



Compiled and edited by Tony Sanderson FRMS Chairman.

From the Chairman's Desk

Last time I wrote, I was in hospital suffering from the CIDP variant of Guillain-Barré's Syndrome. Whilst I could sit and type, I had to be hoisted in and out of bed. I am pleased to say that a few weeks ago, I managed to stand for the first time in eight months and can now walk in my house with the aid of a Zimmer frame. In the gym I attend, I walked 50 metres with the aid of a rollator. I am now increasingly confident of making a full recovery.

A particular pleasure in recent weeks was to attend the Choral Evensong at New College, Oxford where a new anthem by Kim Porter, who sings with the Sixteen and Ora Singers, was being premiered.



Kim Porter

The anthem *A Single, Loving Heart* is setting of a poem about the Baptism of Christ by Malcolm Guite, an Anglican Priest, who writes for *The Church Times*.

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Joanna Marsh: A Plastic Theatre and Beyond

The composer Joanna Marsh kindly agreed to talk to the FRMS for our newsletter.

Your new album, *A Plastic Theatre*, has an intriguing title. Please tell us what is behind that.

A Plastic Theatre is the title of the libretto by Katie Schaag that I set in 2023 for a 20-minute commission from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. Katie specializes in experimental theatre, and her text unfolds across five poetic 'acts,' each exploring a different characteristic of plastic. I chose to name the album after this piece because its themes resonate with the broader narrative of the collection, examining humanity's adaptability in times of crisis.



Joanna Marsh

The first single from the album, *Batter My Heart*, has been nominated for the Ivors Academy Award. The title sounds a bit daunting. Please can you tell us a bit more about the single?

John Donne's famous sonnet *Batter my heart* carries an intense, almost turbulent energy that mirrors the poet's internal conflict. The piece seeks to channel that

raw emotion through an intricate eight-part texture, where every phrase is tightly interwoven with the text's shifting intensity. The vocal lines push against each other, mirroring the poem's urgency, while the interplay of rhythm and articulation heightens the drama: consonants and vowels clashing with force, reflecting the sonnet's plea for transformation.



Joanna Marsh with her 2022 Ivors Award for Best Choral Composition

Your composition *Another Eden* involved the use of jugglers. Are you particularly drawn to music theatre?

I have always been drawn to the idea of music interacting with other disciplines, whether that's theatre, movement, or even architectural space. *Another Eden* was an exploration of rhythm and physicality, with jugglers embodying the music's kinetic energy. The piece also incorporates elements of ground bass, echoing historical musical forms while voicing a more contemporary textural and harmonic idiom. The piece is about longing for a lost paradise, a reflection on the fragility of our world

Are you working on any projects at the moment?

I'm currently composing a piece for Chichester Cathedral to mark 950 years of the Diocese of Chichester; a companion to *Chichester Psalms*, set to premiere on 17 May with the Cathedral Choir. Though I began my musical life as an organist, I find writing sacred music uniquely challenging, especially when working with these ancient texts. Psalm 90, in particular, grapples with the vastness of time, the brevity of human life, and the search for meaning within that contrast. The challenge is to illuminate something in these words that still speaks powerfully to us today.

Going back in time, what led you to want to be a composer?

As a child, I was always creating; painting, drawing, designing things, and experimenting with sound. I played the violin, but rather than sticking to 'proper practice,' I spent most of my time improvising, letting the instrument take me wherever it wanted to go. That instinct for making things gradually shaped my approach to music. Later, when I was directing choirs, I struggled to find pieces that truly spoke to me, especially those with the depth of emotion or humour I was looking for. That was a turning point. I realised that if I couldn't find the music I wanted, I would have to write it myself.

Which of your compositions do you feel were particularly important in setting your direction as a composer?

My setting of Psalm 139, *Thou Hast Searched*, was a bit of a revelation. It was a piece where I felt I was truly being myself in my harmonic language and melodic idiom rather than shaping the ideas and meaning to external expectations. The response to this piece has been continually positive. It's interesting how at any age, we need reminding that we should trust our instincts.

Which composers have particularly influenced you?

I am a mega-fan of Gavin Higgins; his works are utter genius and make my jaw drop afresh on every listening. His work is a constant reminder to me of the necessity to be bold and courageous.

As far as influences go, Judith Bingham also played a crucial role in my development as a composer. She became an important mentor for me. She challenged me personally, always encouraging me to take myself seriously as a composer.

