companies, though, were disadvantaged for two main reasons in their quest for radio airtime.

The first reason that popular music trumped classical companies in regard to radio airplay was simply that popular music had more available radio outputs for their product. In July of 1956 (the month Elvis Presley recorded "Hound Dog"), of the top four radio networks in the country, in typical Monday night prime time, only three time slots were devoted to classical music. These slots were the Boston Symphony Orchestra on NBC's network from 8:15 to 9:00 pm, and the Metropolitan Opera Auditions plus the "Voice of Firestone" from 8:00-8:30 and 8:30-9:00 respectively on ABC.¹⁹ All networks considered, in Monday night prime time, there were one and one-half hours each of news and drama, two hours of talk, one and three quarter-hours of classical music, and six and one quarter-hours of popular music, in either show or all-music format.²⁰ Classical music airings rank right in the middle, between news, talk, and drama, but are far outranked by popular music broadcasts. Also, network radio programming had already begun to

¹⁸Tom Hutchinson, Amy Macy, and Paul Allen, *Record Label Marketing* (Boston: Elsevier, 2006), 59.

¹⁹Mitchell E. Shapiro, *Radio Network Prime Time Programming, 1926-1967* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2002), 102, 124, 154, 165.

²⁰Ibid.

decline rapidly in 1956 in favor of the disc jockey, but it is nonetheless interesting to note the disparity between popular and classical music broadcasts. Network radio was effectively dead by 1960, and the last quarter-hour primetime news show ended in 1967.²¹

As far as statistical data on numbers of radio stations, in 1956, the Federal Communications Commission cited 530 operating commercial FM stations, and 2,896 operating AM stations. In addition, there were 126 non-commercial, educational, and presumably classical music airing stations in operation.²² Eight years later, by 1964, radio station authorizations burgeoned to 1,181 commercial FM stations, and 243 educational FM stations, with an additional 3,976 commercial AM stations.²³ By 1965, the FCC estimated that 7,570,000 FM capable radio sets would be sold in 1966,²⁴ proving the rapid growth being experienced by the radio industry.

Radio continued to grow in importance, but classical music's place on radio did not. For example, in 1978, there were only forty-one classical format stations in America, sharing a meager 3.4% of the total number of American radio stations.²⁵ Additionally, according to national statistics, classical music accounted for only 1.4% of the radio listening being done in America that same year. Compare the number of classical stations to the number of country stations at 442, or rock stations at 497, and the

²¹Ibid., 16, 37, 51, 65, 76.

²²Federal Communications Commission, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 1956* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1956), 5.

²³Federal Communications Commission, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 1964* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1964), 77-78.

²⁴Federal Communications Commission, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 1965* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 116.

²⁵James Duncan Jr., *American Radio: Sixteenth Anniversary Issue 1976-1992: A Statistical History* (Indianapolis, IN: Duncan's American Radio, 1992), A32.

difference is readily apparent. Rock had a roughly 90% advantage in radio outlets in 1978.²⁶

The second hindrance to classical marketing by means of radio airplay involved a problem which progressed in intensity as the era in question continued. A decided multiplicity of recordings of the same musical material existed. While these various recordings were revered from within the classical music community, they ultimately plagued their marketing efforts. Of course, the practice of "covering" other artist's songs was, and has remained a staple of the popular music industry. In fact, Elvis Presley's first successful recording, "That's All Right Mama," covered the lesser known "That's All Right" by the black singer Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup.²⁷ Whereas a "cover" in the rock & roll world may have been an act of tribute or an updating of style, such as the Electric Light Orchestra's 1973 cover of Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven," in the classical world, although a (re)orchestration or transcription might be seen as a type of "cover," the entire corpus of the standard literature was recorded on practically every classical label and by every big-name orchestra. There are also some "covers" in the classical world which update style or instrumentation, like *Switched on Bach*. Of concern here, though, is the multiplicity of recordings of what amounts to exactly the same literature. Consider that before its dissolution in 1973, Decca Records produced and recorded three recordings of Beethoven's "*Eroica*" Symphony (No. 3) in the United States with American orchestras. In addition, Decca released two other recordings

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Dawson and Propes, *45 RPM*, 28-29.

licensed from foreign countries.²⁸ Another US label, Mercury, also released one recording of the *Eroica* on their main label and two on their *Living Presence* classical line.²⁹ Therefore, two of the "Big Six" record labels of America released seven different recordings of the same symphony between 1956 and 1982. This number does not take into account the additional recordings released by the other United States labels during the time. The problem of multiplicity has continued to the present, since in 2003, Amazon.com offered 267 different full recordings of Beethoven's Fifth.³⁰ The marketing challenge here is obvious. With radio broadcasting, there is no way that multiple recordings of a work can receive the same amount of radio exposure as a single, unique recording of a popular song can merit. The same logic applies to work length. Since many classical works, especially multi-movement ones, are many times longer than a typical three- to four-minute popular song, the amount of airplay is limited, especially in a commercial radio setting, unless the station chooses to air works in sections, rather than their entirety. Considering also that the core of recorded music revolves around a limited number of works, at least in the context of the entire corpus of western art music, this problem is only multiplied.

Multiplicity of recordings hampered radio airtime, but it did not affect exposure in the record store. Multiple recordings of the same work may have actually caught the eyes of consumers. Classical music by its nature relies on an established repertory, while popular music is constantly adding new works, which have their moment in the spotlight,

²⁸Michel Ruppli, comp., *The Decca Labels: A Discography*, vol. 5 (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1996), 561-727.

²⁹Michael Ruppli and Ed Novitsky., comp. *The Mercury Labels: A Discography*, vol. 4 (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1993), 533-721.

³⁰Julia Lee, "A Requiem for Classical Music," *Regional Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 2nd Quarter, 2003, 16.

are eclipsed, and then are quickly replaced. This established fact, though it probably did not affect overall sales, did not make repeated recordings of the same work any less of a hindrance to classical music profits on the company level. Because a consumer was unlikely to purchase five recordings of Beethoven's Seventh on one occasion, multiplicity hampered the profits that one label could bring in. In most cases, five recordings of five different popular songs would, by their very nature, automatically reap more unit sales than five different recordings of the same work. Therefore, not only did a classical record company initially have to convince a potential consumer to buy a classical work, they also had to convince the customer to buy *their* recording of the work, and not one of the five or six other recordings of the same piece available on different labels.

Could the problem of multiplicity have been avoided? It is doubtful that without intense cooperation between classical companies this problem could have been overcome. This idea of cooperation between competing companies also balks at the main ideas of a capitalist, consumer-based culture. But even if unavoidable, this problem affected the marketing approaches of the classical industry.

Although much of the industry's focus centered on advertising through radio airplay, another means to advertise involved long-standing print media. Certainly, industry standards past and present, such as *Billboard*, *Cash Box*, and *Rolling Stone* magazines, provided opportunities for print advertising, as illustrated in the following samples of *Billboard Magazine* advertisements from the 1950s.

**AMERICA'S (NO. 1) MOST VERSATILE
SEXTETTE**

BILL HALEY AND HIS COMETS

**STARS
OF
DECCA
RECORDS**



★ NEW HITS ★
"BIRTH OF THE BOOGIE"
b/w
"MAMBO ROCK"
—as big as
"Shake, Rattle and Roll"
"Dim, Dim the Lights"

**ATTENTION: T.V. AGENCIES—DIRECTORS—BOOKERS
MOTION PICTURE STUDIOS and PRODUCERS
NOW ON WEST COAST TOUR • BACK EAST APRIL 13**

— Exclusive Booking Direction —

JOLLY JOYCE AGENCY


Write	2005 PARAMOUNT BLDG.	VICTORY BLDG.—7th Floor
Wire	1501 BROADWAY	1001 CHESTNUT STREET
Phone	NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.	PHILADELPHIA 7, PA.
	Lackawanna 4-9469	Walnut 2-3172 and 2-4677

Reprinted from *The Billboard*, issue of March 5, 1955

Fig. 3. *Billboard Magazine*, (Reprint) March 5, 1955

NOVEMBER 25, 1957 THE BILLBOARD MUSIC RADIO 35

THE ORIGINAL!




.....has its own SATELITE

THE BALL OF FIRE
Jerry Lee Lewis
 Singing His Fabulous New — SUN RELEASE

"GREAT BALLS OF FIRE"

(From the Warner Bros. picture "Jamboree")

and **YOU WIN AGAIN**

Sun 281

*D.J.'s—Thanks for Your Spins.
 The copies of my new record
 are on their way to you now.*

"GREAT BALLS OF FIRE!"

*Here's The Next Sensation
 Of The Musical World!*

Fig. 4. *Billboard Magazine*, November 25, 1957, 35

Notice the blurb on the Jerry Lee Lewis advertisement addressed to deejays and thanking them for "spins." Promotional copies would have been sent by Sun Records to radio stations, and the sole purpose of this ad would have been to encourage disc jockeys to play this new Jerry Lee Lewis single. *Billboard* was, and is, primarily an industry insider

magazine, and therefore the exposure of the public to this advertisement would have been minimal. However, Sun Records, as well as all the other record companies of the time, realized the indispensable nature of (increased) airtime, thus necessitating such ads.

Did classical recording companies of the time also place print ads in magazines? Yes, however, the same problem that affected comparison of chartings in chapter three pervades this comparison as well. The dichotomous split between classical and popular music appeared even in the trade magazine industry. For a classical label to place an advertisement in *Billboard* or *Cash Box* would have been seemingly useless, since those magazines were not read by the classical music audience. American classical companies placed ads like those pictured below in magazines like *Musical America*, *High Fidelity*, and *Stereo Review*, which were the closest thing to trade magazines available. Thus, their readership, which was the audiophile and often classical music-loving community, was exposed to the kind of advertisements which would affect their buying habits.

Print ads, like these pictured, are one of the oldest means, and certainly an effective style of advertising which affords the advertised item exposure to a target audience, and aids in funding the publication. It is also important to realize that a chart in and of itself is also a form of advertisement. A person reading an album chart sees the recording titles and the label name, and leaves with the information necessary to acquire that recording. The music industry and associated trade publications have always been keenly aware of this fact, ever since *Billboard* magazine began publishing airplay charts back in 1945.³¹ The "make or break" nature of chartings in the eyes of the industry came to light with the deplorable late-80s *Cash Box* magazine scandal.

³¹*Billboard History* (Billboard Magazine) (Accessed 19 February 2007)
http://www.billboard.com/bbcom/about_us/bbhistory3.jsp, 3.

**Vintages...
old and rare,
sparkling
and new,
\$2.49*
the bottle.**

Among Seraphim's new releases are three historic recordings by Wilhelm Furtwängler and Beniamino Gigli, precious vintages from the cellars of E.M.I., unclouded by artificial "stereo rechanneling."

Just as exciting are half-a-case of new stereo recordings released for the first time in America: Krips' amusing "Seraglio," a Menuhin Family blend, Christa Ludwig's tawny Mahler, Barbirolli's noble Elgar, the bravado of Tito Gobbi, Mozart at his most impertinent.

