

## More Than Just a Budget Label: A History of Naxos\*

### Introduction

At present writing, Naxos is one of only three vendors that offer institutional licenses to streaming audio content in the United States. Academic and scholarly communities are the primary customer bases of Alexander Street Press and New World Records, which respectively host Classical Music Library and the Database of Recorded American Music; Naxos, on the other hand, nurtures a long-standing reputation as a budget record label for the general public. Yet, contrary to these ostensible customer priorities, Naxos's flagship streaming audio database, Naxos Music Library, is widely subscribed to by libraries both in the United States and internationally, and has consistently outstripped by far its two competitors in the sheer number of albums and tracks it offers.<sup>1</sup> Due to the important library service niche filled by Naxos's streaming audio databases, as well as the abundance of budget recordings the Naxos label continues to release, music librarians often keep close tabs on Naxos's activities, products, and related news.

The extent to which libraries figure in Naxos's overall business outlook, however, remains unclear. A series of Music Library Association Listserv (MLA-L) discussion threads that transpired over two days in early October 2010 suggested that while music librarians seemed to expect a typical education- or academia-oriented library-vendor relationship with Naxos's representatives, those expectations were not being met.<sup>2</sup> These experiences, considered in

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1 Naxos Music Library, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxosmusiclibrary.com>; Classical Music Library, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://clmu.alexanderstreet.com>; DRAM, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.dramonline.org>.

2 Multiple authors to mla-l@listserv.indiana.edu, "a bit of Naxos rant..." "Naxos Recordings," "Naxos - plus ca change," "Naxos - constructive (I hope) suggestion," October 7-8, 2010, e-mails to Music Library Association Mailing List, archived at <http://listserv.indiana.edu/archives/mla-l.html>.

combination with the success of Naxos products among academic libraries, make it hard to ascertain where educational institutions stand in Naxos's commercial priorities, and, accordingly, what librarians could realistically expect of their vendor relationships with Naxos.

This brief history of Naxos as an international music business aims to provide a clearer picture of the company's commercial interests by surveying not only Naxos's primary activities over the past twenty-three years as a record label, but also as a publisher, distributor, and a vendor of electronic content. It pays particular attention to Naxos's interactions with the music information environment, as well as to the development of its United States subsidiary, Naxos of America, Inc. A handful of peer-reviewed articles and more substantial critical reviews aside, I culled this history by skimming more than 150 brief industry news-bites and product reviews to identify Naxos's major initiatives over the years. I hope this article will therefore serve as a convenience to any librarians who may wonder where libraries and library users fit into the broader picture and long-term trends of Naxos's commercial activities.

### Part 1: 1987-1997

#### **Founding**

Many descriptions of Naxos begin simply by saying that the company was founded in Hong Kong in 1987 by the German entrepreneur Klaus Heymann. The corporate autobiography at Naxos's website cogently positions Naxos Music Ltd. as a logical extension of Heymann's ongoing business activities, and details how it became his greatest entrepreneurial success in both revenue and brand recognition. In spite of Naxos.com's obvious self-promotional bias, the website currently offers the most thorough published account of the company's founding, and so I draw almost exclusively from this source for the following overview.

Many of us may not be familiar with Heymann's name, but his career was already well-established in the music distribution and recording industries by the time of Naxos's founding.

By 1987, Heymann had been living and working in Hong Kong for twenty years. He had originally been sent there by an American newspaper, *The Overseas Weekly*, to help establish its new Hong Kong office, but he left the paper after two years to found a new business. The Pacific Mail Order System, as Heymann named it, eventually found its niche as a mail-order company that catered specially to American soldiers in Vietnam, including in its catalog Bose loudspeakers and Revox tape recorders.<sup>3</sup> After the Vietnam War ended, the company, newly renamed as Pacific Music, became Bose and Revox's primary distributor in Hong Kong and China.

Heymann's new business relations with Bose and Revox eventually opened a path for him into music distribution. While organizing promotional classical music concerts for Bose and Revox in Hong Kong, Heymann brought in foreign musicians who discovered that their recordings were unavailable on the island. Learning of this, Heymann began importing and distributing classical music recordings while continuing his dealings in music equipment. This venture was successful enough that, by the early 1980s, Pacific Music had expanded its music recording distribution to Southeast Asia and begun including pop music in its catalog.<sup>4</sup>

The success of the Bose and Revox concerts also brought Heymann other opportunities. The Board of the Hong Kong Philharmonic recruited Heymann as a member, where he went on to chair the fundraising committee and become the orchestra's Honorary General Manager. He also met his wife, the Japanese violinist Takako Nishizaki, through the Philharmonic.<sup>5</sup> Heymann subsequently launched his first recording label, HK, in 1978, producing Nishizaki's performance of *The Butterfly Lovers*. This recording of the folk-music-inspired Chinese violin concerto became a multi-million-copy bestselling record. Given this successful debut, Heymann

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3 "About Us: The Naxos Story—Klaus Heymann," Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxos.com/aboutus.asp?page=klaus>.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

continued to build HK's catalog with more Chinese concert repertoire performed by Asian orchestras.

Over time, the orchestras that recorded for HK expressed increasing interest in recording Western classical music, to which Heymann responded by creating the Marco Polo label. He established this charismatically named classical rarities label in 1982, and gave it a market niche by offering only uncommonly recorded Western works.<sup>6</sup> In 1986, Heymann began to make plans for the budget classical music label that would become Naxos. Its business strategy would be its commitment to low retail prices, which Heymann saw as a way to make compact discs price-competitive with LPs and cassettes in Asia. These older recording formats had long been sold at much lower prices in Asia than in Europe and North America. Naxos's first CD releases in 1987 were sold at the price of LPs in Asia, and offered recordings licensed non-exclusively from a German company.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Early Years**

Heymann expanded Naxos's market to Europe soon after the company's successful launch in Asia. It was at this point that the market disadvantage of non-exclusive licenses became apparent. Naxos's European sales languished, leading Heymann to turn his company away from licensed material and towards releasing entirely new recordings instead. Naxos thus became a fully operational recording company "committed to offering both beginners and more established collectors a full range of classical music—in state-of-the-art digital recordings and CD-length playing times—with performances at least comparable to the best that the major record companies had to offer, yet at budget price."<sup>8</sup>

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6 "About Us: The Naxos Story—The First Recordings," Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxos.com/aboutus.asp?page=recordings>.

