

Some Important Ensembles, Conductors and Performers

All of these ensembles, organizations, or and individuals have a significant number of recordings that are distributed internationally. These lists should be considered representative, not exhaustive.

Early Music Groups (also known as “Period Practice” or “Historically Informed Performance”)

- English Concert
- English Consort
- Concentus Musicus Wien
- Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra
- La Chappel Royale
- Les Arts Florissants
- Les Musiciens du Louvre
- Handel and Haydn Society (USA)
- Boston Baroque (USA)
- Hanover Band
- Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique
- Les Arts Florissants

Important Ensembles (general)

- Berlin Philharmonic
- Vienna Philharmonic
- Royal Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra
- Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra
- BBC Orchestra
- Academy of St. Martin in the Fields
- London Symphony Orchestra
- London Philharmonic
- Royal Philharmonic
- English Chamber Orchestra
- Staatskapelle Dresden
- Boston Symphony Orchestra
- Chicago Symphony Orchestra
- Cleveland Orchestra
- Philadelphia Orchestra
- New York Philharmonic

Some Important Opera Companies

- La Scala (Milan)
- Covent Garden (London)
- Vienna State Opera
- Metropolitan Opera (“The Met” – New York)

- Lyric Opera of Chicago (rarely records, but important in the opera world)
- San Francisco Lyric Opera (rarely records, but important in the opera world)

Some Important Conductors

- Phillipe Herreweghe (early music)
- Ton Koopman (early music)
- Trevor Pinnock (early music)
- Nikolaus Harnoncourt (early music)
- John Eliot Gardiner (early music)
- Simon Rattle
- Bernard Haitink
- Christoph von Dohnányi
- Susanna Mälkki
- Valery Gergiev
- Marin Alsop
- JoAnn Falletta
- Claudio Abbado (D)
- Leonard Bernstein (D)
- George Szell (D)
- Eugene Ormandy (D)
- Seiji Ozawa (D)
- Sir Georg Solti (D)
- Arturo Toscanini (D)
- Carlos Kleiber (D)

Some Important Performers

- Emma Kirkby, soprano (current/English - only early music)
- Cecilia Bartoli (current/Italian)
- Anna Netrebko, soprano (current/Russian-Austrian)
- Renée Fleming (current/American)
- Jessye Norman, soprano (recent/American)
- Leontyne Price, soprano (recent/American)
- Birgit Nilsson, soprano (mid 20th Cent/Swedish/D)
- Maria Callas, soprano (mid 20th Cent/Greek-American)
- Jonas Kaufmann (current/German)
- Placido Domingo, tenor (recent/Spanish)
- Jose Carreras, tenor (recent/Italian/D)
- Luciano Pavarotti, tenor (recent/Italian/D)
- Enrico Caruso, tenor (early 20th Cent/Italian/D)
- Jussi Bjorling, tenor (early 20th Cent/Swedish/D)
- Lauritz Melchior, tenor (early 20th Cent/Danish/D)
- Itzhak Perlman, violin (current/Israeli)
- Isaac Stern, violin (recent/Russian-American)
- Jascha Heifetz, violin (mid 20th Cent/Russian/D)
- Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin (current/German)
- Joshua Bell, violin (current/American)

- Yo-Yo Ma, cello (current/French-Chinese)
- Mstislav Rostropovich, cello (recent/Soviet then American-French then Soviet then Russian*/D)
- Vladimir Horowitz, piano (mid 20th Cent/American/D)
- Evgeny Kissin, piano (current/Russian-British-Israeli)

(D=deceased)

*See *Testimony* in the Suggested Readings document for how such things happen

The first category, “Early Music Groups,” lists some important ensembles that specialize in performing music written before around the year 1825 (A.D.), with an emphasis on the late Renaissance and Baroque. This is sometimes called “Historically Informed Performance” and abbreviated “HIP.” They perform on instruments that either survive from that era or are copies of instruments from that era. Singers who specialize in music from these periods try to utilize vocal techniques that are thought to have been used during that time. These singers tend to sound a little less like “opera singers” than many of the vocalists you will hear singing classical music.

The second category, “Important Ensembles,” lists important ensembles that play music from all eras. Notice the last part of each name: “philharmonic,” “orchestra,” and “symphony orchestra.” They originally meant different kinds of musical groups, but today the terms are generally used interchangeably. However, don’t confuse their synonymous nature with the necessity of using an ensemble’s proper name. For example, the “Boston Symphony Orchestra” is not the same thing as the “Boston Philharmonic,” and the “London Philharmonic” is a different group than the “London Symphony Orchestra.” BUT...it is acceptable to SHORTEN “symphony orchestra” to just “symphony” in casual use: the “Boston Symphony Orchestra” is the same thing as the “Boston Symphony.” The name hasn’t been changed, it’s just been shortened.