SERAPHIM
"Angels of the highest order"

WILHELM FURTWÄNGLER
A WAGNER CONCERT
Sylvia Preisemann, Cello & Beethoven Piano

MARIA CANCELA • BENIAMINO GIGLI • ARMANDO BORGIOU
PUCCINI: *TOSCA*
Soprano, Tenor, Bass & Orchestra. Claudio de Falla, cond.

THE ART OF BENIAMINO GIGLI
Mozart: *The Two and Three Piano Concertos*
Mozart: *The Two and Three Piano Concertos*

MOZART: THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO
Mozart: *The Two and Three Piano Concertos*

THE MENUHIN FAMILY
MOZART: THE TWO- AND THREE-PIANO CONCERTOS

CHRISTA LUDWIG
MAHLER SONGS - Album 2
GERALD MOORE

SEJOHN BARBIROLLI
ELGAR: SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN A FLAT
The Philharmonia Orchestra

THE ART OF TITO GOBBI
Operatic Arias - Classical Songs & Arias
Italian & Neapolitan Songs - Romantic Songs

THE COMIC MOZART
MOTH • SCHREIER • PREY • BERRY

*price per disc, optional with dealer

Fig. 5. *High Fidelity Magazine*, June, 1968, 87

Share a superb new month with Red Seal.

Superlative performances from the greatest names in music.



ARLI-1173



ARLI-1176



ARLI-1312



ARLI-1324



ARLI-1326



ARLI-1409



CRL5-1415



CRL3-1426

For information about Tomita and his music by synthesizer, use your Reader Service Card.

RCA

RED SEAL
Where artists become legends.



Fig. 6. *Stereo Review*, April, 1976, 109.

Cash Box was a key music trade magazine from 1942 all the way until publication ceased in 1996; probably second only to *Billboard* in influence. On March 9, 1989, a masked gunman fatally shot Kevin Hughes, a record chart compiler for *Cash Box*, as he and a friend left a recording studio on "Music Row" in Nashville, Tennessee. The subsequent investigation revealed that Richard D'Antonio, who also worked for *Cash Box*, had, in fact, murdered Hughes, and also attempted to kill Sammy Sadler, Hughes' companion. Hughes' position as a chart-compiler, which was a much more hands-on, manual job in the 1980s before the wired interconnected world of today, probably led to his death. Though never determined beyond a shadow of a doubt, the suspected motive for murder involved Hughes' refusal to tamper with or modify the chart data to conform to his supervisors' personal wishes.³² Although this particular scandal involved the country music side of the popular music industry, it is no less indicative of the kind of business impact the industry tied to chart positions. The classical performing and recording industry's history is not exactly rosy, but most of its documented unscrupulous behavior involved the live performance arena.³³ Payola did not completely die in the late 1960s; it remains a dark side of the industry, showing that record companies and individuals will go to almost any length to see a song or album charted, because charted items automatically get the most airtime, and thereby, sell more recordings.

³²Rex Hall Jr., "Arrest Made in '89 Row Slaying," *The Tennessean*, July 25, 2002, sec. Local, p. 1B.; Christian Bottorff, "Music Row Killer to be Sentenced Today for 1989 Shooting Death," *The Tennessean*, November 7, 2003, sec. Local, p. 6B.

³³See Norman Lebrecht's book *Who Killed Classical Music?*

Visual Vinyl

Going beyond the purely electronic realm of advertising by radio and the idea of print ads, it is important to consider the rapidly emerging idea during this time of a music recording as a "complete package." The idea that not only the sound contained on the disc, but also the jacket, the jacket notes, and any other objects included therein influenced the purchaser, brought about an entirely new way of marketing recordings. Of course, packaging and package advertising are not unique to musical recordings. American markets have experienced a triumph of packaging in every conceivable sector, from fast food meals to toys to tool sets. The author James Twitchell describes the impact of packaging in the following way:

Packaging has not just succeeded but triumphed because both producer and consumer have been rewarded. The producer has been able to talk with the end user without having to go through the salesman. Just as advertising allows him to speak over the head of the retailer, packaging allows him to speak around the clerk. The consumer accepts the package because it assures him that what is inside is what he wants – no grubs, no thumb on the scale, no chocolate chips cookies containing less than one-thousand chips per package. Plus, he can carry the package easily and display his good taste to others.³⁴

Advertising by means of album covers got its start when Columbia Records first released an LP carried in the so-called "tombstone" jacket.³⁵ With the development of this now famous twelve-inch by twelve-inch cardboard cover, the recording's jacket became a means of advertising the contents within.

³⁴Twitchell, *Lead Us Into Temptation*, 145-146.

³⁵Botsford, "Creating the LP Record," 61.



Fig. 7. Columbia Records ML4026 LP Jacket

Of course, although the above example, released in the late 40s or early 50s, is rather plain, it was superior to what had come before. Prior to the advent of the actual LP jacket, shellacs had been shipped and sold inside an album cover or box that often contained just generic information about the musical content, such as the Columbia Records example shown below.

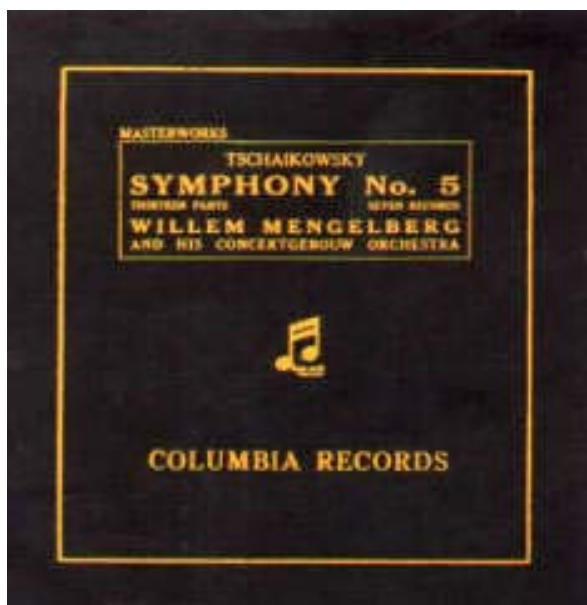


Fig. 8. Columbia Masterworks 78 Jacket

Other album jackets were purely generic and contained no information at all.



Fig. 9. Generic RCA Victor Record Booklet

Inside of albums like the above, the discs themselves were contained in brown paper or cardboard sleeves, like those pictured below.



Fig. 10. A 78 "Album"

If boxed, the discs were more likely to come in a simple paper sleeve that contained, if anything, little more than information about the record company.



Fig. 11. RCA Victor Paper Record Sleeve

Looking at the above examples, it is easy to see that prior to the LP era, using the music's packaging as an advertising element was limited. That is not to say that record labels completely ignored advertising, they simply utilized visual advertising in a much more nondescript way. As can be seen below, the shellac disc's center label (the portion where the grooves would have become too compacted for reasonable sound reproduction), more so than the packaging, carried that particular disc's information and displayed, however small, some advertisement for the record company. Probably the most famous center label icon is Nipper, the famous terrier painting discovered by Emil Berliner, and given to Eldridge Johnson of the Victor Talking Machine Company, where it became the symbol for Victor records, and eventually RCA Victor, after their merger in 1929.³⁶ "His Master's Voice" became a sensational marketing tool, since Nipper adorned not only records in the US, but also in the UK with the "His Master's Voice" (HMV) label.

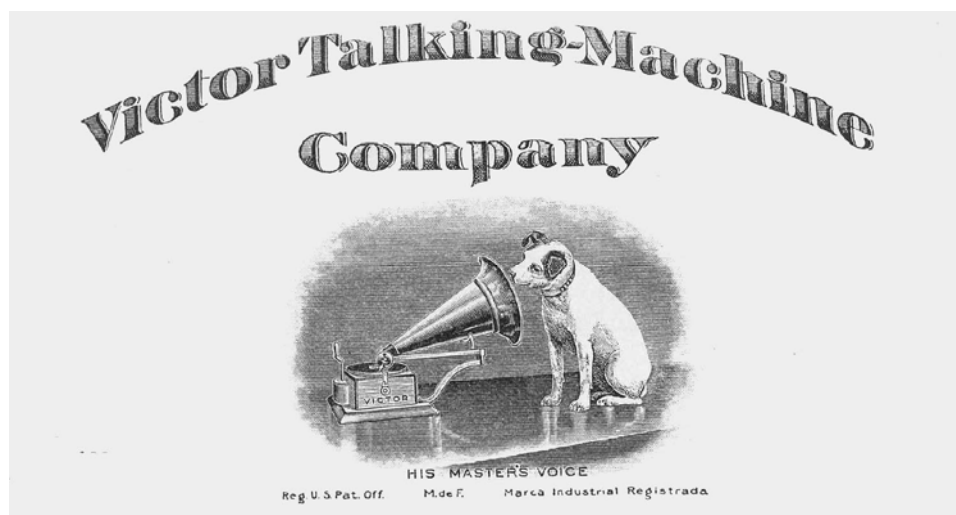


Fig. 12. Victor Talking Machine Company "His Master's Voice" Logo from the original patent document

³⁶"The Gramophone," Library of Congress American Memory Collection (Accessed 07 April 2007) <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/berlhtml/berlgramo.html#NI>.



Fig. 13. Victrola 78 Center Label with HMV logo



Fig. 14. RCA Victor 78 Center Label with HMV Logo

The center label advertised the musical contents and the record label well, and with the 78, the center label proved to be the best means of advertising. Notice the plug above for Victor branded needles printed onto the label itself. As previously discussed, 78s were heavy, cumbersome, and the packaging in which they were contained had to be accessed constantly. Therefore, any package art/advertising that existed quickly disintegrated due to wear. Browsing through an antiques store or the online auction site eBay.com today, one is hard-pressed to find complete classical albums from the 78 era with their original packaging intact.³⁷

Even though the plain paper sleeve has remained a constant staple of platter distribution and packaging, the cardboard LP jacket revolutionized the way albums were marketed and sold. Edward Wallerstein of Columbia Records remarked at how, almost immediately after the LP and the "tombstone" jacket (pictured above) were introduced, displays began to pop up in record stores across the country.³⁸ Why did these displays appear? For starters, a browsable display of LPs could be practical, unlike a display of 78s. LPs were lightweight compared to the 78. Also, with the LP, when looking at an album containing a long classical work or a large compilation of popular songs, one was only picking up one or two discs, as opposed to a stack of ten or twelve shellac records. LPs could be easily displayed, and browsed by record store shoppers, making the visual presentation on the album jacket of paramount importance.

Stefan Sagmeister, a famed album art designer, has purported that album art has two purposes, first to "visually interpret the music," and secondly, to "entice a customer

³⁷eBay Listings: Music/Records/Classical/78 Rpm (Accessed 7 April 2007)
<http://www.eBay.com>.