7 "About Us: The Naxos Story—The Birth of Naxos," Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxos.com/aboutus.asp?page=birth>.

8 "About Us: The Naxos Story—The Naxos Secret," Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxos.com/aboutus.asp?page=secret>.

Heymann's basic business strategy for Naxos was to issue inexpensive recordings of serviceable-to-good performances of a comprehensive range of classical oeuvres, and it worked. Over the course of the early and mid-1990s, Naxos became a major international presence in the classical recording industry. Today, Naxos operates as a group of international companies headquartered in Hong Kong with additional offices in the United Kingdom, Germany, and Scandinavia. It is the primary arm of its parent corporation, HNH International, the present-day incarnation of Heymann's former Pacific Music Company named after Heymann's son's initials. Naxos Music Ltd. also has subsidiaries in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Australia, Denmark, and Finland. At its founding in 1987, Naxos retailed its CDs worldwide at about US\$6 apiece regardless of local costs of living. This price has climbed to around US\$9 today, a figure nonetheless below what inflation rates would project at around US\$11.55.<sup>9</sup>

By 1993, six years after its founding, Naxos had cornered 8% of the world classical music CD market. Turning over US\$25 million annually, Naxos's consumer base was still largely Asian, but the company had begun making inroads into Western markets.<sup>10</sup> A year later, Naxos made its first recording in the United States with the San Diego Symphony, marking "the first time an established American orchestra has figured in a project of new recordings to be marketed at budget prices."<sup>11</sup> Naxos grew around 15% to 20% from 1994 to 1995.<sup>12</sup> In a 1995 interview with *Opera News*, Heymann estimated Naxos at second or third place in the world classical music recording market. Naxos established a studio in London that year, beginning a

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9 Price as most commonly listed for single-disc releases at NaxosDirect.com, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxosdirect.com>. Standard price inflation estimated using the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator, accessed December 15, 2010, [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

10 Simon Twiston-Davies, "HNH International: The Cheap Sound of Music," *Asian Business* 29, no. 10 (October 1993): 16.

11 "Naxos Embarks on Bold New U.S. Program of Berlioz, Liszt," *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 106, no. 6 (February 5, 1994): 34.

12 Bradley Bambarger, "Classical Labels Meld Art, Commerce: Naxos Rewrites Industry Rulebook," *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 109, no. 25 (June 21, 1997): 1, 84-85.

major shift of its operations from Asia and Eastern Europe to the West. Heymann also cited Naxos's most recent market survey as showing—as they had hoped from the start—that “serious collectors” were now the company's primary consumers.<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting to note that what Heymann originally described as the “full range of classical music” appears to have shifted over time. Naxos began with the self-proclaimed goal of offering classical masterpieces for the lowest prices around.<sup>14</sup> However, product reviews and industry news reports from the early 1990s show that, even at that early stage, Naxos already had a special penchant for offering complete sets and cycles, which tended to include many esoteric works of a featured composer alongside his more famous selections.<sup>15</sup> This trend continues to manifest in more recent recording series that I will discuss later. Hence, contrary to the masterpiece approach that Heymann initially declared, it seems that Naxos has actually inclined towards comprehensiveness in its catalog development instead.

### **Building a Reputation**

Klaus Heymann has remained in the media spotlight as Naxos's visionary founder and leader for the past twenty-three years. This is partly because Heymann's budget business strategy for Naxos (albeit with various new interpretations over time) has continued to bring the label market success, and partly because Heymann himself has continued to actively manage and direct Naxos's business operations. Not all the publicity has been positive, however. References to Heymann in trade magazines with such phrases as “*bête noire* of the majors” and articles couched in generally disdainful tones suggest that his high-profit business practices have earned him uneven respect in the music industry.<sup>16</sup> Norman Lebrecht, the famous British music critic, published a book in 2007 where he painted in four pages a particularly unsavory picture of

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13 John W. Freeman, “The Cutting Edge,” *Opera News* 60, no. 4 (October 1995): 16.

14 “About Us,” Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxos.com/aboutus.asp>.

15 “Naxos Embarks,” *Billboard* 106, no. 6 (February 5, 1994): 34.

16 Phillip Sommerich, “Cutbacks auf Naxos,” *Classical Music*, no. 546 (January 6, 1996): 25; Twiston-Davies, *Asian Business* 29, no. 10 (October 1993): 16.

Heymann's professional persona.<sup>17</sup> Heymann took Penguin to court the same year and had *Maestros, Masterpieces and Madness: The Secret Life and Shameful Death of the Classical Record Industry* withdrawn from commercial circulation.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, Lebrecht apparently had "little but praise for Naxos" ten years prior in his 1997 publication with Pocket Books, *When The Music Stops: Managers, Maestros & The Corporate Murder Of Classical Music*.<sup>19</sup>

A long-standing topic of contention amongst music industry commentators is how Heymann has managed over the years to keep Naxos's expenses low, and thereby successfully continued to offer recordings at budget prices. It is a well-known fact that Naxos does not award its performers royalties, but rather compensates them with upfront, lump-sum fees instead. This has been remarked upon frequently in industry media not only by third-party commentators but also in Naxos publicity material and by Heymann himself.<sup>20</sup> Subject to debate is whether Naxos actually denies musicians fair financial rewards in order to support its high-profit budget offerings, or if, as Naxos's website and Heymann himself frequently explain, it actually pays musicians more in its one-time fees than the performers could generally hope to earn via royalty-based payment contracts.<sup>21</sup>

Another cost-saving method—frequently noted by third-party commentators and consistently denied by Naxos in the early and mid-1990s—was the hiring of less expensive Eastern European professionals for its performances and production. Countering this accusation,

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17 Norman Lebrecht, *Maestros, Masterpieces and Madness: The Secret Life and Shameful Death of the Classical Record Industry* (London: Penguin, 2007), 105-108.

18 "Soundboard: Naxos Wins Court Fight Against Penguin," *Gig* 3, no. 20 (October 23, 2007): 17; "Penguin Pays Out," *Bookseller*, no. 5304 (October 26, 2007): 6; Phillip Sommerich, "News: Lebrecht Book Withdrawn in Court Clash," *Classical Music*, no. 851 (October 27, 2007): 7.

19 Bamberger, *Billboard* 109, no. 25 (June 21, 1997): 1, 84-85.

20 Twiston-Davies, *Asian Business* 29, no. 10 (October 1993): 16; "Frequently Asked Questions and Answers," Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxos.com/aboutus.asp?page=FAQ>.