From the Chairman's Desk Continued

The service centred on Epiphany carols with the new anthem, *A Single Loving Heart* is at 20'10".

https://www.youtube.com/live/ezH3gKYIzI4?si=PwbzBoZwidHgbZ_h



The Chapel of New College, Oxford



The Choir of New College, Oxford

Traditional genres can be renewed and refreshed by new compositions and hopefully this new anthem will become part of the repertoire. The Warden of New College, Miles Young, told me that the patronage of new composers and the incorporation of new works in the repertoire is becoming a hallmark of the Choir. The late David Vernier wrote in [ClassicsToday.com](https://www.classicstoday.com) "In my 40-plus years of reviewing recordings by British choirs, I have consistently cited the Choir of New College Oxford for its superior treble sound (i.e., superior to King's and Westminster) and for the unflinching, uncompromising care and musicianship that defined every recording". The current director of the choir is Robert Quinney.

This whole period of being ill gave me the opportunity to reflect on recorded music and what that means in 2025.

I expect virtually all who attend recorded music societies in the UK have copies of recorded music in the form of a physical product, whether it be vinyl or CDs or even cassette tapes. But increasingly, downloads and streaming predominate. Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon Music dominate the market although there are a number of specialist services as well, such as Presto Music. The growth of contemporary vinyl releases shows that there is still a desire amongst music lovers to own a physical product of music by their favourite artist, whether it be Taylor

Swift, Yuja Wang, Anne-Sophie Mutter, the Beatles or the Rolling Stones. When I subscribed to Deutsche Grammophon's STAGE+ video streaming service, DG offered a vinyl recording of the Icelandic pianist Víkingur Ólafsson playing Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

In the field of classical music, there are a number of video streaming services. As well as STAGE+, other services, include the Berlin Philharmonic's own service and medici.tv, which covers festivals like the Verbier Festival as well as standalone concerts and many performances of jazz musicians too. Of course, YouTube also uploads many classical concerts and standalone performances of classical works as well as multitudes of music videos of many different genres.

One of my colleagues on the FRMS committee pointed out that those who are members of their local library [may be able to enjoy free access](#) to Naxos' streaming service to allow you to listen at home to many genres of music, including classical, pop, rock, world, and jazz.

<https://www.naxos.com/onlinelibrariessubscription>

Here is Oxfordshire County Council's Library Service's web page that shows how you can sign up for the Naxos service through membership of their libraries.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries/reference-online/music-streaming>

It could be worth your while seeing what your local library service offers in this regard.

One major benefit of subscribing to a streaming service is that it gives you an ad-free way of exploring music you are not familiar with. Earlier, we were talking about traditional genres being renewed and refreshed by new compositions and I thought I would share some new violin and viola concertos I have enjoyed. Modern concertos often seem to inhabit a more tonal landscape, and their composers often give them titles that describe the inspiration behind the works.

Out of the Deep? begins with a section entitled *Rage and Lament*. After an energetic rage section, the orchestra embraces a dark-sounding lament section with orchestral chords focussing on the trombones, bassoons, contra-bassoons and horns from which the violin soloist emerges with a plaintive lament. As the work progresses the violin rises to its highest register, after energetic sections alternated with passages of lyrical beauty. The world premiere took place on 31st January 2025 in Utrecht in the Netherlands. Radio Filharmonisch Orkest was conducted by Markus Stenz and the violin soloist was Simone Lamsma.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ur0D9SfyJwo&t=1145s>

Another violin concerto was *The Seamstress* by the British born composer Anna Clyne. It was premiered in 2015 by Jennifer Koh and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ludovic Morlot. In this 2024 performance the soloist is Diana Tischenko accompanied by the Orchestra National de Lille conducted by Joshua Weilerstein. The work is in a single movement and is inspired by a poem by W.B. Yeats and is very lyrical in tone.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSmNo5r1IDg&t=2426s>

The South Korean composer Donghoon Shin's *Threadsuns* for viola and orchestra was premiered by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Tugan Sokhiev on 9th January 2025 performed by Amihai Grosz as the viola soloist. *Threadsuns* is the English translation of a poem by Paul Celan. The composer says the piece, which is in two movements, is "sad but not plaintive, lamenting but not wailing, despairing but not without hope". This work is only available on the Berlin Phil's own streaming site. The Berlin Phil's streaming service also featured a discussion between the soloist, conductor and composer. Shin's 2023 work *Upon his ghostly solitude* gives an idea of his sound world. The 2024 Dutch premiere by the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest under Osmo Vänskä, conductor can be heard on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXYbTFIheuU>

Before writing her own Viola Concerto, Jennifer Higdon researched previous viola concertos and found that they were mainly dark and melancholic in tone, and she vowed to write something joyous. She succeeded admirably with a work that combines lyrical passages with energetic and vibrant ones. The work was premiered in 2015. In 2018, it won the Grammy Award for the best contemporary classical composition. The Medici.tv streamed concert featured an on-stage pre-performance talk by Jennifer before a performance by Roberto Diaz and the New World Symphony conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas.