³⁸Botsford, "Creating the LP Record," 61.

to pick it up while browsing in a record store."³⁹ As discussed above, the LP, and the compact disc which was to follow and eventually usurp it, by nature of their very design, allow for easy browsing. Sagmeister's second goal of prompting a potential buyer to pick up and look at the album is of key importance to marketing. The first goal of visual interpretation is relative to the individual artist but less important to actual marketing. Then again, a more creatively designed album package may well have enticed consumers to peruse said album. Nonetheless, is there a marked dichotomy between the package art of classical albums and those of rock albums from American companies produced between 1956 and 1982?

The importance of visual stimulation cannot be overlooked. America is an ever-increasingly visually-oriented society. The widening distribution of television and the continuing influence of the motion picture on society only increased the visually-inclined nature of American society during this era. This visual shift is readily showcased among various forms of American media, including printed texts, movies, and general advertising covering all areas. For music, record albums sold from racks in generic stores (drug stores, department stores, etc.) and eventually exclusive record stores, starting in the 70s, remained the primary means of record distribution during this time period.⁴⁰ That being the case, the visual representation afforded by album covers played a key role in "pushing" records onto the consumer. The visual element stimulated the consumer to at least look at and hopefully purchase the album, especially in a day when consumers were unable to hear the music prior to purchase other than on the radio or in a live performance. Thus the purpose of visual stimulation was to influence the *perception* of

³⁹Stefan Sagmeister and Beck Hansen, *Visible Music* (Corta Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2000), iii.

⁴⁰Geoffrey P. Hull, *The Recording Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 208-211.

the buyer as to the quality of the audio contents, by means of the quality of the visual presentation. As a concept universally respected by marketers, the visual stimulation and the perception it creates can make or break a sale.⁴¹ The effects of visual representation can be seen in something as simple as soft drink packaging. The Coca-Cola Company markets its regular, calorie-laden "Coca-Cola Classic" in a deep, cherry-red package, whereas Coke's less-sweet counterpart, "Diet Coke," is adorned with a neutral gray packaging. Why so? Clearly, a dark and deeper color insinuates a more intense and heartier flavor, whereas the gray of Diet Coke implies a lighter body. One could acquire this information by simply reading the label, but the colors tell it all.

Therefore, the comparison must be made between classical and rock albums of this era. Which side, from a visual and statistical standpoint, created the best, or, the most sellable, perception? The best way to approach this comparison is to go right to the source, and compare representative examples of actual album covers from the years in question. To compile this comparison, which is shown in the appendix, I have chosen the number one chart toppers from both classical and popular categories from *Billboard* charts for the years 1969-1982. In most cases where a certain album or artist held the number one spot for multiple years, I have moved lower on the charts to give a broader picture of the album art being produced. For the prior years back to 1958 (the year of the Grammy's founding), I have chosen the Grammy Award winners in various pop and classical categories. Where applicable I have included indications of any RIAA or other sales ranking awards received by the album in question.

The breakdown is simple. Of the albums pictured in the appendix, all sold well and were recognized by *Billboard* for their sales or by *The Recording Academy*

⁴¹Alreck, *Why They Buy*, 69-71.

(Grammys) for other qualities intrinsic to the album in question. There are seven "Platinum" awards and fourteen "Gold" awards held by the albums pictured above. Two of those "Gold" awards belonged to classical albums, and the rest went to popular albums. One of the recipients of the "Gold" award happened to be "Switched on Bach," by Walter/Wendy Carlos, and the second recipient was the recording of the Bolling *Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano*. Because the RIAA certifications are such a rare occurrence in the "classical" category, these two particular albums were extremely successful attempts at popularizing classical music. The contemporary Bolling *Suite* is a standout, not only for its creative album art, but also because it managed to achieve "Gold" sales status amidst all of the vast and varying popular genres competing in the early 80s. *Switched on Bach* managed to hold the top classical spot for several years, and also remained high on the classical charts long after its debut.

As far as the artistic comparison, on the whole, there is little difference between the classical and popular album art. There are outstanding classical examples, like the 1951 Shostakovich *Symphony No. 5* recording, the Boston Pops *Carnival of the Animals*, and the album cover for the Bolling *Suite*. Likewise, there are incredibly successful and revered album covers like *Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band*, *Revolver*, *The Wall*, and *The Isaac Hayes Movement*. All of these albums have immediate shelf appeal that would have easily enticed a customer to pick up the album and peruse it. Of course, there are decidedly staid covers on the classical side including the Perlman Tchaikovsky Concerto, *The Great Pavarotti*, and Bernstein's *Mass*. But, many of the pop albums are also rather reserved in their art, like the earlier crooner albums and the Barbara Streisand recordings. The evidence above suggests that there is not a definable difference between

covers that rock record labels were apt to print versus those of classical labels. Both industries created both album covers that were deliberately visually enticing to the customer and also those of a more placid nature. In many cases, certain classical albums like the Perlman Tchaikovsky recording and *The Great Pavarotti* were relying on things beyond the album cover to entice a customer to buy the recording, like the reputation of the performers. Rock examples did the same, where albums like *The Wall* were also banking their popularity on qualities separate from the packaging. Granted, the advent of picture discs, and multiple other album designs which modified the standard 12" x 12" cardboard jacket, were adopted, mostly by the popular industry, incorporating entirely new avenues of design, and consequently, producing more consumer appeal. However, all of the above albums with their standard jackets sold well in regards to their particular sector of the industry. Therefore, generally speaking, classical recordings competed well in the avenue of package design.

America, between 1956 and 1982, fell headlong into the throes of a consumer culture, where consumers possessed the resources and desire to purchase goods, and therefore, companies competed to provide those goods. It can be seen that the classical recording labels of the time were disadvantaged in their efforts to sell records by the number of radio outlets. Also, a multiplicity of recordings of the same set body of works also complicated sales. But, we have also seen that classical record companies adorned their album packages in the much the same ways as their popular competitors. The purely visual realm of LP album covers is one in which classical records effectively competed. Therefore, although classical recording companies faltered in some areas due to a variety of complications, they also managed, in other areas, to effectively challenge

their popular competitors. But marketing at home was not the only challenge classical records faced. As this time period advanced, the directions for production and oftentimes the actual recordings were largely coming from across the ocean, as the music industry expanded internationally. This brought about even more challenges to the industry, which will be discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

"All the Pieces, Bits and Pieces": The Conglomeration of the National and International Recording Industry and the Effects on the Classical Sector

Despite what the Dave Clark Five lyrics may suggest, I refer not to the "bits and pieces" of a broken heart, but rather to the bits and pieces of the companies which make up the music industry. Researching the music industry ultimately means dealing with record companies, referred to as "labels," and involves the key issue of *ownership*. The ownership of a label has an undeniable impact on how that label operates, what recordings it produces or acquires, and how it markets those recordings. The recording industry and ownership of labels remains in a constant state of flux. During the study period, 1956-1982, the consolidation of the recording industry brought about profound changes. Classical music record labels were a part of this conglomeration, and thus duly affected.

The consolidation of the music industry was not an intentional or malicious targeting of any particular sector of the industry, but rather a product of the American way of doing business. American industry revolves around the idea of acquisition and consolidation. A company uses its resources to acquire a similar company, consolidates the two together, and uses the newly acquired resources to buy control of yet more companies, with the ideal of becoming a large, conglomerate company with a strong hold on its particular sector of the industry. From the days of Edison and his tin-foil phonograph, this same kind of mentality has driven the music industry. However,

conglomeration and constantly shifting ownership cannot help but impact certain sectors of an industry, for better or for worse.

Secondly, there is the issue of international involvement. Many of the innovations that created the modern music industry came from inside the borders of the United States. However, as the American musical scene has developed, innovations in the field of recording have attained foreign recognition and foreign companies have added their own influence and approaches to the international music market. Even some of the foundational record labels of the American recording industry are of British origin. In the period between 1956 and 1982, foreign, particularly European, involvement in the American recording business increased, and an impact on the way American classical companies operated was inevitable. To better understand this challenge, it is important to understand the process of conglomeration to evaluate thereby the American classical industry's response.

Foreign interaction, though not control, has long been an attribute of American recording. American companies served as licensees for foreign record labels, and vice-versa. For example, Columbia Records, one of the main American classical record companies for the time, directly descended from its parent company, "Columbia Graphophone" of England. As such, EMI of England (the result of a merger between Columbia Graphophone and the Gramophone Company) licensed Columbia to distribute its catalogue in the US until 1952.¹ RCA, which fully developed in America, also served

¹"EMI Overview 1920-29," EMI Group, (Accessed 8 May 2007)
<http://www.emigroup.com/About/History/1920.htm>.

as a licensee for EMI until 1957.² The Decca record company, also of England, established its American division of the same name in 1934, which meant the American side of Decca, until its dissolution in 1973, had access to the full Decca catalogue, including those recordings mastered in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.³ Of course, foreign involvement did not relegate itself just to foreign companies influencing American companies; American companies also sought to secure for themselves a portion of the global music industry. RCA, the Radio Corporation of *America*, released singles of Elvis Presley hits in Japan and had its own distribution office in London. Therefore, it must be understood that international involvement and cooperation, though certainly influential, was not a new phenomenon in the 60s and 70s.

The "Big Six" American record companies at the start of the rock era were Columbia, RCA (Victor), Decca, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Mercury, and Capitol Records. Though the business of Capitol Records revolved around popular music, Columbia, RCA, Decca and Mercury were all key classical labels. MGM was the smallest and probably the least important of the six. Of these six labels, only RCA remained independent between 1956 and 1982. Though a part of the larger Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), Columbia Records also remained effectively independent. However, the other four labels did not maintain independence through the end of the study period, and by 1988 every one of these foundational American companies was part of larger conglomerates. Capitol Records, the primary US record label on the West Coast, lost its independence to EMI (England) in 1955, giving the profits of such legendary artists as

²"EMI Overview 1950-59," EMI Group, (Accessed 15 April 2007) <http://www.emigroup.com/About/History/1950.htm>.

³*History*, Universal Music Group (Accessed 15 April 2007) <http://new.umusic.com/history.aspx>.

Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole to a foreign company.⁴ Fifteen years later, in 1970, Dutch record company Philips, developer of the compact cassette, absorbed Mercury Records and its subsidiary labels. The Mercury name has never completely disappeared (it is still around in the UK), but is now a part of Universal Music Group.

The continuing buyout of American record companies occurred largely under the direction of the highly successful Philips Company. In 1972 Philips merged with Siemens Corporation, which owned the reputable *Deutsche Grammophon* label and reorganized all of their music-related holdings as the conglomerate "PolyGram."⁵ This new international conglomerate PolyGram purchased Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Records (MGM) in 1972. After the purchase, PolyGram placed little emphasis on the MGM label, and by 1976 had relegated the label to MGM movie soundtracks only. In 1982, the label name was officially phased out.⁶ US Decca was the fourth major US record label to disappear. Decca (US) had merged with the Music Corporation of America (MCA) back in 1962, but the Decca name remained operative. However, in 1973, MCA officially dropped the Decca name. Decca's founding English counterpart, interestingly enough, fell to PolyGram in 1980.⁷ MCA and PolyGram would eventually merge in 1998 to form Universal Music Group.