21 "Frequently Asked Questions and Answers," Naxos.com; Bamberger, *Billboard* 109, no. 25 (June 21, 1997): 1, 84-85. An undated email interview conducted with Australian soprano Merlyn Quaife implies that Quaife received only complimentary copies and no other financial remuneration for her late 1990s recordings of Manuel de Falla songs with Naxos. Patrick Lo, "Klaus Heymann Auf Naxos: Cheap Price but Quality Music! A Case Study of a Successful Western Classical Music Company Founded in Hong Kong," *The International Journal of the Arts in Society* 2, no. 5 (2008): 29.

Heymann claimed that the cost of recording in Eastern Europe was actually comparable to that in the West. As he explained, greater availability of co-producers in the West helped Naxos reduce its production costs there; while in Eastern Europe, professional musicians' lower hiring fees were counterbalanced by the fact that Naxos had to pay for all the production infrastructure such as venues and equipment.<sup>22</sup>

Naxos has generally been willing, however, to acknowledge the use of two major cost-cutting strategies in its operations. From the start, Naxos has supported its budget pricing by selling lots of copies of each recording, a strategy it still employs today. The company has historically sold an average of around 50,000 copies per CD, which is five times the average number sold by other classical music labels.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Naxos has repeatedly acknowledged its preference for hiring lesser-known artists who, accordingly, cost less to record. Heymann and Naxos's representatives often tout this as the company's commitment to putting the music ahead of the artist, a philosophy that they say makes them stand out in a business that is increasingly star-driven, and that allows them to be kinder to consumers' pockets in the process.<sup>24</sup> They argue that it is possible to record consistently decent—if not sometimes brilliant—performances with lesser-known artists, a claim that Naxos has validated many times over with the positive critical reviews and awards it has garnered.<sup>25</sup> Supporting this music-over-all philosophy, Naxos also claims to duplicate recordings in their catalog as little as possible.<sup>26</sup> Taken in conjunction with the label's afore-mentioned penchant for releasing complete sets and cycles, this avoidance of duplication suggests that Naxos practices the type of collector's drive that favors complete

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22 Freeman, 16.

23 "Frequently Asked Questions and Answers," Naxos.com; Lo, *International Journal of the Arts in Society* 2, no. 5 (2008): 23.

24 George Adams, "Interview with Klaus Heymann," Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxos.com/aboutus.asp?page=interview>; Royal S. Brown, "Klaus Heymann's Third Interview with *Fanfare*," *Fanfare: The Magazine for Serious Record Collectors* 20, no. 4 (April 1997): 18-20.

25 Bambarger, *Billboard* 109, no. 25 (June 21, 1997): 1, 84-85.

26 "The Philosophy of Naxos," Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxos.com/aboutus.asp?page=philosophy>.



representation of bodies of works over collecting multiple renditions of the same works.

Other smaller cost-cutting strategies that Heymann has mentioned include not providing translations of opera librettos and not accepting pre-selected “package” casts for their opera recordings.<sup>27</sup> In the first decade of its operations, Naxos was also sometimes able to sign on stars for low fees by offering them recording projects that were unusual, or that enhanced a less developed area of their professional portfolio. One common approach the company took was to recruit musicians who had well-developed live performance careers but had never recorded commercially. Heymann has described this approach as the label’s interest in finding new voices.<sup>28</sup> Naxos has also continued to save money by streamlining its publicity material and CD packaging. In a 1997 interview, Heymann expressed special excitement at the prospect of DVD-Audio becoming the standard format for distributing audio. Since much more music could be packed on onto one DVD than one CD, this would potentially allow Naxos to save on peripheral materials like liner notes and jewel cases.<sup>29</sup> Warner Teldec would eventually beat Naxos, however, to become the first classical label to offer music on the DVD-Audio format.<sup>30</sup>

By the end of 1996, Naxos was producing 75% of its recordings in Western Europe and North America. The budget label led the British and Taiwanese classical music markets, and its catalog numbered approximately 1,400 recordings comprising over 6,000 musical works.<sup>31</sup> Naxos’s focus on providing classical recordings at low cost, featuring a comprehensive range of works in good or at least decent performances by lesser-known musicians, was clearly succeeding as a business strategy.

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27 Freeman, 16.

28 To quote Heymann: “Wagner singers are hard to find, and the whole point is to present new voices—new at least on recordings. One of our criteria is to cast our operas with singers who haven’t already done their roles on another label, or who perhaps have never recorded anything. That’s why we’re able to get singers such as Peter Seiffert, who was willing to do *Hollander* for us because it was his first chance to record a complete opera.” John W. Freeman, “The cutting edge,” *Opera News* 60, no. 4 (October 1995): 16.

29 Brown, *Fanfare* 20, no. 4 (April 1997): 28.

30 Phillip Sommerich, “Records: Bold Vision,” *Classical Music*, no. 677 (February 17, 2001): 28.

31 Lo, *International Journal of the Arts in Society* 2, no. 5 (2008): 19.

## Part 2: 1997-2004

A flurry of media attention in 1997 marked the tenth anniversary of Naxos's founding.<sup>32</sup> HNH International, Naxos's parent corporation, was still privately owned by Heymann and his wife, who were respectively CEO and chief artistic advisor.<sup>33</sup> Although sales in the classical music recording industry had declined dramatically over the preceding two years, and full-price record labels suffered financially, Naxos had continued to grow at a slim rate around 2% to 3%.<sup>34</sup> It had scaled back its original recording plans in 1996 from 300 to 150 projects, but the company appeared to be doing well as a whole. As Heymann stated for an October 1996 interview, the label also had about 400 completed recording projects waiting for production, "enough for four years of Naxos releases," and an additional 130 projects scheduled.<sup>35</sup> Commanding 70% of the classical music market in Norway and Sweden and 17% of the United Kingdom's in 1997,<sup>36</sup> Naxos had proven its market durability and could now claim a reputation as a "major mini-independent." The label celebrated its tenth year of operation with multiple concerts worldwide.<sup>37</sup>

### **New Repertory**

Secure in the financial solvency of its budget approach to classical recording, Naxos began to expand in new directions. Genre-wise, the company ventured ambitiously into jazz and world music, creating new sub-labels for each. The first Naxos Jazz recording was released in