There is a performance on YouTube by Kimberly Sparr (Viola) with the Texas Tech University Symphony Orchestra from 19th February 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxI4CIIldNNQ>

There is also a version on Naxos which will be of particular interest to those who can take advantage of the Naxos Streaming Service.

As well as DG's many stars such as Yuja Wang, Vikingur Olafsson, Andris Nelsons and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, DG's STAGE+ streaming service features many artists not on the DG roster such as Sir Simon Rattle. Included amongst the 26 concerts of his that

are available, is his recent 70th birthday concert at London's Barbican. Sir Simon Rattle conducted the LSO in the *Ritual Dances* by Michael Tippett and Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony. Vaughan Williams is a composer that Sir Simon has only recently embraced. A new guitar concerto by Mark-Anthony Turnage entitled *Sco* was written for the guitarist John Scofield and featured jazz and blues influences. While Sir Simon clearly enjoyed the piece, one reviewer found the concerto underwhelming, as did I.

I have enjoyed experimenting with the various video streaming services and hope that some of my discoveries will have been of interest. If your interests are wider than classical, you might like to give [medici.tv](https://www.medicivt.com) a go. For audio tracks, I use Apple Music. I like the way it is laid out. Comparing it with Spotify or other services, I will leave to others.

Happy listening to all!

Please Inform us Promptly if your Society looks Likely to Close

Paul Corfield Godfrey (Treasurer) and Adele Wills (Secretary)

Society Treasurers and Secretaries may not be aware that affiliate fees for performance licences and/or public liability insurance are paid on an annual basis by the FRMS in September of each year.

The Federation pays this on behalf of societies and the affiliate invoices that are sent out in October seek reimbursement of the Federation's funds.

Unfortunately, there have been several instances recently where societies have closed without informing the Federation. This means that the Federation has paid out fees in advance and it is borne as a loss to Federation funds.

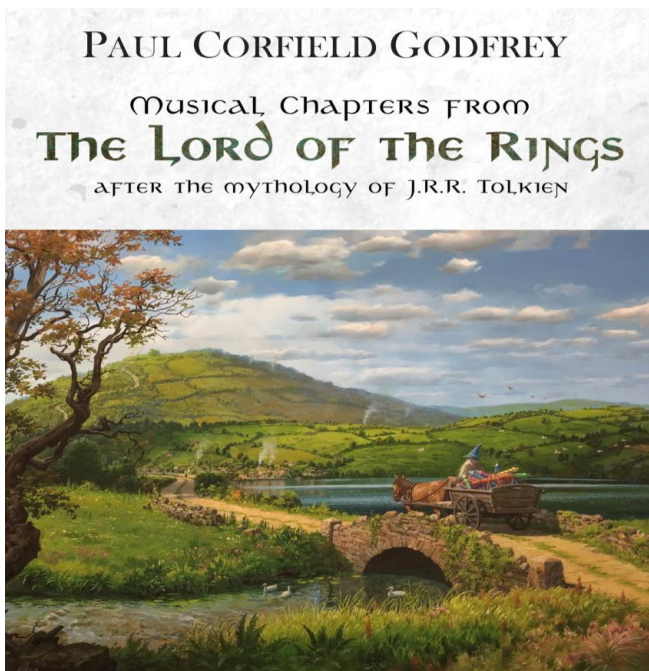
There are situations where societies lose key officers and simply dwindle into non-existence rather than go through an official process of closure. In these cases, it is hard to avoid losses and that is no-one's fault.

However, it is more often the case that officers see that a closure is likely. In these cases, please can we urge you to let the Federation – through the Treasurer or Secretary or both – know. We cannot reimburse fees mid-year – but it will ensure that we do not incur unnecessary costs in September, costs that end up coming from Federation funds.

Many thanks for your consideration!

The Composer Paul Corfield Godfrey Talks about his Operatic Cycle on *The Lord of the Rings*

As 2024 draws to an end, so also do the extended series of recording sessions for my operatic cycle of musical chapters from *The Lord of the Rings*, based on the works of J R R Tolkien. When released next year the set will consist of fifteen CDs featuring some seventy named characters performed by thirty-five professional singers mainly from Welsh National Opera. The project followed on from the complete recording of my epic scenes from *The Silmarillion*, which was brought to a conclusion in 2023, with the issue of a boxed set of ten CDs from Prima Facie Records.



