

# **Mozart's Digital Concerto**

*The Quick and Easy Guide to  
Classical Music Downloads*

by Marc Gunn

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## ***Free Music Downloads F.A.Q.***

<i>What are MP3s?</i> .....	4
<i>Where Do I Download?</i> .....	4
<i>How Do I Download?</i> .....	5
<i>The Legalities of Downloading MP3s</i> .....	6
<i>What are Media Players?</i> .....	7

## ***Free Music Download Websites***

<i>SoundClick.com</i> .....	9
<i>Download.com</i> .....	10
<i>Amazon.com</i> .....	11
<i>IUMA</i> .....	12
<i>Piano Society</i> .....	13
<i>MIT Chamber Chorus</i> .....	14
<i>Classical Cat</i> .....	15
<i>AudioStreet.net</i> .....	16
<i>Ampcast.com</i> .....	17
<i>GarageBand.com</i> .....	18
<i>PeopleSound.com</i> .....	19
<i>Internet Live Music Archive</i> .....	20
<i>DMusic.com</i> .....	21
<i>Lulu</i> .....	22
<i>BBC Classical Radio</i> .....	23
<i>Classical Music MP3 Webring</i> .....	24
<i>Classical Midi Connection</i> .....	25
<i>ClassicalUSA.com</i> .....	26
<i>Vitaminic</i> .....	27
<b><i>9 Paid Classical Download Websites</i></b> .....	28

*Free Music Download*  
*Frequently Asked Questions*

## **What are MP3s?**

An MP3 is a compressed version of a digital audio file. The sound quality remains relatively intact and the compressed file can be sent and received rather quickly due to its smaller size, about 1/12th the original. MP3s can be downloaded, emailed or traded across P2P (peer to peer) networks. They are used globally on the web and are universally accepted by Media Players.

The term "MP3" is short for "Moving Picture Experts Group Audio Layer 3" (or MPEG-1 Audio Layer 3).

## **Where Do I Download?**

In order to download MP3s you need to know where to go. This guide will guide where to go to download classical music. The book is divided up into free downloads and paid downloads.

There are thousands of websites that offer free classical music downloads. The vast majority of legal websites are maintained by independent musicians hoping to build a fan base and sell CDs by giving away free music. These websites are not always the easiest to find. Fortunately, there are numerous directories and aggregations of classical

musicians. These are the main websites I will guide you to in this section of the book.

If you want quicker access to classical music downloads, I suggest you try one of the paid download websites. It took the Major Labels long enough to license their music. But now you can you download albums or individual tracks from Major Label artists. Are these any better than the free music? Not necessarily, but they are quick and easier to access in many cases.

Another way to download is P2P programs. While these are valuable promotional tools for Classical musicians, they are often overrun by spyware, adware, and worse illegal music downloads. Since there is no way of knowing what is legal and what is not, your best bet is to steer clear of those networks.

## **How Do I Download?**

Downloading music from the websites below is fairly easy to do. It's as easy as clicking the link

On a PC, right-click the button on your mouse and "save as". Then find the correct folder to store your music on you

computer. On a Mac, click the button and hold it down. Then find a place to store your new music.

## **The Legalities of Downloading MP3s**

Downloading music is NOT illegal. In fact, it is a huge market and profitable means of promoting music.

Unfortunately, there are a significant number of individuals who do download music illegally. As a result, the music industry is doing it's best to prosecute illegal downloaders. This makes it hard for the independent musicians to make a name for themselves, and that's a crying shame.

Make sure you pay attention to copyright laws. The free music download websites I list offer legal music downloads direct from the artists or labels releasing the music.

However, if you are looking for a particular song from a record label, I suggest you use the Paid Download websites and purchase the MP3 legally.

If you do elect to download the music of independent musicians, I have one strong urging. If you like the music, buy the CD. This is how many musicians make their living. So your CD orders go a long way to help them continue offering free music.

## What are Media Players?

Media players are the software-based audio and video players that enable you to hear music, watch videos and more. Some players specialize in one thing (such as playing MP3s) while others do a wide variety of tasks. Your operating system comes with a basic default media player- in Windows, it's the Windows Media Player (WMP) and in Mac, it's iTunes. Many media players also support legal download sites like Rhapsody, eMusic, Napster and the iTunes online store.