32 Bambarger, *Billboard* 109, no. 25 (June 21, 1997): 1, 84-85; Bambarger, "Distributed Labels: Respected 'Members of the Family' That Cover Uncommon Territory Well," *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 109, no. 44 (November 1, 1997): 48; Bambarger, "Naxos: Ten-Year Anniversary," *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 109, no. 44 (November 1, 1997): 44; Brown, *Fanfare* 20, no. 4 (April 1997): 16, 18-20, 22, 25-26, 28; Andrew Stewart, "Cut-rating the Classics in the Kingdom" *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 109, no. 15 (April 12, 1997): 32; James Jolly, "Passing Notes: Naxos at Ten," *Gramophone* 75, no. 889 (June 1997): 22, 24; "News: Naxos Celebrates 10 Years," *Classic CD*, no. 87 (July 1997): 12; Sommerich, "In the News: Naxos Goes Round the World on a Budget," *BBC Music Magazine* 5, no. 7 (March 1997): 49; Sommerich, "Records: Slipped Discs," *Classical Music*, no. 573 (January 25, 1997): 22.

33 Brown, *Fanfare* 20, no. 4 (April 1997): 18.

34 Sommerich, *Classical Music*, no. 546 (January 6, 1996): 14.

35 Sommerich, *Classical Music*, no. 573 (January 25, 1997): 22.

36 "News: Naxos Celebrates 10 Years," *Classic CD*, no. 87 (July 1997): 12.

37 Sommerich, *BBC Music Magazine* 5, no. 7 (March 1997): 49.

March 1997. Describing the new jazz label, Heymann said:

It will probably be a little bit more expensive than the regular Naxos, because it's our own copyright. But basically it's the same idea: we record front-line but not-yet-well-known jazz artists or people who have been around for a long time but have never had a chance to play front-line jazz or make front-line recordings.<sup>38</sup>

Naxos had evidently expanded its reliable business strategy of recording good performances by more obscure musicians from classical to jazz. It is unclear from Heymann's description, however, in what way copyright affected the company's financial operations for its jazz label. Sommerich's news report for the *BBC Music Magazine* from the same year suggests that Naxos now had to support a substantial legal department that had previously been unnecessary.<sup>39</sup> Exactly what the new legal burdens were, however, remained unspecified. Today, Naxos's intellectual property is managed worldwide by Naxos Rights International Limited.<sup>40</sup>

In 2000, Naxos launched its world music label, Naxos World, with an album of Indian classical music performed by internationally renowned sitar player Irshad Khan. Heymann had expressed reservations in 1997 about recording world music, citing the high cost of flying musicians to countries where Naxos had studios at their disposal and then providing them with accommodations.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, the Naxos World label survives today with several highly acclaimed recordings and a relatively diverse representation of musical cultures.<sup>42</sup>

Naxos also began to record more and more obscure repertory in the late 1990s, corraling works outside the Western classical canon in its pursuit of complete collections. By 1997, it had begun several long-term projects to record all of Liszt's piano music, Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas, Monteverdi's madrigals, and Scriabin's symphonic and piano works.<sup>43</sup> To these, the

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38 Brown, *Fanfare* 20, no. 4 (April 1997): 18.

39 Sommerich, *Classical Music*, no. 573 (January 25, 1997): 22.

40 "Frequently Asked Questions and Answers," Naxos.com.

41 Brown, *Fanfare* 20, no. 4 (April 1997): 26.

42 "Naxos World," Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, [http://www.naxos.com/labels/naxos\\_world.htm](http://www.naxos.com/labels/naxos_world.htm).

43 Sommerich, *Classical Music*, no. 573 (January 25, 1997): 22.

company added its most ambitious project to date: the American Classics series. Naxos describes this critically acclaimed series as featuring “the greatest American composers both familiar and unfamiliar.”<sup>44</sup> Launched in 1999 with a reissue of an album of Robert Muczynski’s flute works (previously released under the Marco Polo label), American Classics today has over 200 recordings in its catalog and continues to grow.

Naxos’s late 1990s forays into non-standard repertoire extended backwards historically as well laterally across genres and nationalities. In 1998, The Immortal Performances Recorded Music Society gave Naxos exclusive access to its archives. The majority of its holdings were NBC’s recordings of its live broadcasts from 1935 to 1943, numbering over 1,500 broadcasts in total. The recordings were particularly well-preserved, and Naxos launched the label Naxos Historical the same year with remasterings of the Immortal Performances archival contents, beginning with performances by the Metropolitan Opera.<sup>45</sup> Earlier in the decade, however, Naxos had already begun a different historical series that focused on unusual older music rather than older performances. This series of little-known, mostly orchestral 18th-century works depended upon Heymann’s founding in 1995 of a music publishing firm in New Zealand in partnership with musicologist Allan Badley. Named Artaria Editions, the publishing company provided Naxos with scores of works otherwise unavailable in modern, typeset editions. As Heymann put it, “we order the microfilm from an archive somewhere, and we publish the score and parts. We record it first; but then we make it [the scores and parts] available to other people as well.”<sup>46</sup> By 1997, Artaria Editions had published about 120 works and presently continues to produce about 100 scores each year. The publisher’s online direct-purchase catalog prominently displays links to streaming audio clips of each work from Naxos Music Library.<sup>47</sup>

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44 “American Classics,” Naxos.com, accessed December 15, 2010, [http://www.naxos.com/series/american\\_classics.htm](http://www.naxos.com/series/american_classics.htm).

45 “Naxos Makes History,” *Classic CD*, no. 94 (January 1998): 13.

46 Brown, *Fanfare* 20, no. 4 (April 1997): 25.

47 Artaria Editions, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.artaria.com>.

## Distribution

While expanding the overall scope of its catalog, Naxos also monitored its market influence in the United States specifically. By 1999, Naxos's U.S. sales had not met the company's expectations, occupying only about 5% of the overall American classical recording market. Besides courting U.S. consumers via content appeal with the American Classics Series,<sup>48</sup> Naxos also began paying more attention to where and how its products were being distributed. In a 1997 interview, Naxos's U.K.-based assistant managing director, Anthony Anderson, explained that moving its products into bookstores had become Naxos's new sales strategy worldwide.<sup>49</sup> By the end of 1997, the American bookstore chain, Borders, had become one of Naxos's biggest retailers.<sup>50</sup>

Naxos of America, a company owned by a Naxos subsidiary called the American Classical Music Company, was by now established in its first location in Pennsauken, New Jersey. Originally set up to more effectively distribute Naxos's own products in the United States, Naxos of America gradually rose to become a major U.S. distributor for classical music overall.<sup>51</sup> Today, the Naxos of America owns exclusive U.S. distribution rights to an impressive line-up of classical music labels. Warner Classics joined their client list in 2010, making Naxos of America the first independent recording company to distribute for a major label.<sup>52</sup>

Distribution became an increasingly major source of revenue for HNH International via its Naxos subsidiaries as the late 1990s wore into the 2000s. Naxos's older sister label, Marco Polo, was no longer doing as well selling classical rarities, but HNH International became an

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48 Bamberger, "Global Classical Pulse," *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 111, no. 36 (September 4, 1999): 55.

