



Compiled and edited by Tony Sanderson, FRMS Chairman

From the Chairman's Desk

I have recently begun my tenure as Chairman of the Federation. Unfortunately, I have contracted the CIDP variant of Guillain-Barré's Syndrome, which has left me with a considerable loss of mobility, at least in the short to medium term. I hope to visit member societies when I am fit and able. However, I have been hospitalised for almost four months and so I intend to make contact with member societies by phone in the short term.

So, in the meantime, here are some thoughts on recordings I have come across and concerts I have been to over the last couple of years or so.

Premieres

I have enjoyed being at premieres of new works by John Adams, Sir James MacMillan, Joanna Marsh and Magnus Lindberg. The CBSO have a long line of premieres to their credit, such as Gustav Holst's *Egdon Heath*. I heard them give the UK premiere of the *Third Symphony (A Line Above the Sky)* by the Austrian composer Thomas Larcher.

I enjoyed premieres of two works by Sir James MacMillan, his *Christmas Oratorio*, conducted by Sir Mark Elder at London's Royal Festival Hall, which contrasted with his haunting anthem *Christus Vincit* for the Choir of New College, Oxford. In a talk before the anthem was performed, MacMillan said he wrote a quiet ending to allow the congregation to reflect on the words. He was inspired by the piano music of Robert Schumann to do this.

Another set of contrasting premieres were by the British composer Joanna Marsh. I was present at the 2019 premiere, again at New College, of her 2019 anthem *O Ignis Spiritus*, a setting of words by Hildegard of Bingen. By contrast, her work *Apollo Resurrected*, featuring a string orchestra and jugglers, performed at Kings Place in London in 2022, was a very different experience.

In 2022, I also attended her work *SEEN* for the BBC Singers in which she worked with electronics for the first time.



Meeting composer Joanna Marsh at one of her London premieres

I greatly enjoyed British Youth Opera's performance at the 2023 Three Choirs Festival of Ralph Vaughan Williams' Opera *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Their liveliness and joy in music making was very infectious.



British Youth Opera receive applause for their performance at the 2023 Three Choirs Festival of Ralph Vaughan Williams' Opera *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Here is a note on the concert I wrote for [slippedisc.com](https://slippedisc.com/2023/07/the-pilgrims-progress-first-review/)
<https://slippedisc.com/2023/07/the-pilgrims-progress-first-review/>.

Unfortunately, because of health reasons I wasn't able to attend the festival this year.

I was delighted to meet the famous critic Norman Lebrecht at the Birmingham Book Launch of his 2023 publication *Why Beethoven*. No question mark in the title, because he wasn't *asking* why but *explaining* why by exploring the "core" of Beethoven's personality in 100 pieces. He is the editor of the slippedisc.com classical news website.

I very much enjoyed attending the world premiere of John Adams' London Symphony Orchestra Commission *Frenzy*. It was a frenetic piece with boundless energy.



Sir Simon Rattle Invites John Adams to appreciate the applause for the world premiere of his new Orchestral Work *Frenzy* at London's Barbican Centre.

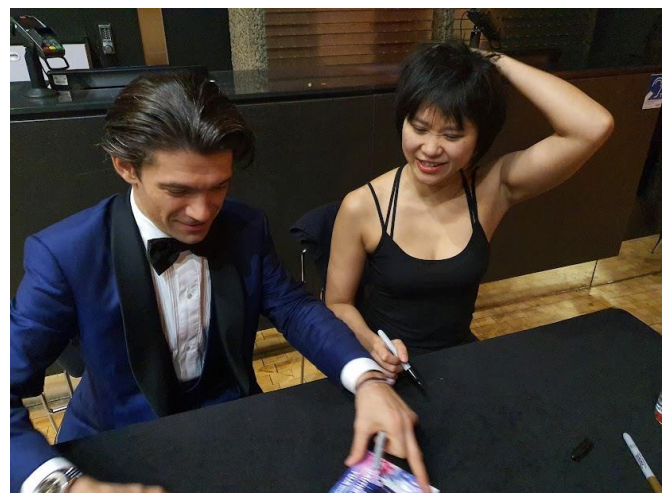
Another premiere I attended was the UK premiere of Marcus Lindberg's Third Piano Concerto written for the Chinese American pianist Yuja Wang. The work got mixed reviews. Judge for yourself.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mK-i39DS1k&t=8s>



This one didn't work out so well – Yuja Wang applauds the composer Magnus Lindberg at the UK premiere of his third piano concerto. Some London critics complained it lacked big tunes!

I was also able to attend a chamber music recital by the pianist Yuja Wang and the cellist Gautier Capuçon, which included an arrangement for cello and piano of Frank's Violin Sonata.