By 1973, four of the top record labels in America had been completely dissolved, merged with other companies, or acquired by foreign interests. In post-1982 times, this trend of consolidation has increased. Now, roughly eighty percent of the world recording

⁴Ibid.

⁵*History*, Universal Music Group (Accessed 15 April 2007) <http://new.umusic.com/history.aspx>.

⁶Peter Preuss and others, *The MGM Records Story* (Accessed 15 April 2007) <http://www.bsnpubs.com/mgm/mgmstory.html>.

⁷*History*, Universal Music Group (Accessed 15 April 2007).

market share belongs to four conglomerates: EMI Group, Warner Group, Sony BMG (Bertelsmann Group), and Universal Music Group, with the last carving out the largest share.⁸ Fully independent labels only account for one-fifth of the world's music sales. The percentage of independent labels does not discount their role in the industry, however, but because most of the larger labels came under foreign control, the impact of foreign ownership outweighs the influence of labels which remained independent.

With American labels working under foreign control, and increased competition appearing from foreign labels directly distributing in America, what were the effects of consolidation on the classical divisions of American record companies? Was there an effect on the classical industry? American record companies have long existed as a series of labels under the ownership of a parent company or label. For example, Decca Records, before disappearing in 1973, controlled the Brunswick, Champion, Coral, and Vocalion labels.⁹ Mercury Records controlled an even larger stake with the following labels: Emarcy, Blue Rock, Fontana, Limelight, Cumberland, Wing, and Smash.¹⁰ Thus, when EMI purchased Mercury, EMI acquired these subsidiary labels as well. Autonomy varies between companies, but ultimately the parent company holds control. An example of autonomy being afforded to a subsidiary label can be seen in the case of Buddy Holly. Holly, a rock pioneer, originally signed a recording contract with Decca Records in 1956, but it was not renewed after the first year. However, shortly after his Decca contract ended, Holly signed with Brunswick Records, a Decca-owned subsidiary, and recorded

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ruppli, *The Decca Labels*, vol. 1, xi.

¹⁰Ruppli, *The Mercury Labels*, vol. 1, ix.

the most successful version of his biggest hit, "That'll be the Day."¹¹ Either way, Decca Records, the parent company, ultimately won and reaped the benefits of Holly's recording career. The effects of ownership can also be seen in some statistics. In 1972, the top five *labels* in America produced 31.4 percent of the charted albums that year. However, the five largest *corporations* controlled almost twice that amount, 58.2 percent of the charted albums.¹² In a conglomerate, the *identity* of the smaller labels may have been retained, but the *control*¹³ and a portion of the business benefits went to the parent company. So successful were the conglomerates at controlling the bulk of the market that many independent labels decided to distribute their own recordings through the conglomerate's networks, thus increasing even more the benefits of consolidation to the parent company.¹⁴

Both RCA and Columbia (the top two main American labels in both classical and pop fields in 1956) were not consolidated or given to outside control within the study period. Columbia may have been a part of the larger CBS group, but was the main record label for CBS during the time period. These were two main labels with fully autonomous control over their own market actions, as well as some of the actions of their subsidiary labels. Gauging the American market success of Columbia and RCA against that of those conglomerate-controlled American classical labels should give a clear picture of the effects of conglomeration on the classical industry. To develop this comparison, I have relied on archived charts from *Billboard Magazine*, the leading American authority on all

¹¹"Buddy Holly and the Crickets," *History of Rock*, (Accessed May 13, 2007) http://www.history-of-rock.com/buddy_holly.htm.

¹²Hull, *The Recording Industry*, 124.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

things music-market-related. 1969 was the first year *Billboard* began compiling a classical only chart. It is interesting to note that the number of classical albums *Billboard* listed as its "Top Classical Albums" in its year-end reports periodically declined during the years under investigation. In 1969, fifty albums were cited, and by 1982, that number had been reduced by half. While the reduction in the number of top albums listed may be insignificant, this charting procedure change echoed the declining trends in the classical music industry as a whole. For that year, of the top fifty classical albums, thirty-one were produced by Columbia or RCA, ten were distributed by foreign labels, six were from conglomerate-controlled labels, and three came from other independent American labels. This means that independents RCA and CBS outsold foreign labels by three times, and conglomerate labels by five times.¹⁵ In 1969, conglomeration had done little to help American classical labels; Columbia and RCA still shared top billing in American classical records.

But, by 1975, more pronounced shifts were taking hold of the American record market. *Billboard's* 1975 chart only lists thirty-five top classical albums. Of these thirty-five, fourteen came from foreign labels, nine from RCA and Columbia, seven from smaller independent American labels, and five from conglomerate-controlled labels.¹⁶ Although Columbia and RCA still held twenty-five percent of the top-selling albums, foreign companies accounted for forty percent of the top albums in America, with conglomerates only possessing fourteen percent. Although conglomerate labels only

¹⁵*Top Classical Albums of 1969*, Billboard.biz (Accessed 25 May 2007)
http://www.billboard.biz/bbbiz/archivesearch/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=855907.

¹⁶*Top Classical Albums of 1975*, Billboard.biz (Accessed 25 May 2007)
http://www.billboard.biz/bbbiz/archivesearch/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=855700.

controlled a small stake, foreign companies produced the majority of the top-selling classical albums. This simple statistic easily shows how the globalization of the music industry produced increased competition for independent American classical labels, which, including the industry giants RCA and Columbia, only accounted for forty-six percent of the highest-selling classical albums of 1975.

1982, the close of this study, shows an entirely different story. By this time, conglomeration had firmly taken root in America. By 1988, all of the Big Six labels of 1956 were under foreign conglomerate control. In 1982, conglomerate-controlled labels produced thirty-six percent of the top twenty-five classical albums sold. American independent leaders RCA and CBS only held thirty-two percent. Foreign labels accounted for twenty-four percent and other American independents only covered eight percent.¹⁷

The above statistics have shown that globalization's effects on American classical labels revolved around increased competition. The increasing interconnectivity of the 1960s and 70s meant recordings mastered by European orchestras and produced on European labels were distributed in the United States, either directly by foreign companies or through foreign-owned subsidiaries. As foreign and conglomerated labels began to intervene in the American record market, American labels were forced to compete. Conglomerations did not storm in and take over the American market. These conglomerates did not even outrank, in terms of top-selling albums, American independent giants RCA and Columbia until 1982. However, foreign-owned labels independent of American companies fostered increasing challenges for American

¹⁷*Top Classical Albums of 1982*, Billboard.biz (Accessed 25 May 2007)
http://www.billboard.biz/bbbiz/archivesearch/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=855427.

classical labels. Only the established RCA and Columbia companies could even rival these new competitors. Other American labels, although actively producing quality records, could not adequately stand up to globalization and the increased presence of foreign-produced and controlled albums.

International music companies such as PolyGram and EMI, despite allowing classical labels a certain amount of local autonomy, still handled the corporate end of running the record label and the ultimate control over their subsidiary labels. They could completely phase out labels, as Philips did with the American presence of Mercury, or adjust the content of a label's catalogue as PolyGram did with MGM Records.

American record companies cannot be seen, though, as victims or passive acceptors of industry consolidation. There was at least one major benefit to consolidation. Consolidation provided American labels with access to the established recording distribution networks associated with the parent company, or the larger record labels within the company, if the parent organization was not a record label. This meant that American classical labels which were absorbed by or otherwise tied to international holding companies, had access to vast distribution chains established by popular music labels and thereby a means with which to get their products on the shelves. With newfound access to these distribution systems and other essential label resources like record manufacturing, subsidiary labels were able to focus on the more important activities of running a record label, like artist and repertoire work (A & R) and marketing.¹⁸

American labels also participated heavily in the conglomeration process. For example, in 1960, Columbia Records purchased the Australian Record Company,

¹⁸Ibid., 131.

expanding CBS's reaches down under.¹⁹ MCA, though not a key player in 1956, rapidly emerged during the 1970s as a leading entertainment industry figure. The conglomerate that MCA created would merge in 1998 with PolyGram to form Universal Music Group, currently the largest entertainment conglomerate in the world.²⁰ CBS, MCA, RCA, Decca, and Capitol all had their hands on subsidiary labels and other entertainment-based companies, even though some eventually became subsidiaries themselves. American record labels were not passive victims in the race to amalgamate, and consolidation certainly aided some of the larger labels.

What was the reaction of American classical labels to the global consolidation of the record industry between 1956 and 1982? Although American labels would have been delighted to maintain the status quo, it was a virtual impossibility. As foreign companies grew larger with acquisitions and thereby gained new resources and purchasing power, most American labels were incapable of reacting. Because of the immense size and clout of foreign label groups like EMI and PolyGram, American labels could not adequately fight consolidation. The status quo changed, and with it, American labels. Only the firmly-established American labels Columbia and RCA could effectively compete for the market share soon enveloped by foreign companies; and then, only for a time. Although American labels reacted by accepting the inevitable consolidation, globalization of the music industry was not a total negative. Consolidation gave American classical labels newfound access to foreign companies' networks established on expansive popular music markets and, therefore, garnered new opportunities for mass distribution and marketing

¹⁹*The Australian Record Company*, Milesago (Accessed 14 May 2007)
<http://www.milesago.com/industry/arc.htm>.

²⁰*History*, Universal Music Group (Accessed 14 May 2007).

for American classical labels. American labels still retained some independence by controlling the more intimate work of a recording label, such as A & R development and marketing. This independence is why Brunswick Records could choose to sign Buddy Holly, right after Decca Records, the parent company, had chosen to drop him. International music groups certainly phased out some United States' labels, but it was often because these labels were performing poorly; American labels were powerless to stop these closings as well. Still, classical music lagged behind popular music, even though popular music companies reaped the same advantages, or disadvantages which came from industry consolidation.

Overall, consolidation was a mixture of good and bad for American classical labels. Foreign involvement proved negative due to new presences with which American classical labels had to contend. This same involvement was also good because it brought certain labels into contact with massive distribution chains and the resources which these large parent companies had built on stabilized frameworks of popular music. American classical labels cannot be faulted for enduring the inevitable. However, because the inner workings of labels' record production, especially marketing, were still individualized to the subsidiary, and not the holding company, American labels can still be held liable for their actions in the areas of production and marketing.

CHAPTER SIX

"Look Inside": A Brief Look at Additional Problems Faced by American Classical Music Companies with Personal Insights into the Future of Classical Recording

This study has exposed the dynamics of classical record production in America during arguably the most influential period of expansion in the science and art of sound recording. Moving from the introduction of the vinyl LP record all the way to the introduction of the digital compact disc, the period from 1956 to 1982 brought new challenges to the classical recording industry. Sweeping technological advancements and huge changes in the American culture and American musical tastes impacted the music industry. Chapter one discussed the present situation of classical recordings, which looks rather bleak in light of its popular counterpart; and this information provided insight into the lingering effects on the industry left by the actions taken in the years in question. Chapter two dealt with American classical companies' involvement in the profound changes of sound recording technology. Chapter three focused on the profound demographic changes in the record market, and the new expansion of disposable income which recording companies sought to extract from their clients. A discussion of marketing in chapter four revealed how the classical side of the American recording industry presented itself to the public. Chapter five illustrated how less is seemingly more in the recording industry, since massive consolidation of the industry has left the majority of the market in the hands of a few key music corporations. The final chapter of this study looks at a few other key issues which affected the American classical scene

between 1956 and 1982, and summarizes the overall effects of this era, with the intention of determining the sufficiency of the actions of American classical recording companies.

