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A Digital Workflow for Classical Music and Opera CDs

3rd Edition

www.classicalweekly.com

**Creating High-Quality Archives of your Classical CDs for
iTunes, the iPod and other Management Software and
Players.**

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Part I: **Introduction, Workflow Overview and Goals**

Please note this is a limited content sample and this excerpt has been truncated.

At the end of this guide you will find a copy of the eBook's actual full Table of Contents.

Preface to the Third Edition

This third edition is designed to incorporate the feedback I've received from readers and is designed to streamline the overall workflow of this book. In the second edition I eliminated some of the more complex archiving steps and kept the workflow within the iTunes default directories. I also devoted more time to organizing the iTunes music folder as it relates to Classical Music, and in discussing more about organizing your CD files and your MP3s. In that edition I also added a brief section on backing up your iTunes music.

Here in the Third Edition I'm going to introduce a second workflow. **It has come to my attention that while many people do like to go from CD -> EAC/LAME -> MP3 -> iTunes, there are many people out there who would like to eliminate EAC/LAME and simply use iTunes to handle all aspects of this process.** So in this version I will also talk about how to copy and archive your classical music using iTunes exclusively, in what I call the "The iTunes-Only Workflow".

Please note that key information in this Part I of the book for people using the iTunes-Only Workflow is highlighted in red, so these readers don't have to worry that they've missed any details in the overall Part I discussion.

Why Create Copies of your Classical Music and Opera CDs?

For me, there are two very simple answers to this question:

1. When I take my CDs in the car, they get scratched.
2. I have a massive classical music collection and I want the ability to access any part of my library at any time, especially via my iPod.

In the digital world, portability is everything. With the advent of new technology and inexpensive hardware and software, a new world of opportunity has opened up for the music lover. With the advent of players such as the iPod and the Zune, you are no longer limited in your choice of music to the number of CDs you can fit in a portable holder or the number of disc that will fit in the arm rest of your car. In today's digital world, the only limit to the amount of music you can carry with you is the amount of disk space on your portable music device.

Now before I go any further in this eBook, let me categorically state that there is no better source of audio for the average to above average home user than a CD. Let me also state that no digital copy of a CD can match the *true* fidelity of the original CD, so in no way am I advocating replacing CDs with MP3s or other digital copies.

What I will say, however, is that digital copies of a CD can provide superb reproductions of an original CD, often at quality levels where few people can tell the difference between the digital copy and the original.

In this eBook my goal is to teach you how to take your classical music and opera CD collection and digitally convert it into a high-quality, well-organized, extensible and portable library.

Throughout the text you will see a few links added to articles located on HelpSpa.com (my technology blog) that expand upon the topic in question. I can't cover everything in this short book, so consider these links to be "extra credit" if you want to learn more about a topic.

Final Results: What will you have in the End?

Once you've worked through the steps in this guide you will have two things:

1. A well-organized, extensible, and portable digital copy of your classical music and opera library. Ultimately you will decide whether you want to organize your music by work or by album, but this guide will give you the skills to make and implement your choice.
2. A high-fidelity archive of your entire classical music and opera CD collection, so that if you do lose or scratch a CD, you will be able to recreate the CD *at close to CD quality*. There are ways to digitize your music collection to a level that is very close to an exact digital copy of your CDs, but doing so requires a very large amount of disk space and patience, and takes away somewhat from the portability benefit of having a digital vs. physical CD collection; I will, however, touch upon this method toward the end of this guide.

Who is this Book for? What Computer Knowledge do I Need?

This guide is for anyone who wants to create a digital copy of their Classical Music and Opera CD collection, listen to their music on a portable player, and manage this collection with software such as iTunes. In order to get the most out of this guide you will need to be comfortable working with files and folder in windows, including moving and renaming folders, and copy and pasting operations. You should also be comfortable with the very basics of installing software.

For those of you who plan to use the "iTunes-Only Workflow", you will only need to be comfortable following screenshots for using iTunes (and optionally backup software).

Even if you are not comfortable with the procedures described above, I still encourage you to read this work, as I provide free 30-day personalized support for all purchasers of this book and will be happy to guide you through any hurdles you may encounter (see the support section below).

Why Did You Pick MP3 vs. FLAC?

MP3 is a well-known and popular audio format that can produce high quality files and has widespread industry support. While the quality of MP3 can be surpassed with formats such as AAC and FLAC, both of these formats have their limitations. Though iTunes and the iPod do support AAC, many other portable devices do not support the format. Also, I enjoy creating MP3-CDs for use in a portable player that I have, so AAC is not an option for me. And while FLAC can produce fantastic recording quality, the FLAC format is generally not practical for portable use as there is no widespread support. So I've chosen MP3 because it works as a compromise to address my needs for an audio format.