Cover Art for the Lord of the Rings Album
© Ted Nasmith

Many of the same singers who had featured in *The Silmarillion* returned for *The Lord of the Rings*, including the superlative Angharad Morgan, who undertook the role of Galadriel in both cycles; and Simon Crosby Buttle, who had sung Elrond in *The Silmarillion*, stepped up to the part of Frodo Baggins in *The Lord of the Rings*, which meant that the former role was necessarily re-assigned. The agreement by the Tolkien Estate for the musical treatment of the author's own words (never previously permitted to any other composer) has meant that we can also record my earlier setting of *The Hobbit* written in the early 1970s and now revised for scheduled release in 2026; and Huw Llewelyn, for example, has recorded his interpretation of Bilbo Baggins both for that issue and *The Lord of the Rings* in order of the narrative, so that he can be heard gradually advancing in age over a period of eighty years. Philip Lloyd-Evans and Michael Clifton-Thompson, both recently retired from Welsh

National Opera, also feature in both sets as Gandalf and Gollum respectively. Other stalwarts from *The Silmarillion* sessions such as Julian Boyce, Steven Wells, Lawrence Cole, Jasey Hall, Helen Greenaway, Emma Mary Llewellyn, and many others have also returned to the studio to take up roles in *the Lord of the Rings*.

As with *The Silmarillion*, the huge cast and the logistical problems associated with assembling such a roster of singers has meant that Volante Opera Productions have resorted to the system of recording each soloist in isolation and combining the results of the sessions in the process of editing. This means that Simon Crosby Buttle and I have the task of ensuring that dramatic and musical continuity is maintained across a whole jigsaw of 'takes' which have taken some six years to assemble. At the time we started, *The Lord of the Rings* was an only partially-composed collection of fragments and episodes I had written over a period stretching back to the 1960s; these had to be revised, reworked and expanded into a complete narrative, and much of this process was indeed undertaken with specific singers in mind.

The actual process of final composition indeed has only recently reached a conclusion, with a newly written passage to be included in an appendix disc. The critical reception given to *The Silmarillion* has expanded with an increased degree of enthusiasm as the plans for *The Lord of the Rings* have evolved, and the complete recording is planned for release at the Tolkien Society's Oxonmoot in August 2025. A series of advance samples will be issued on the internet over the next six months and can be accessed from [The Music of Paul Corfield Godfrey | The-Lord-Of-The-Rings](#) together with details of the recording and editing processes and discussions with the singers. And the result, when all three recordings are completed, will comprise the largest single work ever to be released on CD in this country.

Before then Prima Facie will also be releasing a complete recording of all my piano music written since 1972 on CD played by Duncan Honeybourne. This will include another newly composed piece receiving its world première, an appendix to *The Lord of the Rings* entitled *The Passing of Arwen*. Recordings of two other non-Tolkien operas, *The Nightingale and the Rose* (Oscar Wilde) and *Blithe Spirit* (Noel Coward) are already available on the same label.

Full details of the compositions of Paul Corfield Godfrey can be found on [HOME | The Music of Paul Corfield Godfrey](#)

LSO Live Anniversary Year 2024

One of the pioneers of own label recordings was the London Symphony Orchestra. LSO Live kindly gave us permission to quote from an article on their website.

LSO Live spoke to LSO Managing Director, Dame Kathryn McDowell DBE DL, and the LSO's former Managing Director, Sir Clive Gillinson about the early days of the label, their favourite recordings, and what's in store for the years to come.

Clive, could you start by telling us what prompted the LSO to start their own record label back in 1999?

CLIVE: In the 90s, it was becoming increasingly clear that the market for classical music CDs was going to start diminishing, since most of the repertoire had already been recorded, and much of it many times over. That was one big factor. The other was, when you're recording for recording companies, you tend to have to record whatever it is that fills a gap in their catalogue, but you can't necessarily record what's important for the orchestra. So, it was the combination of the two things.

I was discussing the idea with the orchestra for two or three years, and initially it was difficult to persuade the union to accept the players doing it for no money, but just the share of profits, if there were a profit. That, understandably, was a huge gulf for the union to cross at that time.

Then we had to agree that none of our guest artists would be paid if the players were not paid and would instead receive a share of profits: it should be the same for everyone. There were a few artists who were reluctant to join at the beginning, but almost everybody joined once they saw the success of the label.