49 Christie Eliezer, "Taking Classics to Consumers: Sales and Marketing Director Anthony Anderson," *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 109, no. 44 (November 1, 1997): 51.

50 Bamberger, *Billboard* 109, no. 44 (November 1, 1997): 44.

51 Robert Moon, "David Becomes Goliath," *Strings* 14, no. 5 (January 2000): 100, 102.

52 Naxos of America's LinkedIn profile, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.linkedin.com/companies/naxos-of-america>; "Soundboard: Naxos and Warner Sign Distribution Deal," *Gig* 6, no. 16 (September 2, 2010): 18.

important international distributor for other award-winning labels with similarly specialist profiles, such as the Danish label Da Capo, German label CPO, British label Hyperion Records, and Australian label ABC Classics.<sup>53</sup> Several of these labels came under HNH International's representation when the corporation took over the major British distributor Select Distribution.<sup>54</sup>

Naxos's distribution activities also expanded to include other audiovisual media. In 2000, HNH International and its Naxos subsidiaries began to distribute DVDs for the German label Arthaus Musik. The Arthaus Musik DVD catalog consisted largely of filmed operas, ballets, and concerts along with documentaries about classical music and musicians.<sup>55</sup> Naxos finally began releasing music in DVD-Audio format in 2002 under the label Naxos-Marco Polo DVD.<sup>56</sup> Not long afterwards, Naxos itself entered the business of producing DVD videos on classical music subjects. Rather than competing directly with the various well-established DVD labels it already distributed, Naxos's DVD video catalog specialized in classical music accompanied by visual montages of places associated with the music or its composers. The "Musical Journey" series, which consisted mostly of reissued videotape releases from the 1990s, was later joined by numerous films of live opera productions and some live concerts.

### **Success in Other Media**

Publishing turned out to be another major area of business for Naxos as the second decade of its operations progressed. Around 1993, Naxos had begun publishing educational material on classical music under the imprint and label Naxos Educational, but the series did not attract much media attention until 1997. The company described the goal of Naxos Educational as one of grooming future generations of classical music lovers who, they hoped, would keep the

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53 Bambarger, *Billboard* 109, no. 44 (November 1, 1997): 48.

54 *Ibid.*, 44.

55 Bambarger, "Artists and Music: Naxos Making Moves To Branch Out," *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 112, no. 33 (August 12, 2000): 36; "Marketing the New Millennium: Performances for Armchair Enthusiasts," *Strings* 15, no. 3 (October 2000): 15-16.

56 "Naxos Debuts SACD Releases," *Music Week* (February 7, 2004): 16.

niche culture and industry healthy for years to come.<sup>57</sup> Having already found some success with younger consumers in Sweden, Naxos hoped to spread that trend to its markets elsewhere.

Naxos Educational generally published books accompanied by illustrative CD anthologies of the music discussed within the texts. Early publications were *The A-Z of Classical Music* and *The Classical Music Start-Up Kit*, which were aimed at young adult and adult audiences. Naxos also published full packages of educational material for younger children such as *Music for Kids*, which Heymann described as “a big book with ten CDs, worksheets, world music, and everything.”<sup>58</sup>

A major medium that Naxos began to see success in during the late 1990s was audiobooks. Naxos Audiobooks was an equal joint venture between Heymann and publisher Nicholas Soames. The company launched in 1994 with two competitive market strategies: it was the only DDD (fully digital) label in the audiobook market, and it was also the only audiobook company that offered every single title it released in both cassette tape and CD format.<sup>59</sup> Capitalizing upon the huge cache of classical music at its disposal from Naxos Classical, Naxos Audiobooks also sought market appeal through a genre niche of classic literary masterworks accompanied by classical music. The label favored dramatized readings that used different voices for different characters. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Naxos Audiobooks began to accumulate major awards for its audiobooks, notably the Audie Award from the Audio Publishers Association in the U.S. and the TALKIES Award from the U.K.’s Spoken Word Publishers Association.<sup>60</sup>

In the late 1990s, the German music and manufacturing enterprise Edel bought a 10% stake in HNH International, a figure that increased to 25% in 2000. One industry commentator

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57 Eliezer, *Billboard* 109, no. 44 (November 1, 1997): 51.

58 Brown, *Fanfare* 20, no. 4 (April 1997): 20.

59 *Ibid.*, 26.

60 “Audio Bits,” *Publishers Weekly* 246, no. 36 (September 6, 1999): 37.

suggested that this new partnership may have influenced Naxos's internet expansion.<sup>61</sup> Naxos's website at the time, [www.hnh.com](http://www.hnh.com), was already established and in 1999 received 100,000 to 120,000 site visits per month.<sup>62</sup> The streaming collections that would bring Naxos's reputation into the digital age in the mid-2000s were not far behind. A reporter for a 2001 article in *Classical Music* captured some of Heymann's projections in print:

He envisages a near future where, instead of people filling their homes with CD collections, they will use a tv set-top box to dial up to a virtual library, choose a title and stream it through their home hi-fi or even in their cars or on trains via the next generation of mobile phone and other wireless devices.”<sup>63</sup>

Given the proliferation of on-demand video streaming services today like Netflix and Hulu Plus, not to mention the growing popularity of portable digital book devices like Kindles and Nooks, Heymann's comments seem uncannily prophetic. Instead of a television set-top box, however, Naxos went with the personal computer.