*"It's Lonely at the Top, but its Comforting Looking Down upon Everyone at the Bottom."*¹

Other issues affected the marketing of classical music. One of these was the notion that classical music is an elite status symbol for the wealthy and/or educated in society. This notion was not a new development in the study period, but certainly continued to exist.² As the president of EMI Classics once dryly noted, even those within the classical music industry "encouraged the attitude that you have to be able to spell Tchaikovsky backwards to be qualified to buy something."³ Even though those who sought their living in the classical industry may have taken pride in this notion, the implications were no less of a hindrance to marketing. With a characterization like this associated with classical music, music recording companies had a great deal to overcome with the changing demographics of this time period. As certain minority groups and teenagers gained a larger share of the United States' market, classical music had many cultural boundaries to cross. These new and powerful demographic groups wanted nothing to do with music associated with white, upper-class elitism and historical tradition. They wanted to rebel, and they rebelled with rock music and other emerging genres which ignored and even

¹*Elitism*, Despair.com (Accessed 29 May 2007) <http://www.despair.com/elitism.html> - The Despair Company says this slogan is for "Anyone burdened with being inherently superior to the rest of us."

²Michael Sahl, "Thoughts on the State of Classical Music in the U.S." *The Musical Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (1986): 523-524.

³Quoted in: Julia Lee, "A Requiem for Classical Music," *Regional Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 2nd Quarter, 2003, 22.

mocked the stereotypes of old. An example of this "out with the old, in with the new" attitude espoused by the music of these new rebellious, yet powerful, listening groups is the namesake of this study. Chuck Berry's lyrics to "Roll Over Beethoven" directly challenged classical music and its associated stereotypes by calling the name of two of history's most revered and popular art music composers.

I'm gonna write a little letter,
gonna mail it to my local DJ
It's a rockin' little record
I want my jockey to play
Roll over Beethoven, I gotta hear it again today

Well, early in the mornin' I'm a givin' you a warnin'
don't you step on my blue suede shoes
Hey diddle diddle, I'm gonna play my fiddle,
ain't got nothin' to lose
Roll over Beethoven and tell Tchaikovsky the news.⁴

The implication in Berry's song that classical music was being overrun by popular music was all too true. And, unlike many other popular songs, which are popular only a few short weeks, the message telling classical music to "roll over" carried sway with audiences long after Berry's version fell from the charts. An elaborate 1973 version of "Roll Over Beethoven," which even quotes several sections of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, by the British band the Electric Light Orchestra was a resounding success with audiences in both the United States and the United Kingdom, and served as ELO's favorite encore for live stage performances during most of their American tours. Although the orchestral quotations in ELO's version are a testament to the longevity of Beethoven's Fifth, the recurring quotations are distorted and interspersed with screaming guitar licks, implying that Beethoven's music somehow needed assistance. Berry's

⁴*Roll Over Beethoven*, ChuckBerry.com (Accessed 08 June 2007)
<http://www.chuckberry.com/music/lyrics/beethoven.htm>.

original implications are still echoed through the lyrics and the musical content. *Rolling Stone Magazine's* review of this song says "'Roll Over Beethoven' became the ultimate rock & roll call to arms, declaring a new era."⁵ And a new era it was. With most of the hallmarks of the classical repertoire being composed fifty to one-hundred or more years prior to the rock revolution, its historical relevance to new and younger listeners was diminished. With the firm arrival of rock, classical music in America had a hard time overcoming pre-conceived notions and convincing the rebellious younger generations of this period of the validity and relevance of art music.

However, this era was not all doom and gloom for classical music. As mentioned in chapter four, the growth of popular labels and industry consolidation gave American classical labels unprecedented access to musical catalogues and the networks with which to distribute recordings. Also, with the changing demographics of this time period, classical music gained some new listeners, which accounted for a sustained, though not astronomically explosive, growth in the listening population. Persons involved in newly formed "technical" fields of work like computer programming and other types of engineering were drawn to classical music recordings because of the music's inherent sound quality.⁶ These techies created and supported the audiophile phenomenon, which turned to classical music because of its superb audio reproduction made available through new recording technology, most of which was inspired by classical music. Audiophiles, along with traditional classical music purchasers like academies and the upper-class,

⁵"Roll Over Beethoven," *Rolling Stone* (Accessed 08 June 2007)
http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/6595942/roll_over_beethoven.

⁶Sahl, "Classical Music in the US," 526.

allowed classical music to remain a stable, although small, competitor in the music recording industry.⁷

Popularizing the Unpopular

Recordings of multi-movement classical art music, presented in its entirety and in roughly the original instrumentation, as a general rule, did not sell well during this time. Because of the associations above, and the vast number of new emerging genres, classical recordings in a traditional manner were simply unpopular. It only takes a quick browse of the *Billboard* "Top Classical Album" charts between 1969 and 1982 to realize this fact. Many of the top ranking albums are themed, or are of the "greatest hits" variety. Part of the explanation for this fact is that American classical recording companies did not directly market traditional types of recordings to the general populace. These types of recordings were marketed indirectly in audiophile and insider magazines, and on record store shelves, but hardly ever in popular magazines or on television. However, there was a reasonable crop of albums in which the production appealed to popular tastes, and these albums sold well, compared to their other classical colleagues. In 2007, these would be termed, "crossover," in that, while retaining classical music as the inspiration, the end product is presented in a popular format. Crossover also refers to the fact that this type of album often ranks on both the classical and popular charts. The most successful album in this vein is *Switched on Bach* by Walter/Wendy Carlos. Carlos' electronic renditions of Bach masterpieces on a Moog synthesizer, released by America's venerable classical label Columbia, ushered in an entirely new era of electronic fusion in

⁷Classical music sales have remained, until recently, relatively stable since the 1970s, which was the apex of the audiophile phenomenon, waffling between roughly three and six percent of total recording sales. "Research and Data," RIAA (Accessed 08 June 2007) <http://www.riaa.com/news/marketingdata/default.asp>. ; Lee, "A Requiem for Classical Music," 21.

music. Though certainly not adored by many classical critics, *Switched on Bach* was an enormous success. It made the *Billboard* "Top Classical Albums" chart five years in a row, and even, surprisingly, reached number twenty-one on the *Billboard* "Top Pop Albums of 1969" chart.⁸ Another factor which obviously aided the acceptance and popularity of *Switched on Bach* was its pure novelty. However, many other popularized classical albums existed during this time. Most of these albums were considerably more conservative than the Carols, playing compositions in roughly their original instrumentation. However, in keeping with the popular short-song format, these albums rarely played full length works; instead they only contained a selected movement or two, to retain a popular feel for the album. This style of album also usually employed a catchy title with popular connections like "Greatest Hits," or "The Best Of ..." Look at Table 1 below for some representative titles produced in this fashion.

Aesthetics aside, these crossover, or "popularized" classical albums sold well, and comprised a large portion of the charted albums for classical labels. Seven out of the ten albums which have made "Gold" sales rankings are of the crossover variety; therefore, this style of recording was important for record labels.

I'll Scratch Your Niche if You Scratch Mine

Despite some market success with popularized and crossover albums,⁹ classical music, as a whole, has not been a real contender against rock in the marketplace.

⁸Various Paths, Billboard.biz (Accessed 09 May 2007)
http://www.billboard.biz/bbbiz/archivesearch/yearend_results.jsp.

⁹Crossover albums now account for 90% of the top-selling classical albums in the country. These albums are farther removed from traditional classical recordings, in that many of them have classical artists singing pop songs with pop artists and generally eschewing the standard repertory.

Table 1. Representative Crossover Albums (1969-1982)¹⁰

Album	Label	Year
<i>Chopin's Greatest Hits</i> – Various	Columbia	1969
<i>Bach's Greatest Hits</i> – Various	Columbia	1970
<i>My Favorite Chopin</i> – Van Cliburn	RCA (Red Seal)	1971
<i>Heavy Organ</i> – Virgil Fox	Decca/MCA	1972
<i>King of the High C's</i> – Luciano Pavarotti	London	1974
<i>Pachelbel Kanon: The Record that Made It Famous and other Baroque Favorites</i> – Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra	London	1976
<i>Go for Baroque</i> – Palliard Chamber Orchestra	RCA	1977
<i>Rampal: Greatest Hits</i> – Jean-Pierre Rampal	Columbia	1978
<i>Greatest Hits of 1720</i> – Various	Columbia	1979
<i>Perhaps Love</i> – Placido Domingo and John Denver	CBS	1982
<i>Hooked on Classics</i> – Royal Philharmonic Orchestra	RCA	1982

In this period, a pronounced shift can be seen in the way the classical music industry viewed itself. Classical music in 1982 was a far cry from what it was in 1956. In the 1940s and 50s, classical music was seen as a viable part of the American musical scene. From hours of network radio programming and huge celebrity stars like Stokowski, Toscanini, and Horowitz, classical music moved to minimal radio airtime and a lack of even passing recognition with the general populace. CBS's pushes for new playback technology were directly inspired by the belief that a vibrant classical music-loving and listening market existed,¹¹ but the technologies that emerged after CBS's LP, like the 45 single and the 8-track tape, ultimately hampered classical music due to their track length constraints. Popular music was in and classical music was seemingly out.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹See Chapter 2.