Many of the most popular media players try to do it all, while some deal with different file formats (like RealAudio or Windows Media files). Often is necessary to have more than one player to be able to access all the various audio and video files that you encounter.

With a Windows system, download free basic versions of RealPlayer and Quicktime to compliment the default Windows Media Player. Those three players will allow you the greatest functionality to any free music you encounter online. Though if you are sticking to just MP3s, then Windows Media Player will do the trick.

*Free Classical Music  
Download Websites*

## SoundClick.com

<http://www.soundclick.com/genres/charts.cfm?genre=Classical>

When MP3.com up and died a few years ago, SoundClick became one of my favorite repositories for free music downloads. The classical music is no exception. There are thousands of high-quality classical MP3s.

SoundClick sets itself apart from other free music download websites by its simplicity and easy of use. The charts feature *hifi* and *lofi* download links so you can sample the music before you download it. They also give you the option of voting on individual sounds as *hot* or a *flop*.

Artists are allowed to promote themselves to stand out on the charts. Just remember that these are not always the best artists to download. Most the artists I inspected were original artists performing in a classical music style using a synthesizer.

My suggestion is to look between the ones that are highlighted and seek traditional classical songs to find some of the finest classical music downloads.

## Download.com

[http://music.download.com/2001-7979\\_32-0.html?tag=nav\\_dir&](http://music.download.com/2001-7979_32-0.html?tag=nav_dir&)

Download.com knows that classical music fans are discerning folks. That's why they carefully define what they consider classical music. Since there are many artists who consider their musical classical by sound but are not necessarily performed by classical artists like Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart, this distinguishing ability sets Download.com apart when searching for classical music.

The downside to Download.com is that there are no streaming links so you can sample the music before you download it. However, they maintain a talented editorial staff that will help guide your classical music searches. They are talented at finding the artists that best fit in the genre, however, they don't feature all of the best music, to be sure. I found a lot of choice groups who were not featured in their editorial listing, and I thought it a major shame.

## Amazon.com

<http://www.free-musicdownloads.net/classical>

Amazon.com surprisingly has one of the best collections free classical music downloads. More and more record labels are recognizing the power of free MP3s to sell their CDs. Consequently, Amazon started the Digital Music Downloads section of their website to help labels sell more CDs.

Amazon now has a decent-sized list of free classical music. Many of your favorite songs will be found there recorded by a variety of artists. Amazon has good Editorial Recommendation section too. Those recommendations are usually biased to major labels so you will miss out on a lot of the independent classical music downloads, however, it is usually the independent artists that stand out best in the classical music charts.

Best of all, if you like the MP3s and want to buy the CD, Amazon has a quick link that will take you to their powerful online shopping experience so you can buy the entire album.

# IUMA

<http://artists.iuma.com/Genre/CL/>

IUMA is one of the oldest free music download website. It was created in 1993 by a couple of musicians who wanted to create an Internet Underground Music Archive, IUMA for short. The website was designed for the independent musicians, and it's been around so long that there are thousands upon thousands of bands who've had their music there for years.

The downside to the years of existence is that the website is old and not easy to maneuver around. There are a few classical gems, but they are very few. This is the last place I'd go to find free classical music downloads.

## **Piano Society**

<http://www.pianosociety.com/>

Piano Society.com offers hours of listening pleasure for free. It is a free promotional resource for pianists by allowing pianists to upload their music to share with the world. There are over forty artists with hundreds of downloadable MP3s.

As a special bonus, they also have a special section for composers. The website lists information about the composers and then offers a quick link to the recordings and the free MP3s. Then you can find out what the pianist is, and if you so desire visit their websites to buy the CDs.

This is a fantastic website for any classical music download enthusiast.

## MIT Chamber Chorus

<http://hebb.mit.edu/FreeMusic/>

In general, I prefer to list directories of websites with free classical music downloads. However, this group had a surprising number of free classical MP3s that I thought it was worth mentioning.