Signing my CD – the pianist Yuja Wang and the cellist Gautier Capuçon

Crossing Boundaries and the Bridgerton Effect

[Rock My Wedding](#) have produced a playlist for a wedding reception. It comprises popular songs arranged for string quartet. They write

“we just want to take a moment to talk about Bridgerton wedding music. Because, let’s face it, Ariana Grande, ‘thank u, next’ covered by a string quartet? Perfection. More and more couples are moving away from the traditional Wedding March. Now, whilst it will always be the original banger (you know it is), we can’t help but love the fact that couples are exploring something a little different.”

Here are some you can try for yourself.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= So28S0lfNk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=So28S0lfNk)

Tara Bitran, writing in Netflix’s [Tudum](#) online magazine about orchestral covers in season 3 of *Bridgerton*, says “Each of these gorgeous orchestral selections was specifically chosen by showrunner Chris Van Dusen and music supervisor Justin Kamps so that these stirring instrumental covers would pull on your heartstrings at just the right moments of dancing, merriment, heartache and, naturally, pining”.

Justin Kamps says that they used an orchestral cover of Pitbull’s *Give Me Everything* for an intimate carriage scene because “the song has this great build to it, and that’s what the scene really needed”.

Deutsche Grammophon Goes Crossover

If popular songs are getting a classical makeover, I thought I would take a look at the famous yellow label to see if anything there is moving in the opposite direction. I have noted that in recent months they have signed that perennial Classic FM favourite Einaudi, as well as musicians such as Moby and Brian Eno.

There seems a more multicultural mix of artists too. Currently DG list on their website the following new signings. They have signed Meredi, a classically trained German-Armenian whose name means “melody”. She writes, performs, and produces expressive, intimate, melody-driven music according to DG. They have also signed the LA-based Indonesian composer, Eunike Tanzil. Bangkok Post describes her orchestral work *Celestial Waves* as “a marvel of thematic imagination”.

Another crossing East-West boundaries is the Japanese composer Joe Hisaishi, who has recorded his second symphony and his *Viola Saga* with the Vienna Symphony.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lO37ypbl-g>

Classical artists exploring other repertoire include Daniel Hope exploring *Irish Roots* and the French cellist Camille Thomas giving the French crooner and resistance fighter Charles Aznavour the full Bridgerton treatment in her new album *Aznavouria*.

Female Composers

At a concert of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra I was impressed that the Venezuelan composer and pianist Gabriela Montero improvises her encores. Her first piano concerto *Latin* is well worth a listen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yA2BwY2rz3c&pp=ygUrZ2FicmlibGEgbW9udGVybyBwaWFubyBjb25jZXJ0byBuby4gMSBsYXRpbG%3D%3D>

Full of Mexican verve and life is Gabriela Ortiz’s violin concerto *Altar de Cuerda*, played by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and soloist María Dueñas.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7xovNtF2Qo&list=OLAK5uy_ltg6k2Kcl0DI6KR03Z4XgWxHVgTvj9pOs

On the subject of female composers, New College Choir Oxford includes pieces by Deborah Pritchard on their very recent album *Commissions and Premieres*. With new commissions for Joanna Marsh and Sir James MacMillan, let’s hope a second album of commissions is in the works.

A couple of other young British female composers have caught my ear. On BBC Radio 3, I recently heard the slow movement, *Longing*, of Dobrinka Tabakova’s Concerto for Cello and Strings. I found it very beautiful.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iFrYFkxzTA>

Following on a line of British composers inspired by nature, Eleanor Alberga’s First Symphony is about Planet Earth. In this recording by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the first movement depicts the Old Testament *Firmament*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BK4ZtDO2Sto>

Anton Bruckner (1824 – 1896)

In this year of the 200th anniversary of his birth, BRUCKNER2024 is a large-scale project begun in 2011 by the conductor Gerd Schaller with the aim of performing all symphonies of Anton Bruckner in all versions on the concert stage and on CD before the composer’s 200th birthday. The Project includes not only all symphonies in all versions but also the

“intermediate variants”, so it is a good year for Bruckner completists.

<https://www.bruckner2024.com/en/>

So, is it best to stick with the tried and tested recordings of his symphonies by Eugen Jochum or Herbert von Karajan, or try the newer kids on the block like Christian Thielemann or Andris Nelsons? Personally, I think I will try to get acquainted with his choral music, of which I have enjoyed Zubin Mehta’s Vienna Performance of the *Te Deum*. On a much smaller scale, I would recommend Edward Higginbottom’s performance with the Choir of New College Oxford on their *Agnus Dei* album of Bruckner’s *Christus factus est*.

British Giants

George Lloyd fans will be delighted to see that Lyrita are releasing a complete cycle of his symphonies, concerti and choral music.