The classical music field increasingly views itself as a niche market. The public and publications confirm this view. Everywhere one looks, classical recordings are seen as a niche. Solid media classical recordings are only marketed in specialty or insider magazines, rather than to the general populace. Classical music is now a part of "the long tail." The "long tail" is the near endless stream of niche markets which fall in behind the big-selling top stars and styles.¹² Classical recordings were already a niche market by 1982. This is not to suggest that the classical music industry intentionally carried itself into a niche role. It appears however, that the classical music industry, by its lack of innovative marketing approaches, failed to do much to keep itself more mainstream. Due to limited exposure in retail establishments, and a small amount of exposure in other advertising forums, broad-based marketing has all but disappeared for classical music. In actuality, broad-based marketing for classical recordings never existed. Simply put, persons who purchased classical music in the 40s and 50s comprised the bulk of those who purchased recordings at all. However, when adolescents and other demographic groups emerged with disposable incomes and became potential record buyers, classical labels did not visibly adjust the majority of their marketing habits and did little to expand their existent markets to include these new groups. Thus, classical music gradually became a niche market appealing to a specialized group of people with a specialized product. Because of a widespread acceptance of this "niche notion," it would take great efforts and revolutionary tactics to move classical music back into the mainstream. Fortunately for the classical field, the area of online recording sales offers advantages for

¹²Chris Anderson, "The Long Tail," *Wired Magazine*, vol. 12, no. 10 (October, 2004) (Accessed 09 June 2007)
http://web.archive.org/web/20041208042735/www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html?pg=1&topic=tail&topic_set=.

niche markets. Digital sales can allow a company vast exposure to the public and allow it small, but more stable, profits, since niche buyers can easily access their favorite tracks and purchase them one by one. Digital sales can also offer price reductions, since the logistics of distributing and selling solid-media recordings are removed, and can allow unprecedented access to as many recordings as a company wishes to digitize.¹³ But, small advantages of niche marketing aside, the movement of classical music to a niche perspective, ultimately means that the classical music industry has relegated itself to playing second fiddle to popular music. This is not to imply that the industry intentionally turned itself into a niche market, but rather to state that inaction on the part of the industry in the face of unavoidable changes occurring in the makeup of the record market and American culture, made this move inevitable. Popular music is a constantly changing affair, which remains viable because of its unending developments of new styles and genres. Because classical music relies on a largely set repertory, it cannot claim public appeal in the same manner. This fact, however, does not mean that moving to a niche perspective was the answer to the problem. Classical recording companies needed, and still need to, develop ways of presenting classical music to the general populace as viable and innovative despite its age and any preconceived notions.

Change, Change, Change

Change characterized the time between 1956 and 1982. Changes in culture, changes in technology, and changes in economics all effected changes in the classical recording industry. This study has shown that classical music recording companies had

¹³Ibid.

much to overcome in America during this time. Overall, it can be said that these companies' reactions to these changing circumstances were mixed.

American classical recording companies certainly failed to react adequately to several of these changes. Classical companies failed to address changing demographics and the emergence of an adolescent population with a newfound disposable income. Marketing specifically geared towards teenagers by the classical community was non-existent in this period. Even popularized classical albums were not directed towards the adolescent population. Classical companies failed to exploit the rise of disposable income in the average American home during this time. Also, no classical record advertisements are to be found in any magazines with popular appeal or distribution. Classical advertisements appeared in insider magazines geared towards audiophiles, but not in magazines like *Billboard* or *Rolling Stone*, which would have had a wider readership. Efforts at marketing classical music to the general populace were seen by many to be a direct undermining of the inherent value of classical music.¹⁴

Perhaps it was impossible for the classical sector of the American music industry to change the developing musical tastes of a nation, but they seemingly never made significant efforts even to try. It can be said that classical music companies did not want to try and tap a changing market. Classical recording companies never adequately fought the stereotype that classical music was reserved for the upper-crust elite; if anything, they fostered it. While this may have been a smart choice to market to the social class that was familiar with and already purchasing classical music, it failed to address the fact that the majority of recording purchasers, after the rock revolution, were not of that social

¹⁴Colin Symes, "Beating up the Classics: Aspects of a Compact Discourse," *Popular Music*, 16/1 (January, 1997); 84-85.

status. In one of the advertisements pictured in chapter four, classical recordings were compared to vintages of fine wine, which is certainly promoting a stereotype and not relevant to much of the population. Even the development of popularized classical albums failed to do much to remove this notion of intellectual and moral elitism.

It is interesting to note that classical labels also failed to promote music from contemporary American composers such as John Cage and Phillip Glass. Not only did classical companies need to promote recordings from the 1600-1900 era, they also needed to promote music composed between 1956 and 1982. Many of the problems associated with promoting music composed in centuries past were nonexistent when dealing with contemporary compositions. With contemporary works, classical labels' marketing did not have to overcome the stereotype of antiquity, and labels could have easily highlighted the fact that the compositions were being created by living composers. Often, contemporary compositions carried appeal outside the circle of traditional classical listeners, with nods to rock, jazz, and other popular music. Joseph Horowitz points out that American contemporary classical music coming out in the 1960s and 70s was inventive and fresh, and carried a distinct character with broad appeal.¹⁵ Yet classical record labels failed to actively record and market contemporary music, which might have carried more sway with modern record purchasers, as well as failing to promote classical music from the past.

Despite some overt failures, there are many areas in which the American classical industry rose to the challenges brought on by this era. In the area of recording technology, the classical sector not only kept abreast of new developments, it actually was the impetus behind many of these technological advances. Classical music recording

¹⁵Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 528-529.

directly inspired the LP record, stereo sound, the high-fidelity revolution, and the audiophile craze. Certainly, recording and playback technology flourished in this time due to the actions of classical recording companies. Another way in which classical companies competed was in marketing through album art. There are not any major variances between art on the top classical and popular albums of this time period. Also, the classical industry began in the 60s, and especially the 70s, to produce popularized classical albums, where the repertoire was restricted to lighter, more familiar, music and played in a short-song format like popular albums. These types of albums, such as *Bach's Greatest Hits*, certainly were an admirable attempt by classical companies to relate to the population of the time.

In addition to the changing circumstances mentioned above, there are many occurrences of these years that classical music could not adequately predict or react to. The disappearance of network radio and the shift to an all-music format was hardly predictable. The classical industry did not have the financial resources to subsidize enough radio stations to keep classical music flying across the nation's airwaves. As the musical tastes of the nation changed, radio changed as well. The classical industry, particularly Columbia Records, could not have predicted RCA's reaction to their technological development of the LP record. The emergence of the 45 RPM single, and other new technology like the 8-track tape, was also unpredictable. Certain classical labels, like RCA Victor, attempted to utilize the 45 as a means for transmitting classical music, which was a commercial flop. Due to track length restrictions, classical music could not function adequately on the 45 or 8-track tape, and by the time the compact cassette achieved widespread popularity, the classical industry had a new vested interest

in the digital compact disc. It is doubtful that the classical industry could have predicted the 1970s conglomeration of the recording industry. The foreign recording industry provided an increase of competition toward the classical industry, which forced United States-based companies to find ways to react. The rise of rock and the massive growth that took hold of the American record market were wholly unpredictable as well. This fact, of course, does not mean the classical sector reacted adequately to this change.

There are two sides to every coin, and so it was with many of the changes of this period. Although foreign involvement in the American record market may have fostered increased competition, conglomeration also brought classical companies into contact with huge, already established catalogues from which to press recordings. Consolidation also meant that financially strapped classical companies had new access to financial resources from the parent company and vast distribution networks built on a stabilized framework of popular music. Many foreign companies believed it was advantageous and prestigious to maintain a classical recording section, which many companies did by dipping into their coffers which had been bolstered by sales of popular music.¹⁶ Similarly, the flip side of market expansion and new population groups emerging with spending resources was that a theretofore unexploited portion of a market was there to be tapped. However, classical companies failed to exploit this obvious advantage brought about by market expansion.

No one is suggesting that tapping this emerging market would have been an easy process, but it could have been done. Perhaps classical recording labels could have exploited the rebellious nature of the emerging population groups by running a series of print ads in magazines with widespread readership highlighting the many rebellious instances in the history of classical music, such as the censoring by the Communist Party

¹⁶Lee, "A Requiem for Classical Music," 18.

of numerous soviet composers in the mid twentieth-century. Classical labels could have attacked elitist stereotypes with television ads dramatizing Mozart's quarrels with aristocracy during his day. The list of possibilities is endless. Older classical music aside, if classical labels had gone so far as to just promote the music of contemporary composers market success might have come about more easily. Another suggestion is that classical recording companies could have supplemented their catalogues with a host of previously-unrecorded literature. This has been done to great effect in recent years by the Naxos discount record label, which is now the leading classical label in the world.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the success of Naxos has not visibly bolstered solid media recording sales,¹⁸ but if done earlier, catalogue expansion might have turned the tide of diminishing market share.

Classical music has longevity because it possesses time-tested quality. However, if a classical label cannot convince record purchasers of the music's inherent worth, then the benefits of merit are lost. Considering that classical labels had a defined repertory, they did not have to incur expenses to hire writers and arrangers to constantly update and change its style and content, unlike the popular music industry does with its constantly shifting body of works. Classical labels had but to find artists, record, produce, and market recordings. No one could fault the classical industry if an encompassing change had occurred in their marketing strategy based on the changing makeup of America's consumer population. But, the fact remains, that outside of popularized albums and

¹⁷*About Us*, Naxos.com (Accessed 19 June 2007) <http://www.naxos.com/aboutus.asp>.

¹⁸Since Naxos' founding in 1987, classical recording sales have remained in the 2.5 to 3.5% range. "1998 10-Year Music Consumer Trends Chart," RIAA (Accessed 26 June 2007) <http://76.74.24.142/E216CC98-8482-83E0-0ACC-A071D1595159.pdf> ; "2006 10-Year Music Consumer Trends Chart," RIAA (Accessed 26 June 2007) <http://76.74.24.142/E795D602-FA50-3F5A-3730-9C8A40B98C46.pdf>.

occasional print ads in audiophile magazines, classical labels did little to market to the emerging teenage population group, which has come to define the American record market.

The End ... At Last

Music recording, as it has been recognized in the last half-century, may very well be on its way out. Researchers and economists alike see the future of solid-media recording as shaky at best. A cascade of new developments, inspired largely by the development of online digital distribution, is changing the way America and the world buy recorded music. Although this new revolution may eventually aid the classical recording industry, classical records currently still lag precariously behind in the American record market. Although classical records have maintained relatively the same percentage of sales since the early 1980s, their sales compare miserably to that of popular music. It is my belief, based on the facts presented in this study, that the meager percentage of classical recording sales compared to the sales of popular recordings is related to the actions of American classical recording companies during the years between 1956 and 1982. This era brought about a host of challenges which classical companies had to meet. Many of these challenges the industry met with aplomb. However, the key challenge of driving the tastes of an emerging purchasing segment of the population to classical music was met with a complete failure. The overlooking of the teenage and minority populations by American classical labels consigned the industry to a lower position of market share. Classical companies in America, though they may have tried to hide behind the curtains of moral and intellectual elitism, ultimately failed to educate or elevate an entire segment of the population. The popularized classical

recording, though it met with some success, never assuaged the poor market position of classical recordings. The crossover boom of the present, though currently enjoying success, will also come and go. However, if American-based classical companies fail to fight preconceived notions, as they failed to do so between 1956 and 1982, the future looks bleak. If the strategies used by popular music companies trample upon notions of superiority, or challenge the aesthetics of classical music, then new strategies must be developed. Defined, poignant, progressive, and militant marketing strategies must be utilized. Unless classical companies present classical music as a medium for all people, aggressively targeting the younger generation of America and instilling the notion that classical music does not require financial status or education to be enjoyed, classical music will never see market success, and will remain an isolated, self-perpetuating, but never thriving, portion of the American musical scene.