Why Go Through all the Trouble of Setting up LAME and EAC? Why not just use iTunes to Rip the CDs?

iTunes is capable of ripping CDs but not with the precision of EAC. One of my main goals in digitizing my classical music library is to create high-quality copies of my CDs. EAC allows me to record MP3s at the high-quality 320 kBit/s bitrate, and does so with extremely accurate error correcting during the CD ripping process. **Those of you who elect to use the iTunes-Only Workflow can still rip CDs at 320kBit/s, with error correction, but not with the precision that you could with EAC/LAME. But for those of you who want the simplest method with the fewest steps, the iTunes-Only Workflow is a great alternative that still will give you quality file copies and quality sound.**

Some people will argue that using 320kBit/s is not practical because it's hard even for the trained ear to hear the difference between this level of encoding and lower levels of encoding. While this fact may be true, disk space is relatively inexpensive and making the highest quality recording (within the bounds of MP3) allows me to future-proof my recordings for when I may have equipment that will allow me to take advantage of this high bit rate. Further, encoding at this high bit rate allows for converting back from the MP3s to CD as a last-resort way to restore lost CDs (*clearly restoring a collection from MP3 isn't the best way to go but it's better than a total loss*).

I will also mention that there are many, many ways to configure LAME and EAC. The method I present here is one of many, but it is the method that has worked reliably for me, and in my opinion is a good configuration for most users. Once you get your feet wet with EAC, however, if you are interested, I encourage you to dig deeper and learn more about tweaking and fine-tuning EAC.

Please note that you CAN use the organizing and tagging tips suggested in this guide WITHOUT using EAC and LAME to rip your CDs and we will go over that in the iTunes-Only Workflow; remember the only reason we are using EAC and LAME is because that combination of software creates higher-quality MP3's than iTunes can on its own.

Should I Pick the EAC/LAME Workflow (Parts II-IV) or the iTunes-Only Workflow (Part V)?

Both workflows are good at what they do and the ultimate choice depends on your goals. The EAC/LAME workflow will give you the highest-quality rips of your CDs, but will require a lot more configuring of software and manipulating of files and folders. iTunes was never designed to handle the task of routinely ripping CDs outside of iTunes, and then bringing the resultant MP3 files in to the iTunes library later on. Thus, workarounds are necessary to get everything to work harmoniously.

If, however, you really want a minimalist approach, and simply want to use iTunes to rip and manage your Classical Music – still at pretty good quality, then Workflow #2, “The iTunes-Only” Workflow, is for you. In this workflow we’re never going to leave iTunes, and you will only have to change a minimal number of settings to configure iTunes to create high-quality rips (though not as high-quality as EAC/LAME).

If you have further questions about the differences or about your particular situation, feel free to drop me a line at info@classicalweekly.com and I’ll see if I can help you sort it out.

The Structure of this eBook

Part I: This introduction

Part II-IV: Folder Setup, EAC/LAME Configuration, CD Ripping and MP3 tagging for Workflow #1 (EAC/LAME -> MP3 -> iTunes).

If you are using the iTunes-Only workflow you can skip Parts II-IV and head directly to Part V for the iTunes-Only specific workflow. Note that by skipping Parts II-IV you will NOT be missing any relevant information for the iTunes-Only Workflow.

Part V: Workflow #2: The iTunes-Only Workflow

Part VI: A Word about Backups, FLAC and AAC

Support

I wrote this guide to be helpful and self-explanatory, but no matter how well one writes a guide, questions do arise. If you have questions about the content in this book or need assistance with any of the steps, please contact me via the contact form at ClassicalWeekly.com. The address is: <http://www.classicalweekly.com/contact>. I provide free personalized support for the first 30 days after your purchase of this guide.

There is also a support page on the classicalweekly.com website located at www.classicalweekly.com/support. I will post the latest updates on this page, so please check here first if you are having a problem. But as always do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

About ClassicalWeekly.com

ClassicalWeekly.com is a website designed to expose you to more and more classical music, and the idea at ClassicalWeekly.com is simple. Each week I will post a new work of classical music for you to listen to (and hopefully see). Each posting will have the title, composer, genre and a YouTube recording of the work (when available). I will usually make a few comments about the work at the start of the post and I when applicable I will include a Wikipedia (or other) link for you to learn more about the work if you wish to do so. At the bottom of each post I will also place an Amazon Affiliate link to my favorite recording(s) of the work. You can also signup for the free newsletter which will weekly alert you to the presence of a new work to explore. Visit the site at www.classicalweekly.com –you won't be disappointed.

Resources

Below are some articles you may find helpful from my technology blog at www.helpspa.com about external hard drives and backups.

1. [How to Select an External Hard Drive to Purchase](#)
2. [The Home PC Backup Checklist – A Backup Planning Tool for Saving your Files and Data](#)

On the pages that follow you will find screenshots of the actual Table of Contents from the full eBook.

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