<https://www.lyrita.co.uk/>

Sir Mark Elder is standing down as the Music Director of the Hallé Orchestra at this year’s BBC Proms. To mark the occasion, the Hallé Orchestra have released a new album of Elgar’s two complete symphonies. Sir Mark describes this as “music that lies at the very heart of what the Hallé and I have achieved together over the past quarter century”.

<https://halle.co.uk/news-blog/latest-album/>

We also ought to take a moment to honour the late **Sir Andrew Davis**. He is best known for his interpretation of British composers, especially of Elgar and Vaughan Williams with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. In recent years, his recording home was Chandos.

https://www.chandos.net/artists/Sir_Andrew_Davis/10807

As well as more Elgar, he brought us Sir Arthur Bliss’s neglected *The Beatitudes*, music by Sir Arnold Bax, Charles Ives and, in an out-of-the-box moment, he orchestrated Alban Berg’s Piano Sonata.

Dua Lipa

I have been catching up on the story of Glastonbury headliner and Grammy Award winning singer Dua Lipa, the British and Albanian singer. Brought up in London, she moved to Kosovo with her family at the age of 11 but moved back to complete her education in London, flat-sharing with a friend from Kosovo. She always wanted to pursue a musical career.

She has described not being accepted into a school choir and the effect the disappointment caused her. She also speaks about the very positive effect when a music teacher, recognising the special quality in her voice, put her in a group with fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds and how this boosted her confidence.

A voracious reader, she submits a monthly choice for the [Service 95 Book Club](#). Titles include *Swimming in the Dark*, a love story set in the final years of Communist Poland, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, *Norwegian Wood* by Haruki Murakami, and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. Her new album, *Radical Optimism*, encourages her young audience through life’s setbacks. Dua always tries to insert a positive note into her songs. The album closes with *Happy for You*, in which she wishes a boyfriend well with his new girlfriend. The message I would take from her story is the vital role music teachers can have in nurturing young talent.

In Conclusion

After all that, I would suggest a few trends. Thanks to *Bridgerton* it’s a good time to be a string quartet if you want to cash in on the wedding market. Boundaries between different styles of music are becoming more fluid, and young composers from Latin America and indeed our own country are breathing new life into traditional music forms. East-West divides in music are breaking down. But above all, one message that needs bringing out to our politicians is that music education is an important and vital national investment.



This is advance notice of the next FRMS AGM, which will take place on Saturday 2 November at 2.00 pm by Zoom. This is an ideal opportunity for all societies to join the FRMS committee to take part in Federation business, but also to contribute to discussions about future ventures. It is easy to join and all from the comfort of your own home. You just need a computer and an internet connection – we can help you with the rest. Please do book this date in your diary. Further information will be sent out to your society Secretary in August, so keep an eye out for this and we look forward to seeing you.

Adele Wills, FRMS Secretary

A Forthcoming Weekend Event!



15th – 18th
November 2024 at
The Grand Hotel,
Torquay
TQ2 6NT

Although not an FRMS event, the Torbay Musical

Weekend is supported by FRMS members, and we are pleased to promote it. The Grand Hotel is located on the seafront, adjacent to the railway station.

David Wherrell and I, Tony Sanderson, from the FRMS Committee, attended last year's and thoroughly enjoyed the weekend. David assisted a friend with one of the presentations.

Attending TMW is a very agreeable way to spend a winter weekend away from home before the pre-Christmas rush, listening to music in comfortable surroundings amongst congenial companions who share your interests and tastes.

Music lovers have gathered in Torquay annually for well over fifty years to listen and talk to a wide variety of people from the world of music, including critics, composers, performers, presenters, and writers, providing an opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones.

Friday

The programme commences on Friday evening at 6pm with a welcome reception and dinner, followed by the first recital of the weekend. This is given by celebrated classical guitarist **John Mills** and cello soloist **Andrew Fuller** presenting *Latin Serenade*, a musical tour of Spanish and Latin America. It will feature music by de Falla, Granados, Piazzolla, Villa-Lobos, Casals and Cassadó from their recent CD release on Meridian Records.

The first half includes their transcription of Schubert's wonderful *Arpeggione Sonata*.

Saturday

Saturday's programme starts off with **John Mills** and **Andrew Fuller** discussing the highs and lows, triumphs and disasters of half a century on tour as well as introductions to, and demonstrations of, their instruments.

This is followed by the guitar-maker and composer **Laurie Burn** giving an illustrated talk with humorous anecdotes based on his experiences of learning first to

play, then build guitars. Laurie will play examples of his favourite folk, ragtime and blues music.

After time to relax or explore the Torquay seafront **David Bednall** will explore the enormous and sometimes divisive influence of Richard Wagner in the early evening session. He will show that Wagner's influence is still felt today, including in music for the cinema.

