The month of May has thus far brought a diverse assortment of rock music into Cambridge and Boston. Earlier in the month, Robin Trower (below) dazzled two sell-out crowds at the Performance Center with his lifetime's work. Sandy Denny and Fairport Convention (with Dave Swarbrick and Dave Pegg pictured to the right below) played a delightful set at Sanders Theatre. Last Monday was expected to keep things going, with the scheduled Mott the Hoople/Queen concert. But Queen cancelled and Mott (with Ariel Bender and Ian Hunter shown to the right) was sloppy, expensive, and boring.

The classical music groups here at MIT have had a very good year. The MIT Symphony Orchestra under David Epstein continues to present challenging repertoire as well as financial ones, but its new home at the National Theatre in the Boston Center for the Arts is a great acoustical success and the orchestra seems to be attracting a new and large audience.

The Boston area has long been a center for early music. Joel Cohen’s Camerata has given a series of exceptional concerts this season at the Museum of Fine Arts and Sanders Theatre, and it may well be the early music ensemble in America with the broadest repertory of the New York Pro Musica. The Cambridge Society for Early Music continues its pioneering efforts, presenting outside groups and individuals as well as its own chorus and orchestra under Iva Dei Hilt. A newcomer to the scene, the Brandeis Chamber Orchestra, is the area’s first professional orchestra specializing in performance of baroque and classical music on period instruments. Led by Robert Koff of Brandeis, formerly of the Juilliard String Quartet, the orchestra is a welcome addition to music in the Boston area, and its concerts have been quite successful from a musical and attendance standpoint.

The orchestra’s musical life provides many opportunities for performance and study, and helps to upscale the character of the MIT campus, as well as that of its own chorus and orchestra under Gunther Schuller, the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Three different orchestras (the Berkshire Music Center Orchestra under Gunther Schuller, the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Ormandy and the Philadelphians), is the Koussevitzky Centennial, in honor of the late music director of the Boston Symphony and conductor of the Berkshire Festival, Serge Koussevitzky. These three orchestras are being used for the performance of baroque and classical music on period instruments.

The past year has seen a growth in the area’s four-channel recording activity, as well as an expansion in the number of concerts that provide front-to-back separation. The shortage of vinyl that is partly related to the oil shortage has caused some deterioration in the quality of disc surfaces from most record companies, and has also caused a delay in the release of RCA’s Quadraphonic discs in both Columbia’s and RCA’s QuadraDisc format. There is great interest in the use of the new possibilities that four-channel sound opens up.

The classical recording industry shows signs of renewed life and vigor in several areas at present. RCA Red Seal, which has been concentrating its efforts in "greatest hits" aggregations and occasionally re-recording some old classics with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, has hired one of the co-directors of Columbia Masterworks, Thomas Z. Shepard, to direct its musical activities, a change which promises greater activity for RCA in the classical field. Columbia Records, having fired its President, Clive Davis, in the wake of the recent "scandal," has brought back Goddard Lieberson to fill that position again. Lieberson was responsible for many of the most courageous and artistically important projects of Columbia in the past, including the Stravinsky and Copland conducts Copland series, and he has promised a change from the purely money-oriented philosophy that his company has followed more recently. The recording work of Deutsche Grammophon here in Boston is continuing and expanding, and having apparently produced some artistic and commercial successes.

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