The MIT Chamber Chorus is a group of about thirty undergraduate and graduate singers representing many disciplines at the Institute. It performs two concerts each year under the direction of Dr. William Cutter. Musical focus is placed on standard chamber repertoire for small vocal ensemble. Members of the chorus recently performed in Vienna and Budapest with the MIT Tour Choir. The chorus has also sung in the past with the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra, the MIT Wind Ensemble, and the MIT Symphony Orchestra.

# Classical Cat

<http://www.classiccat.net/>

Classic Cat is a directory with links to over 2500 free to download classical performances on the internet, sorted by composer and work. To find the classical music you select a composer, a work and a performing musician. Then you are transported to the page of the musician(s) where the music is hosted and you can download it.

Some sites have a limited bandwidth and are at times overcrowded. Others are regularly down. In those cases you are advised to bookmark the page and come back on another day. The links on Classic Cat are regularly checked so the percentage of permanent dead links should be below 5%.

For the hosting sites Amazon, Soundclick and Whitekeys you need to register. This is free and is asked when you start your first download there. This site is very well-organized and a great resource.

# AudioStreet.net

<http://www.audiostreet.net/genre.aspx?genreid=45>

AudioStreet.net came together literally overnight. There was no planning, no board meetings, no business lunches, no story boards, no advertising budgets, no marketing meetings.... just a crazy idea, and a group of driven individuals willing to make it a reality.

This site allows musicians to carve out their own home on the web, to establish a name for themselves, and to interact with other musicians and fans from all around the globe.

It features a nice selection of free classical music downloads including some popular contemporary classical songs. And there is not registration required to access the free Mp3s. Just click through various sub-genres or scan the Top 10 Classical Songs or Latest New Song lists to get quick access to great music. If you are looking for something special, you can visit their interactive forums and chat with other classical music fans.

# Ampcast.com

<http://www.ampcast.com/music/browse.php?id=300&typ=top&idx=0>

The Ampcast.com web site arose from the growing needs and changes of the musical community. Founded in 1998, it is dedicated to introducing and exposing new musicians and bands as well as providing a forum for the promotion of more established musical artists.

To that end, it's built a respectable collection of classical music downloads by independent artists covering a nice assortment of classical genres. You have the option to listen to the songs before you download, and you can rate them or if you join the site (it's free), you can add the songs to your personal playlist to listen online at your leisure.

Ampcast allows you to buy CDs straight from their website. So if you like what you hear, you can easily purchase more of the music from the same artist.

# GarageBand.com

<http://www.garageband.com/genre/classical>

GarageBand has led the new music revolution since the demise of MP3.com. In fact, when MP3.com closed its doors, GarageBand worked out a special deal with Vivendi to invite MP3.com artists to their website. Add to this the grass-roots promotion the site has done, and you can see why it is a favorite among artists for building exposure, exchanging ideas, finding new fans, and furthering their careers.

The website uses their own Flash software for featuring music. This means you don't need a Media player to listen to the music. That's a very nice convenience. There's also no need to sign up to their website though they have an excellent Members service if you do.

GarageBand is known for giving feedback to musicians. If you like the music, review it. Artists appreciate the kind open responses, and it helps build your reputation in the community.

And if you want CDs, GarageBand is partnered with CDBaby, the #1 independent music store on the net.

# PeopleSound.com

<http://www.peoplesound.com/music/classical/>

PeopleSound is a favorite free music download website in Europe and the UK. They are the only site where emerging and unsigned artists are showcased alongside major and independent label talent. Their mission is to host the broadest selection of music across the genre spectrum, and to allow music lovers to hear as much music as possible for free. Because of this mission, they have a large collection of classical music.

Unfortunately, the site is difficult to maneuver. You need to be a registered user to access many of the downloads, and while it is free to register, it's a hassle. Plus, songs are not easily categorized.

If you decide to use this site, I'd suggest using Classical Cat to find and download the music.

## Internet Live Music Archive

<http://www.archive.org/audio/>

The Internet Music is a community committed to providing the highest quality live concerts in a lossless, downloadable format. The Internet Archive has teamed up with etree.org to preserve and archive as many live concerts as possible for current and future generations to enjoy. All music in this Collection is from trade-friendly artists and is strictly noncommercial, both for access here and for any further distribution. Artists' commercial releases are off-limits.