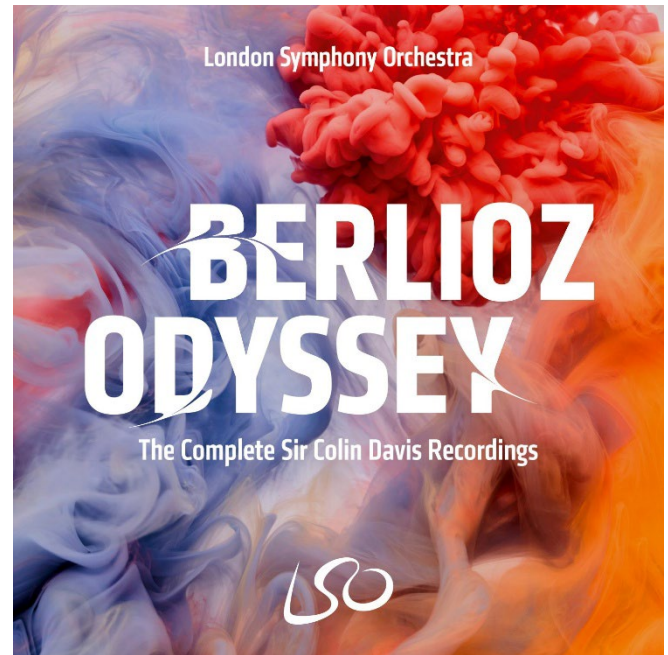
Eventually, the union reached an understanding of where the market was going to go and that we needed to do this, both to make sure we continued to be recorded, and to make sure that what was recorded represented our artistic vision.

Could you tell us about the first recording projects the label worked on?

CLIVE: In the end, the early years turned out to be a huge hurry. For me, the reason was that I wanted to capture Colin Davis's Berlioz cycle, because I felt that was a piece of LSO history. If we didn't capture it then, we would probably never have the chance to do this with Colin again!

The Trojans was the first work we recorded. At the time, I talked to people about how they expected the recording to do, and they said 'well, perhaps you can

sell a few thousand CDs.' It was 60,000 in the first year!



Sir Colin Davis's Berlioz Cycle on LSO Live

One of the key things we did – and I was really keen for this to be the case – was to sell LSO Live at a price that was accessible, so that it wasn't a considered purchase, it could be a whim purchase. A lot of CDs were at least double the price of what we were charging, but to get into the market and establish ourselves I felt we had to be very accessible. We wanted people to say 'well, it's the price of a beer.'

Kathryn, would you say this ethos around accessibility has remained with the LSO since then?

KATHRYN: Accessibility across all our work is key and has informed so much of what we do. As Clive says, LSO Live was set up with the same values, and that's something that has been sustained throughout the history of the label.

We do our utmost to ensure that people can access our work at affordable prices, and I think we've been able to use the digital aspect of LSO Live to really good effect. In many ways, that's where we've seen the most ambition in terms of accessibility and reach. It has really complemented the philosophy that underpins everything we do across live concerts and our LSO Discovery programme.

What have been the major changes and milestones over LSO Live's more recent years?

KATHRYN: I think for me, the move into audio-visual production has been an important way to reach a much wider audience. We struggled for some years to find the right model, and it was only through a major fundraising campaign to cover the costs of production

that the model then became viable. We were just starting to create a proper repertoire of audiovisual recordings when the pandemic struck, and that suddenly became our principal way of keeping in touch with our audiences – it was much more important than we could have ever imagined!

Since then, our approach to filming and distribution has become even more sophisticated, allowing us to license our content to different platforms. We also tested different ways to make our own filming unique – I'll never forget the first time I saw the conductor's expression on camera, as if looking through the eyes of the musician. I think it helps you to hear things differently.

We are now making another new step into documentaries with Sir Antonio Pappano which I find really exciting for the future—not only do we have the performance available, but we have the contextual material. We spoke about accessibility in price, but there's also accessibility in content. I think Antonio has a way of talking to the audience that is quite unlike anyone else. He speaks about music in a very relatable way, and I think this will really broaden our reach in the years to come.

Do either of you have any favourites from the LSO Live catalogue?

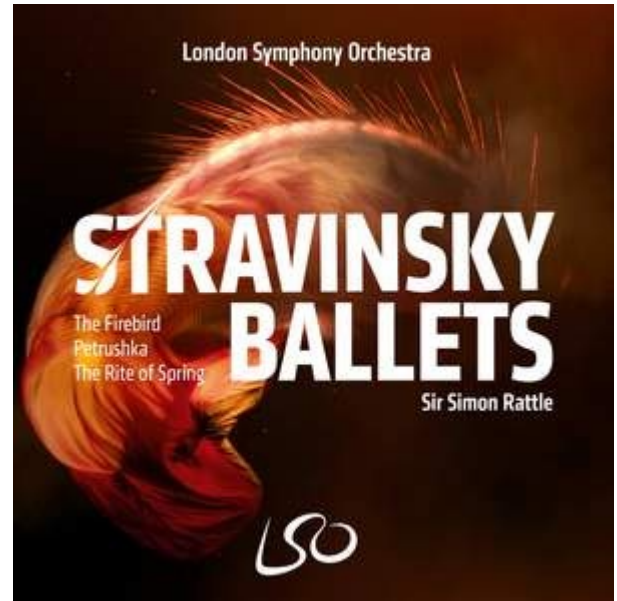
CLIVE: Well, of course The Trojans, that was key. Also, the Sibelius cycle was very interesting because Colin had recorded it with the LSO for BMG, but he always said to me 'I hate recording in the studio because you can't perform properly. I need to be a performer.' And so, we agreed we were going to do the Sibelius cycle again.