### Part 3: 2004-2010

#### **The Digital Marketplace**

In 2004, Naxos and Alexander Street Press each launched their flagship licensed streaming audio music databases into a digital music marketplace saturated with streaming and downloading services. Prominent industry products at the time, like FullAudio's MusicNow and Listen.com's Rhapsody, were fee-based subscription services created in a post-Napster fervor for downloadable, burn-friendly audio.<sup>64</sup> They catered to individual consumers who wanted the ability to download and take their music with them, and they faced considerable difficulties securing licenses from recording companies that would allow their consumers such freedom.

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<sup>61</sup> Bambarger, *Billboard* 112, no. 33 (August 12, 2000): 36.

<sup>62</sup> Bambarger, *Billboard* 111, no. 36 (September 4, 1999): 55.

<sup>63</sup> Sommerich, *Classical Music*, no. 677 (February 17, 2001): 28.

<sup>64</sup> For a detailed overview of the 2001 Napster controversy, see Jessica Litman, "The Copyright Wars," Chap. 10 in *Digital Copyright* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2001).



Naxos had actually been one of Rhapsody's major licensors in the early 2000s, offering rather liberal licensing terms that permitted Rhapsody's customers to burn anything from their online catalog straight to CD at a limited number of tracks per month. Since Rhapsody was a streaming service that did not allow downloads, it used a CD-burning software from Roxio that let users burn CDs from Rhapsody's library without creating digital copies on their personal computers. Nonetheless, a commentator for *Billboard* expressed doubt at other major labels' willingness to offer up their entire catalogs for burning as Naxos had done.<sup>65</sup> As a result, one significant advantage that Naxos had over its competitors when it launched its own subscription service was that Naxos itself produced recordings, and could offer its own content under its own terms.

Naxos Music Library (NML) appeared early in 2004 with many of its present-day features already in place. It was marketed explicitly as a product for libraries, schools, and institutions of higher education, and one industry commentator suggested that Naxos saw it as an extension of their educational products. The general manager of Naxos Digital Services, David Robson, described the company's approach as "addressing the education market first," but also remarked that NML could potentially be marketed to retailers in the future who wanted to maintain listening stations in their stores.<sup>66</sup> In 2005, Heymann was described as being "adamant that this streaming model will not be extended to the consumer market in the foreseeable future."<sup>67</sup>

Reviews of NML upon its initial U.S. and U.K. launch were highly positive. Naxos's entire catalog, including all its non-classical sub-labels such as Naxos Jazz and Naxos World as well as the contents of the Marco Polo and Da Capo catalogs, was completely available through NML. This gave NML a starting collection of about 5,000 albums and 75,000 audio tracks. New CD releases came available on NML before they were available in stores, and full or partial

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65 Brian Garrity, "Listen, FullAudio to Give Users More Options," *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 114, no. 17 (April 27, 2002): 57.

66 "Naxos Lends Weight to Web Service," *Music Week* (May 22, 2004): 15.

67 Sommerich, "Records: Naxos Comes of Age," *Classical Music*, no. 789 (June 4, 2005): 35.

liner notes were available for each album on NML, thus increasing the database's educational value. Naxos's encyclopedic approach to collection development suited librarians very well. Some librarians commented favorably on now being able to access all of the Naxos Historical series as well as the rarities—classical and otherwise—in its catalog.<sup>68</sup> NML's audio quality was reviewed as being generally better than Classical Music Library's, and was available in three tiers: 128kbps for CD-quality, 64kbps for near-CD quality, and 20kbps for dial-up or FM quality. Furthermore, Naxos seemed to respond well to librarians' concerns. Persistent URLs were originally available only at the album level, but at libraries' suggestions, NML began providing them for individual audio tracks as well. Even at this early stage, Naxos had begun talking about providing MARC records via OCLC, which it did beginning in 2005.<sup>69</sup>

One reviewer touted NML's prices as being lower than Classical Music Library's.<sup>70</sup> Both services promoted a per-simultaneous-user pricing scheme, which for NML started at US\$750 for a minimum of five simultaneous users. From there, an institution could purchase unlimited additional seats in increments of five at a slightly lower rate. Beyond twenty-five simultaneous users, one could purchase additional seats singly at US\$50 each.<sup>71</sup> Early reports showed that Naxos Digital Services was amenable to price negotiations for larger institutions and consortial licensing.<sup>72</sup> In spite of Heymann's assertions that there were no plans for NML to be marketed to individual consumers, NML now also offers individual subscriptions at US\$225 annually for a high bandwidth connection and US\$150 for low bandwidth.<sup>73</sup>

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68 Meg McCaffrey and Walter Minkel, "Plenty of Music, No Hassle," *School Library Journal* 50, no. 4 (April 2004): 29.

69 Ned Quist, Darwin F. Scott, and Alec McLane, "Naxos Music Library," *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 61, no. 2 (December 2004): 514.

70 Rick Anderson, "Naxos Music Library," *Charleston Advisor* 6, no. 1 (July 2004): 18-20. This is substantiated by the pricing figures provided by Paul Cary, "Digital Media Reviews: Classical Music Library," *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 60, no. 4 (June 2004): 1009-1012.

71 Quist, Scott, and McLane, *Notes* 61, no. 2 (December 2004): 512.

72 Ibid., 515-516; Stephanie Orphan, "Naxos Digital Services Enters Agreement with PALINET," *College and Research Libraries News* 65, no. 9 (October 2004): 501.

73 "Naxos Music Library Subscribe," Naxos Music Library, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxosmusiclibrary.com/subscription/subscribe.asp>.

Trade magazine reviews generally shared with library journal reviews the same positive assessments of NML, but differed significantly on the usability of the NML browsing and search interfaces.<sup>74</sup> Where industry reviewers raved about how user-friendly they were, librarians were discontent, finding NML's "basic search cumbersome and its advanced search far too busy graphically and confusing to use."<sup>75</sup> Librarians also remarked upon the fact that two important functions—playlists and persistent URLs—were only available to the database administrators, not to users.<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, librarians generally recommended NML highly, even going so far as to say that it was the best deal for streaming audio available.<sup>77</sup> Naxos launched a subscription internet radio service, Naxos Radio, in the same year. In December, Naxos put its entire audiobook catalog streaming online with Naxos Spoken Word Library.<sup>78</sup>

By 2005, NML had attracted several hundred subscriptions worldwide and eighty in the U.K. alone.<sup>79</sup> It had quickly begun to expand its offerings by licensing content from other labels, turning into a true aggregator on top of its primary identity as a content publisher.<sup>80</sup> Problems had begun to surface, however. While NML had fixed some of the problems that librarians had previously brought to their attention, numerous new and unexpected technical difficulties plagued the database in late 2004 and early 2005. The playlist function, for instance, was still not available to regular users. Furthermore, although persistent URLs were now available to both administrators and users, it turned out that NML could not tell what level of audio quality a user was entitled to through their institutional subscription when an individual track was accessed via a persistent URL. The problem came to light when the database began providing

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74 Anderson, *Charleston Advisor* 6, no. 1 (July 2004): 18-20; Robert Matthew-Walker, "On-Line Music Library Naxos," *Musical Opinion* 128, no. 1442 (October 2004): 15; Bobby Pickering, "Click on That Classical Jazz," *Information World Review*, no. 201 (April 2004): 25.