This is an exciting development in free and legal music downloads. Unfortunately, finding specifically classical music downloads is not an easy task. If you know who you are looking for, you may be able to find music fairly easily, otherwise, it's worth a casual glance to see if there's anyone you know available.

## **DMusic.com**

<http://music.dmusic.com/genre/classical/>

DMusic is one of the oldest online digital music communities. They built website technology to allow musicians to plug their official websites in to their platform, enabling them to add far more interactive components to their website than they normally could.

In addition DMusic.com also provides digital music news, reviews, information and a highly interactive environment for users to interact with their favorite DMusic musicians and other DMusic users.

The site does not have a lot of classical music downloads, but the ones they do have are quite enjoyable.

# Lulu

<http://music.lulu.com/category/6046>

Founded in 2002, Lulu is the web's premier independent publishing marketplace for digital do-it-yourselfers. It's the only place on the web where you can publish, sell and buy any and all things digital — books, music, comics, photographs, movies and well, you get the idea. They simply provide the tools that leave control of content in the hands of the people who created the content.

This site is not a haven for classical music downloads, however, there are quite a few, varying from free MP3s to free sheet music of classical pieces. Plus, there are opportunities to buy classical music CDs and books.

## **BBC Classical Radio**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/classical/index.shtml>

The BBC is well-known for quality programming. But many do not realize that it also offers numerous free classical music downloads.

Visit this website often for some wonderful classical music radio shows and new classical MP3s from the masters.

## **Classical Music MP3 Webring**

<http://p.webring.com/hub?ring=classicalmp3>

This is a webring is dedicated to centralizing all websites with classical music MP3 files on them. The site features quality classical music from classical music artists.

At present, there are only about forty websites with free classical MP3s listed, but it's a good starting resource for finding more free classical music.

# Classical Midi Connection

<http://www.classicalmidiconnection.com/>

The Classical MIDI Connection is an endeavor to provide the classical music enthusiast with an easy method of accessing MIDI sequences of classical music. You can browse the site and listen to and/or save any of the sequences available. While visiting you might also want to take advantage of some of the other features available in the CMC.

If you don't mind the fairly generic sounds offered by MIDI, then this is a great website for you. The site has a huge collection of pieces from all the masters throughout the centuries. Again, the only drawback is that it sounds like synthesized music.

# ClassicalUSA.com

<http://classicalusa.com/>

Paul Baker's ClassicalUSA.com bills itself as "Your link to Music, Arts, & Entertainment!" And it is one heck of a guide.

ClassicalUSA.com has links to hundreds of quality classical music websites. Unfortunately, finding free music downloads is not easy to do. There are no direct links, however, there are links that will guide you to just about every classical music website online. For that reason, ClassicalUSA.com is a necessary link for any classical music fan.

## Vitaminic

<http://www.vitaminic.com/main/classical>

Vitaminic is best-known among Europeans. The site features thousands of free MP3 tracks from more than 20,000 artists and over 600 labels from all over the world of all different genres. All songs are provided by emerging bands and musicians who have chosen to use the Internet to promote themselves and their music.

The site has a small but excellent collection of classical music from mostly European musicians. There are hundreds of classical music downloads that will keep you entertained for days.

## 9 Paid Classical Download Websites

There are dozens of websites that sell classical MP3s. Here are my top nine picks of paid classical music websites:

1. Apple iTunes

<http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/>

2. MP3Tunes

[http://www.mp3tunes.com/index.php?genre\\_id=220](http://www.mp3tunes.com/index.php?genre_id=220)

3. Rhapsody

<http://www.listen.com/>

4. Napster

<http://www.napster.com/>

5. MusicMatch

[http://www.musicmatch.com/download/music\\_intro.htm](http://www.musicmatch.com/download/music_intro.htm)

6. BuyMusic

<http://www.buymusic.com/>

7. Classical Music Archives

<http://www.classicalarchives.com/>

8. eClassical

<http://www.eclassical.com/>

9. eMusic

<http://www.emusic.com/>