I remember when we programmed it, saying to him 'Colin, I know what the emotion is going to feel like at those concerts. You have to have encores ready.' Orchestras don't normally do encores in their home base but in this instance, we prepared them, and the audience went wild! So, not only were they extraordinary concerts, but Colin was so much happier recording the Sibelius symphonies from live performances. For him that was a huge deal.

KATHRYN: As time has passed, having LSO Live has meant that we have a proper audio record of the main works different chief conductors have explored with the orchestra. As Clive mentioned, we have a real body of work with Sir Colin Davis now, and it was wonderful to see the Dvořák symphonies remastered this year, they were some of the earliest works we did with him.

There were some really beautiful recordings made in Sir Simon Rattle's time. I was just looking back at the triple bill of the Stravinsky Ballets, which was one of his first programmes in his inaugural week as Music

Director. I still remember that concert live— it was absolutely electric, and the sheer energy and joy of that live performance comes across on the recording.



Sir Simon Rattle Conducts Stravinsky

Thanks to the label, we have created a digital record of what we did with all these amazing conducting figures. That goes also for the likes of Gianandrea Noseda, whose Shostakovich and Prokofiev cycles have really been the defining aspects of his tenure as Principal Guest Conductor. And now with Sir Antonio Pappano, I would say it's the recording of Vaughan Williams Symphonies Nos 4 & 6 that stands out for me—it captured two extraordinary moments in the concert hall. Number four was on the eve of the 2019 general election, and then when we did the sixth symphony, it turned out to be the last concert we played before the pandemic. For both performances there was such an atmosphere of uncertainty and expectancy in the hall, and we've captured that. I think that's why these recordings have been so well reviewed as well, because they were of their moment.

What can we expect from LSO Live over the coming years?

KATHRYN: I'm excited to be planning our work into the next three to five years with some of the world's most amazing artists, and I think the work that we're doing to refurbish LSO St Luke's and to equip it for the digital age is going to give us an amazing resource for making beautiful recordings, videos, documentaries and learning resources. There are so many new and developing technologies that we're dipping our toes into, at the moment, and having enhanced facilities at LSO St Luke's will allow us to explore and deliver them, while continuing to do fantastic LSO Discovery projects in the community.

LSO Live has been remarkably fortunate in having two fantastic leaders in the course of its 25-year history. Chaz Jenkins had a real entrepreneurial spirit and was able to drive the label forward in those early days. Handing over to Becky Lees in 2012 has allowed LSO Live to move up a gear and into another era, and the fact that they both built excellent teams around them has really been part of the label's success story. Looking back, I think the LSO was incredibly brave to embrace LSO Live when it did, and to take that leap of faith. The Orchestra and staff have continued to invest their time and energy in the label since the beginning, and I hope they will do so for many years to come.

The full article can be found at

<https://www.iso.co.uk/the-history-of-iso-live/>

Link to a selection of LSO Live that can be played on Apple Music, Spotify, Amazon Music and other platforms.

<https://lnk.to/LSOLiveat2512>

Leicester Music Society

Ron Mitchell

I've been on the committee of the Leicester Music Society for over 15 years now. During that time much has changed: three different venues, three Chairmen with different styles, even the name of the Society, from which we removed the word *Recorded* in 2016.

There's been some change in the content of our meetings too. When I joined, the emphasis was almost entirely on invited speakers external to the society. We had reliable regulars, such as John Steane, the great scholar of the human voice, who once told me how claustrophobic was the interior of the pre-war Coventry Cathedral, where he had sung in the choir as a boy. Other well-known regulars were Edward Greenfield, Donald Hunt and Malcolm Goldring. One of our most chaotic—and joyous—meetings was when Annetta Hoffnung came and showed us film and audio of musical escapades conducted by her late husband, the inimitable and sadly missed Gerard.

Only around once per season would one of our own members contribute a programme. However nowadays—and only partly to save on fees and expenses—we have much more local content, either from our own members, particularly Chairman and composer David Fisher, our President Neil Crutchley, or other distinguished musicians living and working in and around Leicester.