75 Quist, Scott, and McLane, *Notes* 61, no. 2 (December 2004): 513.

76 *Ibid.*, 514.

77 *Ibid.*, 516.

78 "News from Vendors," *Teacher Librarian* 32, no. 2 (December 2004): 51; Gail Golderman and Bruce Connolly, "Naxos Spoken Word Library," *Library Journal* 134, no. 17 (October 15, 2009): 110, 112.

79 Sommerich, *Classical Music*, no. 789 (June 4, 2005): 35.

80 "Content/Linking Agreements," *Computers in Libraries* 24, no. 8 (September 2004): 54.

only 20kbps-quality audio when a track was accessed via persistent URL. After receiving irate complaints from institutions that had paid for higher-quality access, NML switched to providing both 64kbps and 20kbps via persistent URL, but still not 128kbps. The search and browsing interfaces were also still largely unchanged.<sup>81</sup> A 2005 follow-up review posited the following:

Librarians must adjust to the fact that the market for the Naxos Music Library is much broader than the library audience, and that producers looking at a worldwide group of classical music listeners and anticipating what will appeal to them are less attuned and perhaps less amenable to the complex, sophisticated levels of indexing, searching, presentation, and interactivity that librarians have come to expect in electronic resources.

While ceding that Naxos had recently appointed a library advisory board at libraries' requests, and that NML was overall a valuable product, the reviewer nonetheless opined that Naxos had much more work to do on NML if it wanted to prove its commitment to libraries and library users as the database's primary clientele.<sup>82</sup>

In 2005, a part of Naxos's catalog of crucial interest to academic libraries suddenly became no longer available to NML subscribers in the United States. This was the year that Naxos of America lost a copyright lawsuit to EMI/Capitol Records over Naxos reissues of recordings released by Capitol in the 1930s.<sup>83</sup> These recordings were in the public domain in the U.K., where they had originally been released. Recognizing the ambiguity surrounding the U.S. copyright status of foreign, pre-1972 recordings, Naxos had decided to err on the side of boldness, and had reissued these recordings in New York under new Naxos sub-labels. Unfortunately, the venture backfired. The outcome of *Capitol v. Naxos* forced Naxos to withdraw from commercial circulation the specific remastered recordings disputed in the lawsuit.

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81 Darwin F. Scott, "Digital Media Reviews," *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 62, no. 1 (September 2005): 192-198.

82 *Ibid.*, 198.

83 *Capitol Records, Inc. v Naxos of Am., Inc.*, 4 NY3d 540 (2005), accessed November 22, 2010, [http://www.courts.state.ny.us/reporter/3dseries/2005/2005\\_02570.htm](http://www.courts.state.ny.us/reporter/3dseries/2005/2005_02570.htm).

On top of that, even though the copyright infringement had occurred in New York state and was trialed in the Second Circuit, the particular ruling the court chose set a U.S. precedence, greatly increasing the likelihood that, from then on, any pre-1972 recording reissued without the original copyright owner's permission anywhere in the U.S. would be viewed as copyright infringement. Naxos proceeded, as a result, to withdraw all its remastered pre-1972 recordings from both retail stores and NML not only in New York state, but throughout the United States.<sup>84</sup>

Overnight, NML users in the U.S. lost access to several major Naxos sub-labels that, due to their historical focus, were of high value to educational institutions. The sub-labels pulled from NML included Naxos Historical, Naxos Jazz Legends, Naxos Rock Legends, Naxos Nostalgia, and Naxos Classical Archives. Since *Capitol v. Naxos*, librarians and NML users in the United States have become increasingly frustrated with the frequency with which they encounter an inaccessible recording at the end of a search. Despite repeated requests that the inaccessible recordings be expunged from U.S. subscribers' view entirely, the content has remained. Naxos removed the recordings from NML's browsing lists soon after, and in 2010 is finally working on hiding the inaccessible labels from the label listings in NML's advanced search fields. However, the recordings still appear in search results conducted via other parameters.<sup>85</sup>

In 2005, EMI began licensing its content to NML's main competitor, Classical Music Library. Nonetheless, an exhaustive comparative review of the two databases published in *Music Reference Services Quarterly* in 2008 still ranked NML above Classical Music Library.

84 Timothy P. Best, "Capitol Records, Inc. v. Naxos of America, Inc.: The Persistence of Copyright on That Old Time Rock n' Roll," *Berkeley Technology Law Journal* 21, no. 1 (2006): 335-360; Susan Butler, "N.Y. Broadens Copyright Protection to Older Works," *Billboard: The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 117, no. 17 (April 23, 2005): 8-60; R. Deazley, "Capitol Records v. Naxos of America (2005): Just Another Footnote in the History of Copyright?," *Journal of the Copyright Society of the U.S.A.* 53, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2005): 23-70; "Naxos Legal Move," *Music Week* (April 23, 2005): 2; "News: Naxos Pulls Historical Recordings," *International Musician* 104, no. 1 (January 2006): 2; Sommerich, "Naxos Loses US Copyright Case," *Classical Music*, no. 786 (April 23, 2005): 7.

85 Nick D'Angiolillo, "Naxos Recordings," October 7, 2010, e-mail to Music Library Association Mailing List, archived at <http://listserv.indiana.edu/archives/mla-l.html>.

Although each service had its advantages, NML's breadth and depth of content for lower prices prevailed over Classical Music Library's better technological functionality.<sup>86</sup> Naxos's commercial approach of valuing content comprehensiveness and competitive pricing above all thus appears to have succeeded in its forays into licensed digital content.