APPENDIX

Album Cover Comparison, 1958-1982

Classical
1958



Capitol Records
Grammy – Best Orchestral Performance

Pop/Rock

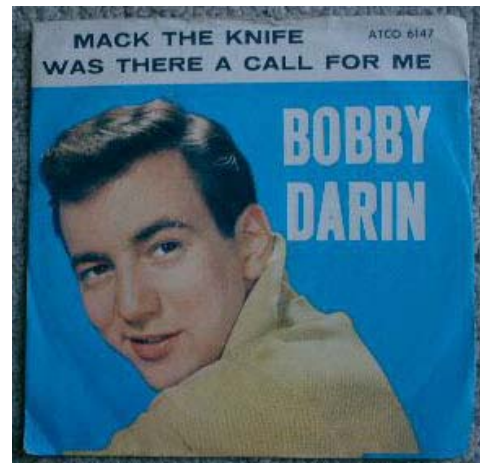


RCA Records – Certified "Gold"
Grammy – Best Vocal Pop - Male

1959

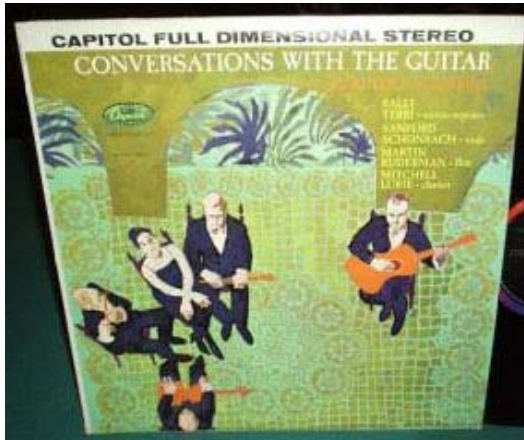


RCA Records
Grammy – Best Album Cover

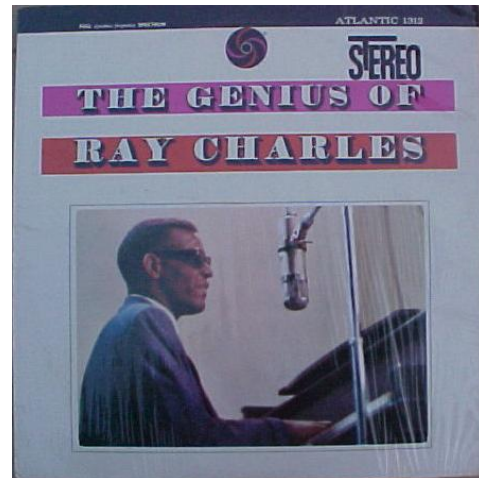


Atco Records
Grammy – Record of the Year

1960



Capitol Records
Grammy – Best Classical Performance



Atlantic Records
Grammy – Best Vocal Performance

1961



Columbia Records
Grammy – Album of the Year (Classical)

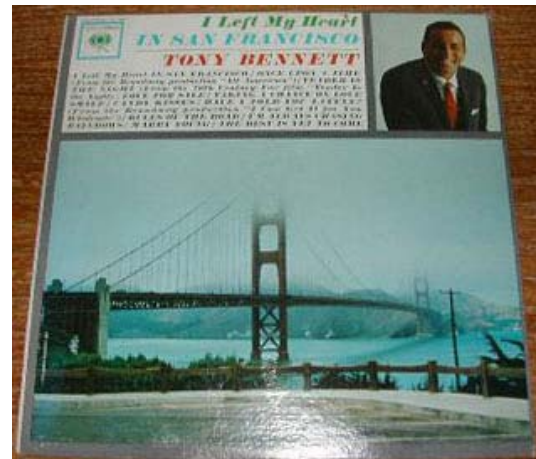


Kapp Records
Grammy – Best Vocal Pop Male

1962

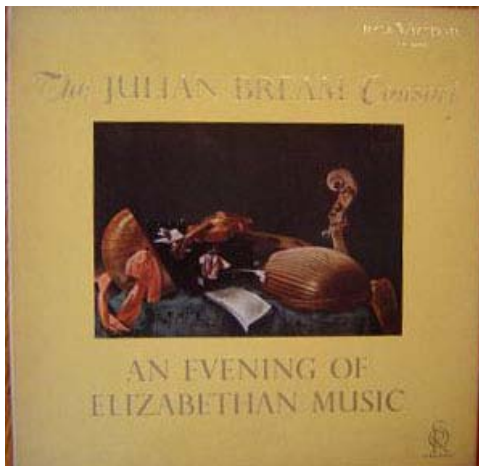


Columbia Records
Grammy – Album of the Year (Classical)



Columbia Records – Certified "Gold"
Grammy – Record of the Year

1963

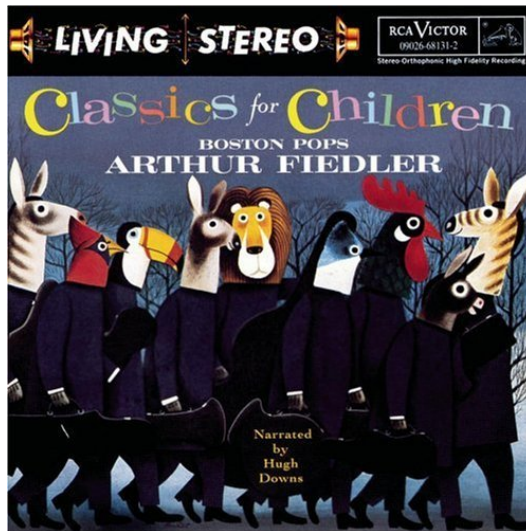


RCA Victor Records
Grammy – Best Classical Performance (Chamber)



Columbia Records – Certified "Gold"
Grammy – Album of the Year

1964:

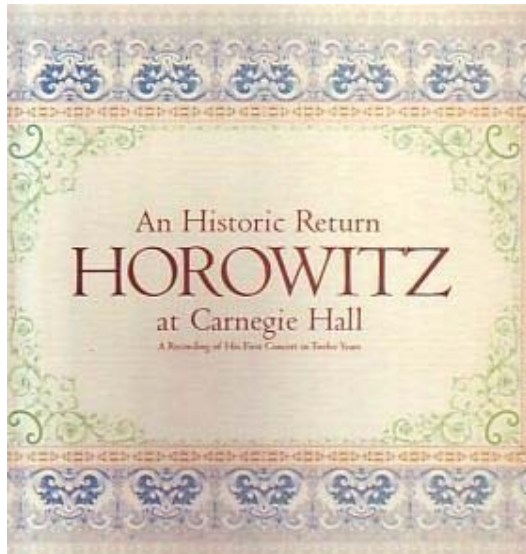


RCA Victor Records
Grammy – Best Album Cover (1 of 2)

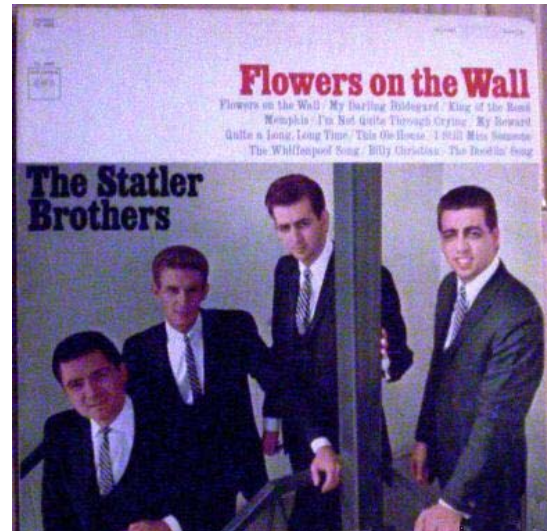


Columbia Records – Certified "Gold"
Grammy – Best Album Cover (2 of 2)

1965

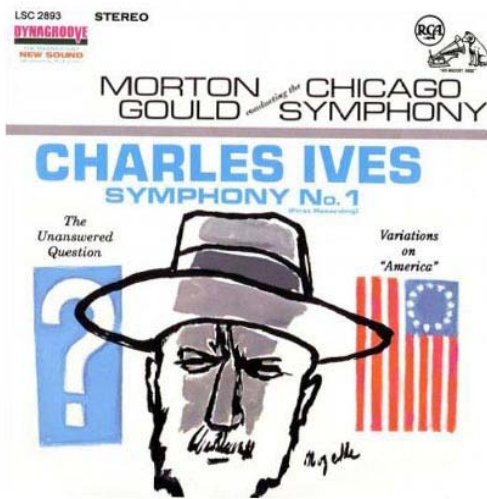


Columbia Records
Grammy – Album of the Year (Classical)

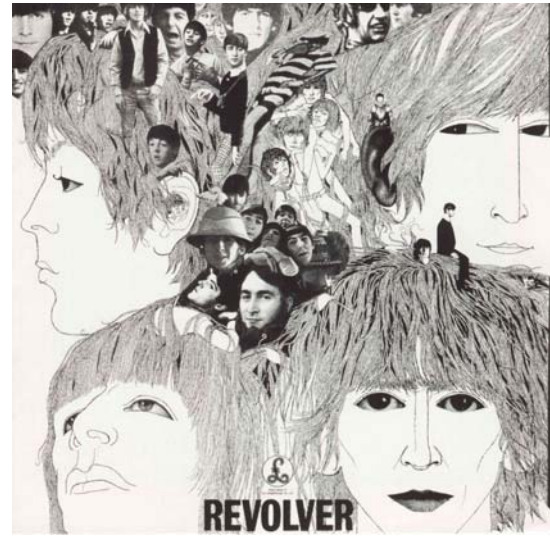


Columbia Records
Grammy – Best Contemporary
Performance

1966

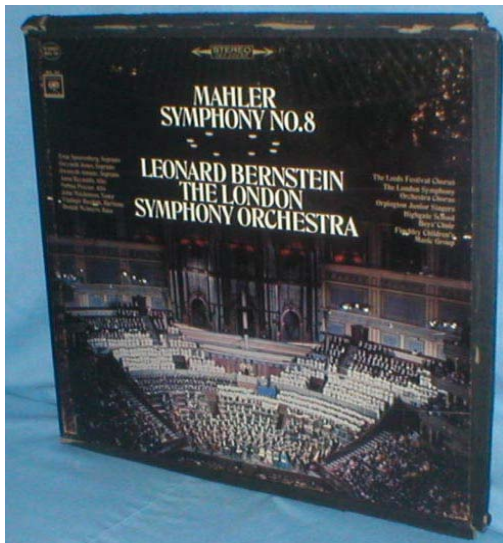


RCA Victor Records
Grammy – Album of the Year (Classical)



Capitol Records – Certified "Gold"
Grammy – Best Album Cover, Graphic Arts

1967

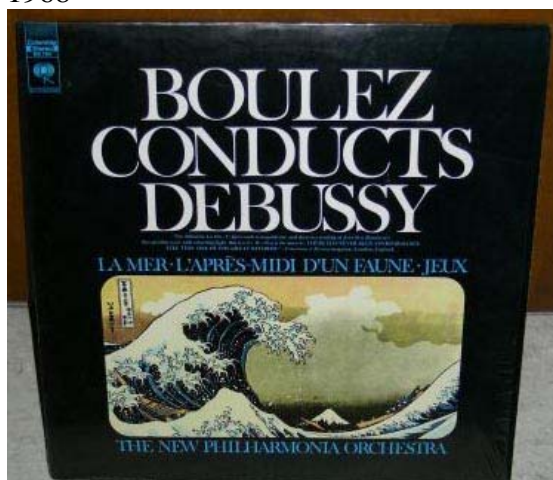


Columbia Records
Grammy – Album of the Year (Classical)