Another recent change has been an initiative to include live music-making, perhaps to justify the assertion that we are no longer only a *Recorded* music society. In December 2023 we put on a "Victorian Christmas" event in a Leicester church, with carols, solo performances and recitations. This year we did a

similar event with live organ music, accompanied solo songs and Christmas poems. In January the Director of Music at Leicester Cathedral conducted a hybrid meeting, playing recordings of organ music in the first half, and after the refreshment break repairing with us to the adjacent chapel to play on its organ.

We believe we've solved the problem of getting members to attend AGMs by conducting them in record time, immediately followed by our annual Fun Music Quiz!

There is no longer a dedicated Programme Secretary. Instead, seasons are devised by society officers at committee meetings, with email to continue discussions between times. It all seems to work quite well, but inevitably much depends on the dedication and work of the officers and committee.

If you'd like to get more of a flavour of what we do, have a look at the Programme Pages of our web site (<https://leicester-music.org.uk/programme.html>). After each meeting we fill out its web page with an appreciation from a member, a list of the music played, and some pictures, so there is quite a lot to see.

Community Bank Accounts: a Sign of the Times

Adele Wills, FRMS Secretary

My local society – the Street and Glastonbury Recorded Music Group – has long had a community bank account with Lloyds Bank that we use to pay in member subscriptions and keep them secure. We also have a cheque book that we use to pay any out-goings such as FRMS affiliation fees or other expenses. It is not a large account but having it is convenient and tidy.

In December 2024, we received a letter from the bank informing us that, from January 2025, the account would be subject to a monthly charge of £5 while there would also be a small fee – in the region of 50p – for each transaction. We currently have a membership of 14, so, although these charges may look small, we would either have to increase our membership subscription or become financially unviable – neither of which are attractive options. In the event, we closed the account and are now dealing exclusively in cash.

I have received a call from another society in exactly the same position, so Lloyds is clearly not the only bank moving in this direction (the second bank involved is the Bank of Scotland). I know of other societies who have faced considerable difficulties in even opening a community bank account.

This is a particular problem for smaller societies, and it looks as if banks are simply not interested in looking

after our money because the sums are so small. So much for community spirit!

If you find yourself in this position, there are not many options. Where a committee member already has an account with a bank, there may be some flexibility – Santander, for example, continue to offer community accounts where this is the case. NatWest seem currently to be offering free community accounts, as do Barclays, the Co-op and the Metro bank, although this could change. It is certainly the case that most of the other banks are now charging – and, even if an account is available, you need nerves of steel and dogged perseverance to survive the Spanish Inquisition-style registration processes!

So, for Street and Glastonbury, it looks like we are back to the ‘tried and tested’ method of cash under the bed. So much for progress in the twenty-first century.

My Involvement with Recorded Music

George Steele – Vice-President of FRMS

I never studied anything to do with music. My interests were science and engineering leading to my eventual target of Chartered Engineer status.

During the late ‘60s whilst living in Glossop, Derbyshire, I attended evening classes on music appreciation. From that I learned to appreciate Schumann song cycles, opera and symphonies.

Some years later while I was leading alpine walking holidays I met John Heyes. He lived on the IoW and was involved with the two Recorded Music Societies on the island. Later he was also a member of the FRMS committee.

I joined Rochdale GS in 1998 because of John’s enthusiasm. After he died in 2003, I decided to join the FRMS Committee in his memory.

The Rochdale society has an interesting background and is now the second oldest member of the FRMS. Here is the story of its founding from its website..

‘The Society was started by Mr Frank Walkden who was then living in Milnrow. He had an EMG gramophone which had a huge horizontal horn. He and two friends met over a glass of beer in the Commercial Hotel, and it was proposed to try to form a gramophone society. They canvassed a group of friends and advertised in the Rochdale Observer. The response was one, a Miss McCormick from Balderstone, who joined and remained a member until her marriage.

The first meeting was in the Drake Hotel in November 1931. On the night of the first meeting the EMG

gramophone, which had been ordered, had not arrived. The railway people had failed to deliver it in time for the meeting and Mr Walkden had to run up to the Fishwick Street sidings to collect it. There was a right to-do in persuading the night staff to allow him to take it away, but they did and the waiting members had an exciting time trying it out.’

When I joined it had over 30 members and met weekly in the evening. In 2000 we changed to meeting in the afternoon because of a clash with scouts who wanted the evening spot. A few years ago, we changed to meeting every other week as membership had shrunk. It is now down to 8 members of whom two are ill. It was therefore decided to terminate the Society, which closed in December 2024.

In earlier days we had a mixture of presentations from members, local musicians and presenters from other societies. In more recent years we have also been able to view opera and ballet using a digital projector.

From early days my partner, Monica, and I visited FRMS events at Daventry and participated in events organised by the old Yorkshire area committee. At these I was able to act as photographer and produced work for later use on the website which I managed after 2007.