Naxos's expansion in the digital marketplace has continued. In 2005, Naxos created Naxos Music Library Jazz, available as a standalone subscription or as a discounted bonus with Naxos Music Library. With new digital music downloading retail models showing market potential in 2005, Naxos began licensing its music for download with third parties such as OverDrive, iTunes, eMusic, and other digital music vendors.<sup>87</sup> Around the same time, the company also partnered with SheetMusicNow to provide downloading access to sheet music.<sup>88</sup> In 2007, Naxos Audiobooks became available for download via eMusic, a company second only to iTunes in the digital entertainment retail market in the U.S. at the time.<sup>89</sup> Naxos now maintains its own digital downloading retail site called ClassicsOnline, but its subscription-based digital libraries remain streaming-only. Early in 2010, Naxos released free iPhone and iPod Touch applications that allowed users mobile access to Naxos Music Library.<sup>90</sup> Naxos Video Library launched around the same time, offering the contents of the Naxos-Marco Polo DVD label streaming along with DVD video content from other labels it distributed.

### **Growing the Catalog**

Even while maximizing its influence as a digital content publisher, Naxos has continued to explore other diverse commercial opportunities. In 2005, it established a new print publishing

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86 Chris Durman, "Naxos or Classical: Which Music Library is Best for You?" *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (2006): 55-74.

87 Norman Oder, "OverDrive Downloads Classical Music," *Library Journal* 130, no. 20 (December 2005): 26.

88 John Anderies, "The Promise of Online Music," *Library Journal* (June 1, 2005), accessed December 12, 2010, <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA602662.html>; Golderman and Connolly, "Major Upgrades," *Library Journal* (Winter 2006): 24.

89 "eMusic Takes on Audible," *Bookseller*, no. 5299 (September 21, 2007): 7.

90 "Naxos Releases New iPhone And iPod Touch Applications," *American Music Teacher* 59, no. 4 (March 2010): 9.

arm, Naxos Books, with Naxos Audiobooks co-founder Nicholas Soames overseeing its operations.<sup>91</sup> The imprint, like the Naxos Educational line of products, targets layman audiences but with a less overtly pedagogical aim. Most of its publications are general biographies of famous classical composers accompanied with CDs of music by the composers. Naxos's distribution and digital aggregator businesses have also grown. Naxos Music Library now streams content from over 320 independent labels.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, and perhaps the most unusual of all its business initiatives, Naxos has in the past decade begun commissioning new works from living composers working in the classical tradition. Its only commission so far has been a large one: a request for ten new string quartets from the renowned British composer, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, proposed in 2002 and due five years hence. Davies delivered. All ten quartets were premiered and recorded for Naxos by the Maggini Quartet, and performed live as a cycle over the course of three days in London in October 2009 in honor of Davies' seventy-fifth birthday.<sup>93</sup> Although it is unknown if Naxos will commission more works in the near future, this first investment suggests that Naxos has considered building its own recording future by *creating* new works to record. Less unusual but along similar lines, Naxos jointly organized a recording competition with Early Music America in 2003 for early music ensembles and performers. The competition prize was a debut CD recording with Naxos, and was awarded to both the Grand Prize Winner and the First Runner-Up.<sup>94</sup> It is unclear which organization approached which in the creation of this competition, but

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91 Tom Tivnan, "On the Right Frequency," *Bookseller*, no. 5374 (March 20, 2009): 23; Katherine Rushton, "Naxos Moves into Books," *Bookseller*, no. 5186 (July 8, 2005): 13; Sommerich, "Bundle of Joy," *Classical Music*, no. 808 (March 4, 2006): 39.

92 Naxos Music Library, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.naxosmusiclibrary.com>.

93 Tim Homfray, "Ten by Four," *Classical Music*, no. 720 (October 12, 2002): 14-15; Peter Quantrell, "Interview: Peter Maxwell Davies," *Gramophone* 82, no. 985 (Awards 2004): 11; Sue Pascoe, "News: Southbank Presents First Cycle of Naxos Quartets," *Classical Music*, no. 896 (August 1, 2009): 9.

94 "Sound Bytes: EMA/Naxos Announce the Finalists in Recording Competition," *Early Music America* 9, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 5; "Tidings: EMA Announces Winners in Recording Competition with Naxos," *American Recorder* 44, no. 5 (November 2003): 9; "Other Prizewinners in the Naxos/EMA Recording Competition," *Early Music America* 9, no. 4 (December 2003): 13.

it helped Naxos find new, highly qualified performers to record while furthering the participating performers' careers at the same time.

Naxos has been recognized for its success in industry profiles and awards many times over since the mid-1990s. Besides awards for individual recordings and audiobooks, Naxos has been named Label of the Year at least twice: once at the 1997 MIDEM Classical Awards in Cannes and again at the 2005 Gramophone Awards.<sup>95</sup> In the tough industry of classical music, Naxos appears to have succeeded by effectively juggling profitable business practices with convincing appeals to certain connoisseur desires, such as encouraging encyclopedic grasps of composers or genres; and emphasizing the importance of collecting works over interpretations of works.

## **Conclusion**

Naxos's consistent dedication over the past twenty-three years to developing a comprehensive catalog and offering it at low prices has been appealing to educational institutions. Dreams of a "complete library" are seldom far from librarians' minds, especially when presented with a lower-than-expected price tag. However, as shown here, academic libraries and their patrons have played an extremely small part in Naxos's overall commercial interests. While Naxos's mission of providing comprehensive and low-cost content seems compatible with the goals of librarians, Naxos's approaches to realizing this mission over the years have generally not taken into account academic library needs. In particular, the technological flaws that Naxos has been willing to let stand in its digital subscription services suggest that, although originally launched for an educational market, Naxos's digital libraries aim not for the kind of precision and functionality expected in higher education settings, but rather for what is just slightly better than good enough for a general public's leisure and self-

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<sup>95</sup> Bamarger, *Billboard* 109, no. 25 (June 21, 1997): 1, 84-85; Jolly, "Coming of Age: Naxos," *Gramophone* 83, no. 998 (October 2005): 31.



education purposes.

Although it is undeniable that Naxos's products play an important role in the delivery of library services, educational institutions comprise a very small part of the company's consumer base, and thus remain Naxos's secondary clientele. The company is, first and foremost, a personal consumer enterprise that caters directly to the general public. Libraries have benefitted from Naxos's approach when their public service missions have mutually aligned, but not when libraries' needs—particularly those of academic libraries—have surpassed what Naxos has been willing or able to provide in return for the revenue generated by the library community.