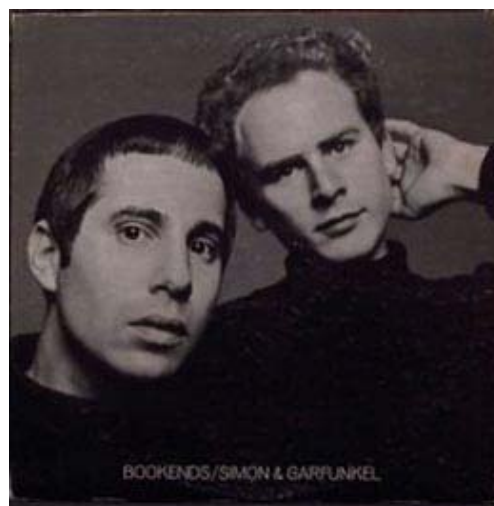


Capitol Records – Certified "Gold"
Grammy – Best Album Cover, Graphic Arts

1968



Columbia Records
Grammy – Best Classical Performance,
Orchestra



Columbia Records – Certified "Gold"
Grammy – Best Contemporary Pop
Performance

1969



Columbia Records – Certified "Gold"
Billboard – Top Classical Album
Grammy – Album of the Year, Classical

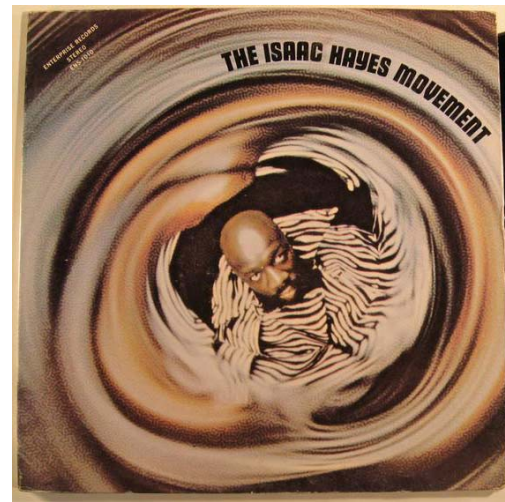


Gordy Records – Certified "Gold"
Billboard – Top Soul Album
Grammy – Best R&B Performance

1970



RCA Victor Records
Billboard – No. 4 Classical Album

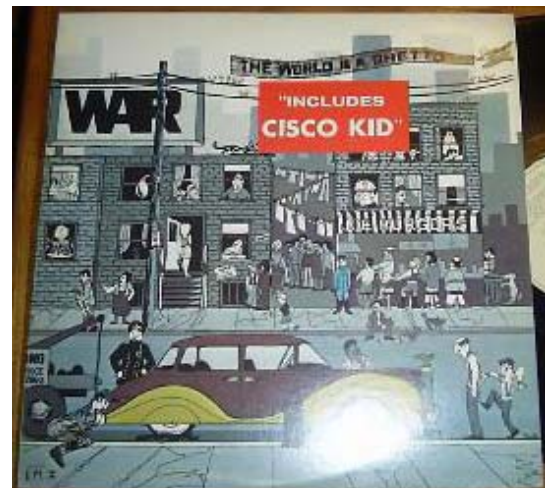


Enterprise Records
Billboard – Top Soul Album

1971

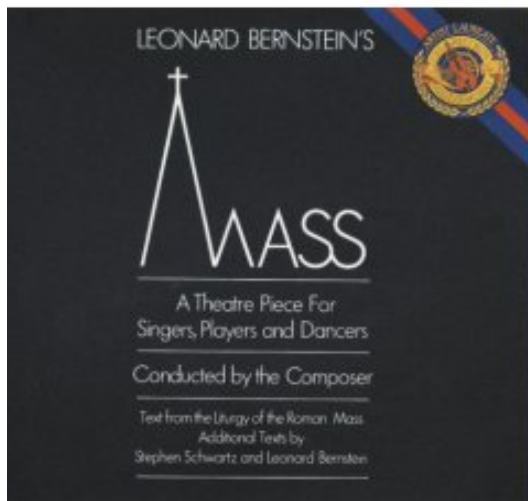


Columbia Records
Billboard – No. 3 Classical Album



United Artists Records – Certified "Gold"
Billboard – Top Soul Album

1972

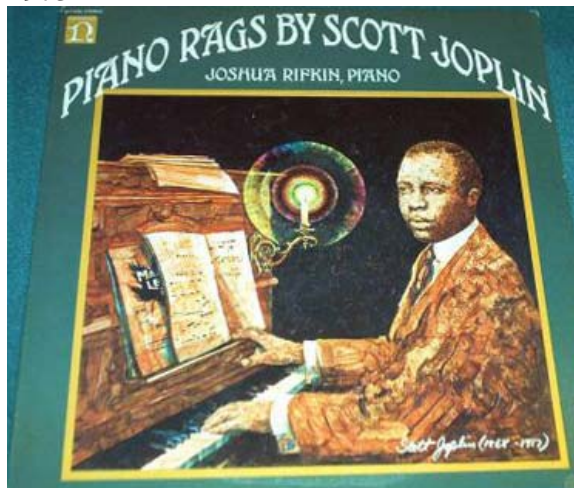


CBS Records
Billboard – Top Classical Album



United Artists Records – Certified "Gold"
Billboard – No. 3 Pop Album

1973



Nonesuch Records
Billboard – Top Classical Album



London (Hi) Records
Billboard – Top Soul Album

1974

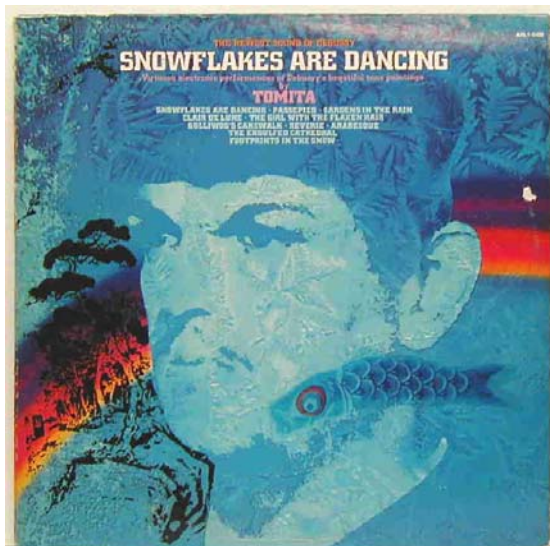


Angel Records
Billboard – Top Classical Album



MCA Records – Certified "Gold"
Billboard – Top Pop Album

1975



Columbia Records
Billboard – Top Classical Album

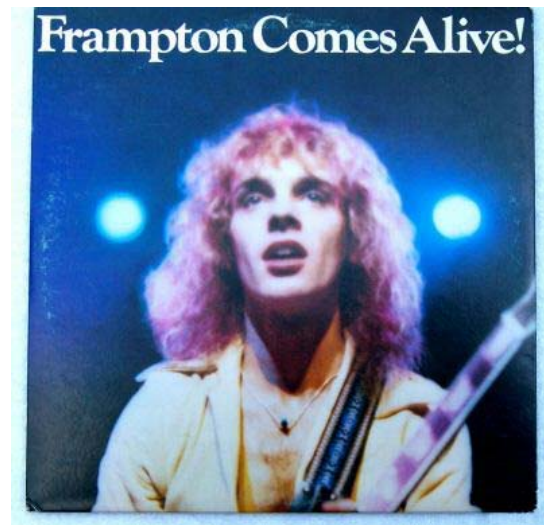


Columbia Records – Certified "Gold"
Billboard – No. 3 Pop Album

1976



London Records
Billboard – Top Classical Album



A & M Records – Certified "Platinum"
Billboard – Top Pop Album

1977



London Records
Billboard – Top Classical Album

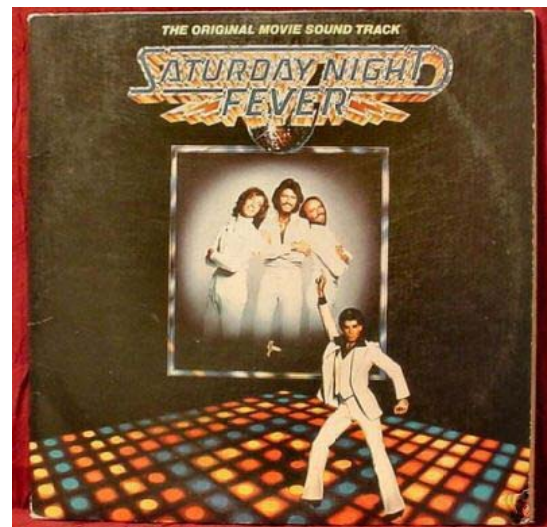


Warner Brothers Records – Certified "Platinum"
Billboard – Top Pop Album
 Grammy – Album of the Year

1978



London Records
Billboard – Top Classical Album

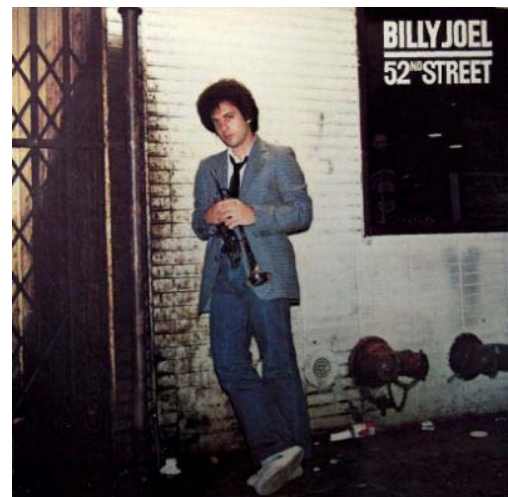


RSO Records – Certified "Platinum"
Billboard – Top Pop Album
 Grammy – Album of the Year

1979



RCA Records
Billboard – Top Classical Album



Columbia Records – Certified "Platinum"
Billboard – Top Pop Album
 Grammy – Album of the Year

1980



Angel Records
Billboard – No. 5 Classical Album



Pink Floyd – "The Wall"
 Columbia Records – Certified "Platinum"
Billboard – Top Pop Album
 Grammy – Best Engineered Recording

1981



Columbia Records- Certified "Gold"
Billboard – No. 2 Classical Album



Epic Records – Certified "Platinum"
Billboard – Top Pop Album

1982



Nonesuch Records
Billboard – No. 2 Classical



Geffen Records – Certified "Platinum"
Billboard- Top Pop Album

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