I made presentations at RGS and also at several other societies in the NW and also in Yorkshire. My presentations were either composer-based or other ideas such as “Inspired by foreign shores”. “Some Strings” and “More Strings”. Several of my presentations have been made available for other societies via the FRMS website. My own musical tastes are wide but especially Vienna based.

I stayed on the Committee for many years because I enjoyed the meetings and the interaction with other members. Eventually when Ron Mitchell joined the Committee, I realised that, as a computer programmer, he could probably make a better job of managing the website than I had done.

The role of Vice-Chairman became available, so I opted for that instead of Website Manager. That job had involved me in interaction with other Committee members and had given me a lot of pleasure. With the necessary move to Zoom meetings I felt that some of the attraction of the Committee had gone. Consequently, I made known my interest in the role of Vice-President.

I see my new role as Vice-President being a less busy role but keeping me involved with the FRMS.

TORBAY MUSICAL WEEKEND

John Isaac

“All good things must come to an end” and it was on those terms that we arrived for the 2024 Weekend at the Grand Hotel, Torquay, thinking this would be our last such Torbay Musical Weekend. About 55 members attended what turned out to be ‘one of the best yet’. However, after the weekend, developments have arisen that may well mean that the Torbay Music Weekends will continue. For the moment, we will report on the 2024 weekend, which was splendid with many congratulations received from members, presenters and recitalists alike.

We opened the programme on Friday evening with a recital given by guitar legend John Mills and cello maestro Andrew Fuller entitled *Latin Serenade*, a musical tour of Spain and Latin America featuring Granados, Guatali, Villa-Lobos, Piazzolla and de Falla. The first half also included their transcription of Schubert’s Arpeggione Sonata. Next morning they talked about their experiences playing alongside names like Andres Segovia Julian Bream; Yehudi Menuhin and Andre Previn, revealing their ‘highs’ and ‘disasters’.

Next, we had a most instructive and enjoyable *Guitars – Made and Played* presentation from maker and player Laurie Burn, a type of presentation which was fascinating and, in this instance, had people eating out of his hands, it was so well done.

Wagner! A talk on *The Sorcerer of Bayreuth* was most enlightening and David Bednall left no stone unturned as to all the surrounding influences and personae that allowed *the Sorcerer* to produce so much that was in the ‘genius’ category. Not to be missed!

We are moving into a new era. Classical Music is ceasing to be the ‘snobs paradise’ and so many of the great composers have come to life in popular culture and their great music permeates so much drama/tension/romance to say nothing of TV commercials. We were reminded that good composers borrow the work of others and great composers steal the works. This is so easy now as so much is out of copyright! Only Tony Rawlins could have shown this so well in *Baroque on a Roll*.

Sunday, and Dr Steve Wright introduced us to an Armenian/American hardly known this side of the Atlantic in *Alan Hovhanness*. This composer was prolific, and we were enlightened by music neither romantic nor programmatic but ‘Impressionistic’. Certainly, this was obvious in his Symphony *Mount St Helens*.

So many composers left works ‘unfinished’ or at points which superstition suggested death was at hand. Entitled *Schubert’s ‘Unfinished Business’*, David Thresher gave a fascinating presentation and delved into so many of Schubert’s forgotten fragments.

Emma Johnson needs no introduction, and we had the most polished and professional presentation about *Tales from Vienna*. So many brilliant composers rubbed shoulders at one time and Emma played many recordings of their timeless, melodic, harmonious, works that are so well known yet so good that they are not hackneyed. With the music we enjoyed many quality pictures on the screen. A masterpiece of presentation.

Our weekend closed with *Recital 2* of harp music which showed how versatile the harp can be. We heard so many well-known pieces, mostly transcribed from compositions for other instruments. Fiona Hosford not only played but also described the structure of the harp and the working of the pedals, which inspired one member of the audience to remark on her choice of what appeared to be a very expensive pair of red stiletto shoes.

The current FRMS Officers and Committee

President

Julian Lloyd Webber OBE

Vice-Presidents

Paul Astell

Allan Child

George Steele

Chairman

Tony Sanderson

tony.sanderson@thefrms.co.uk

Vice-Chairman

David Wherrell

david.wherrell@thefrms.co.uk

Secretary

Adele Wills

secretary@thefrms.co.uk

Treasurer

Paul Corfield Godfrey

paul.godfrey@thefrms.co.uk

Website Manager

Ron Mitchell

website-manager@thefrms.co.uk

Articles for Newsletters

The next newsletter should be published in September 2025. Please send any society news or articles by 1st August to the Chairman at the email address shown above. Any contributions would be welcome, such as an article about your society.

Current and past Newsletters can be downloaded at:

www.thefrms.co.uk