In the after-dinner session **Tony Rawlins** will describe how classical music has enhanced the drama/tension/romance of feature films and how it has made some TV commercials really memorable.

Sunday

Following breakfast on Sunday morning **The Friends of Torbay AGM** will take place. After which **Dr. Stephen Wright** will explore the prodigious output of the American-born Armenian composer Alan Hovhanness. Stephen will navigate and play excerpts of the composer's 653 catalogued works, which include 67 symphonies.

In the afternoon, **David Thresher** delves into the considerable number of unfinished works in Schubert's prolific output, including symphonies, quartets and piano sonatas. David hopes to uncover some hidden gems.

In the early evening, **Emma Johnson** asks what is so special about Vienna, which nurtured composers such as Mozart, Haydn, Gluck, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Strauss, Mahler, Bruckner and Schoenberg. Emma will reveal that this explosion of talent also applied to visual art, architecture, science and politics.

After dinner the harpist **Fiona Hosford** will entertain with a varied programme – a sublime and exciting mix of Classical Harp and Jazz pieces....all with accompanying anecdotes, and all delivered in Fiona's own inimitable way.

Monday

Enjoy a hearty breakfast to finish off the weekend.

The full programme and booking form can be obtained on The Friends of Torbay website at www.fot.org.uk or by contacting Gillian Babbs on 020 8668 2775, leaving your name and address. Alternatively, email Gillian at gillianbabbs23@gmail.com

Please note: programme information has been obtained from the official Torbay Musical Weekend 2024 leaflet. Details were correct at the time of going to print but are subject to alteration without notice.

The Friends of Torbay Committee have been in post for many years now. They no longer feel they can continue

in this role but are happy to support a new committee or structure for the Friends of Torbay. If you are interested in taking up a role on a new committee, please contact the current Chairman, John Isaac by his email, bryanjwisaac@outlook.com

The Tolkien Estate Permits Paul Corfield Godfrey to Compose an Opera of the Lord of the Rings

The Treasurer of the FRMS, Paul Corfield Godfrey, is the only composer to have been permitted by the Tolkien Estate to write an opera on the text of *The Lord of the Rings*. This follows on from his 10-CD setting of epic scenes from *The Silmarillion*, J.R.R. Tolkien's posthumous novel realised by his son Christopher Tolkien. Paul has been interviewed on Australia's ABC.

For many years since the 1960s the composer has been working on sketches for what has now evolved as "musical chapters from *The Lord of the Rings*" and he has now completed a fully operatic setting of the texts which will incorporate revised material from the original fragments and episodes to produce a companion work on the same scale as *The Silmarillion*. This work is currently in the process of recording by Volante Opera, and it is anticipated that Prima Facie will release the complete cycle in 2025–26.

The professional singers, some thirty in number, come mainly from Welsh National Opera and Angharad Morgan, for example, will be assuming the role of Galadriel that she has already undertaken in the recording of *The Silmarillion*. Other principal artists will include Simon Crosby Buttler as Frodo, Julian Boyce as Sam, Michael Clifton-Thompson as Gollum, Huw Llywelyn as Bilbo, Philip Lloyd-Evans as Gandalf and Stephen Wells as Aragorn.

Philip Ashton

Phil passed away suddenly after a long illness on 27th January. I first met him at one of the Federation's music weekends at Daventry, which I had started attending with my late father, Arthur,

Phil was the technical officer for the Federation and always gave a most insightful roundup of the latest trends in audio techniques and the many new sources of music, including *Spotify* and other online apps, at the music weekends. It was at one of the weekends that it transpired that Phil was a long-standing member of the Letchworth Recorded Music Society, which is local to me, and he invited me to go along to the next meeting as his guest. I joined soon after. He was also responsible for me joining the FRMS committee, introducing me to one of the meetings in Derby.

Sadly, Phil became unwell a few years ago and he eventually had to 'retire' from both his Federation post and meetings in Letchworth. He was a great admirer and quite an authority on Sibelius and regularly gave presentations including his music.

A great fan of PMC loudspeakers, a pair of which graced his living room and were his pride and joy. He got to know the manufacturers, who were in Luton, and was able to arrange the loan of a pair of PMCs for music weekends.

Phil was a one-off and is missed by all who knew him.

We send our condolences to Dena and family.

David Wherrell

The current FRMS Officers and Committee

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Allan Child

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Other Member of the Committee

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Distribution of Newsletters

Newsletters will be sent out by email. Societies desiring printed copies should contact the Secretary.

The next newsletter will be published in January 2025. Please send any society news or articles by 1st December to the Editor, chairman@thefrms.co.uk.

Current and past newsletters can be downloaded at: thefrms.co.uk.
