Jaren S. Hinckley, 2008 BYU Education Week

SUGGESTIONS FOR STARTING (or expanding) A WONDERFUL MUSIC COLLECTION

SUGGESTION #1: To find the best recordings, look for names you recognize. For example, you'll probably get a better recording of Beethoven's Symphony #5 performed by the New York Philharmonic than by the Czighnczikhistan Symphony Orchestra. And you'll probably hear a better recording of operatic arias by Luciano Pavarotti than by Bob Dullard. There are a lot of cut-rate labels that record cheaply; as a result, the sound quality is not great. Resist the impulse to buy any old bargain bin CD or iTune. Spend a little extra money to get the more respectable performers/labels. For a list of well-known labels, conductors, and performers that you can pretty much guarantee will be good, see the lengthy list at the bottom of this page.

SUGGESTION #2: Listen to the local classical music radio station wherever you live! Support it during their pledge drives. Play the radio game all the time! (See "How to Play the Radio Game" below) When you hear a piece you like, write down the title, composer, and performer. If you couldn't understand the disc jockey when they announced it, call the radio station and ask them to spell it out for you. Then you can go to the CD store or iTunes and buy that exact recording. Some radio stations even keep a list of the most-requested pieces of music on their web-sites—for instance: www.king.org (King FM Seattle) maintains a list of all the music they play! Also, subscribe to a free on-line radio station, like www.pandora.com (it's fantastic!).

SUGGESTION #3: Keep seeking out live performances. Go to concerts, recitals, etc. and when you hear something you like, write it down and buy it!

SUGGESTION #4: Go to the library and get multiple recordings of the same work and listen and compare so you know which recording you prefer.

SUGGESTION #5: Play your favorite recordings for your family, friends and significant others. Share the wealth of beautiful music! Before you know it you will be a connoisseur of art music from all your favorite time periods.

NOTE: These lists are by NO MEANS all-inclusive, but it's a very good start.

- Some well-known labels are: Archiv, Argo, Centaur, Chandos, Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, EMI Classics, Erato, London, Naxos, Philips, RCA, Sony, and Teldec
- Some well-known orchestras are: The Academy of Ancient Music, Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Baltimore Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, City of London Philharmonia, Cleveland Orchestra, The English Concert, London Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony and the Vienna Philharmonic
- Some well-known conductors are: Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Leonard Bernstein, Pierre Boulez, Colin Davis, Christoph von Dohnanyi, Charles Dutoit, John Eliot Gardiner, Christopher Hogwood, Neeme Jarvi, Herbert von Karajan, Lorin Maazel, Neville Marriner, Zubin Mehta, Kent Nagano, Eugene Ormandy, Trevor Pinnock, John Rutter, Leonard Slatkin, George Szell, Michael Tilson Thomas, and David Zinman
- Some well-known pianists are: Claudio Arrau, Jorge Bolet, Philippe Entremont, Lukas Foss, Richard Goode, Artur Rubinstein, Rudolf Serkin, Jean-Yves Thibaudet
- Some well-known string players are: Joshua Bell (violin), Yo Yo Ma (cello), Itzhak Perlman (violin), Msistislav Rostropovich (cello), Gil Shaham (violin) and Pinchas Zukerman (violin/viola)
- Some well-known string quartets are: Emerson String Quartet, Juilliard String Quartet, and Kronos Quartet
- Some well-known wind players are: James Campbell (clarinet), Eddie Daniels (clarinet), Heinz Holliger (oboe), Wynton Marsalis (trumpet), Charles Neidich (clarinet), Jean-Pierre Rampal (flute), and David Shifrin (clarinet)
- Some well-known singing groups are: Anonymous 4, Cambridge Singers, Hilliard Ensemble, The King's Singers, Monteverdi Choir
- Some well-known singers are: Cecilia Bartoli (mezzo-soprano), Kathleen Battle (soprano), Barbara Bonney (soprano), David Daniels (countertenor), Jan DeGaetani (mezzo-soprano), Placido Domingo (tenor), Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone), Marilyn Horne (mezzo-soprano), Emma Kirkby (soprano), Sylvia McNair (soprano) and Shirley Verrett (soprano)

HOW TO PLAY THE RADIO GAME AND WIN!!!

The Radio Game is very easy to play. Simply turn on the classical music radio station and listen. Hopefully you will turn it on during a piece of music. If you turn on the radio and the announcer is speaking, quickly turn off the radio. Turn it back on and hopefully the piece of music has begun. The idea is to NOT hear the title or composer of the piece announced before you listen to it. Then, as you listen, try to determine which time period the piece was written in, the genre, performing forces, composer, etc. Below you will find an extremely brief list of helpful hints for what to expect in each time period.

BAROQUE ERA (1600-1750)

Ornamentation. Orchestra consisted of mostly strings and harpsichord—sometimes flutes, oboes, bassoons, brass, and timpani. If you hear a really high piercing trumpet—you're probably listening to a Baroque piece. Most pieces sound quite structured. Lots of repetition. Fairly long melodies. Terraced dynamics (i.e. one section of the piece will be one volume then another section will be another volume)

CLASSICAL ERA (1750-1830)

Structure. All the woodwinds (including clarinet) and brass are used. Harpsichord is rarely used. Shorter hummable melodies. Composers wanted you to be able to hum their tunes after hearing it once or twice. Much more dramatic use of dynamics, including the use of crescendo and decrescendo (gradually getting louder/softer).

ROMANTIC ERA (1820-1910)

Emotion! More of everything—more woodwinds, brass, strings, percussion, etc. Much less structured, more free-flowing. Melodies not quite as hummable, more drawn-out to reflect emotion. Sounds like its telling a story (because it usually is!) More dramatic use of dynamics

Modern Era (1900-the present)

Experimentation! Anything is possible. Composers can use as many instruments as they want or as few! Everyone is trying to do their own thing. More dissonance.

Now—Here's your challenge! Start playing the radio game on a regular basis; you'll soon be able to guess not only time periods, but composers as well, and eventually you'll start recognizing certain pieces by title. Impress your friends, family and significant others by being able to say, "Hey, that's clearly from the Romantic Era. I bet it's Mendelssohn!"