



Compiled and edited by Simon Rawlings FRMS committee member.

From the Chairman's Desk

When I took the chair at the FRMS AGM in 2013 I little thought that I would remain as acting chairman for what might be described as the Federation's *annus horribilis*, or indeed that I would continue as chairman for the next ten years. The deaths of our chairman, our president, and then our vice-chairman, all in little over eight months, were seen by some as a misfortune from which it was not be easy to recover.

Yet now, ten years on, the Federation is still functioning, albeit in different circumstances. We survived the crisis of 2013-14 and were looking to a brighter future when Covid-19 put all our plans in disarray. There is little doubt that a few societies closed as a result, directly or indirectly, of the pandemic and its ensuing lockdown; others that have survived now face other challenges. There are some positives from the pandemic, however. We have learned the joys of online working and our committee meetings are now held using Zoom, benefitting both the Federation's finances and members' time (though we miss the accompanying lunch). And holding the AGM online has enabled more societies to participate than when attendance involved extensive travelling.

So, I think this is a suitable time to tidy the chairman's desk, as it were, put out the lights and lock up the office. Which is a way of saying that after ten years the time has come for me to hand on the chairmanship, so that I will not be seeking re-election at this year's AGM. But I cannot end without expressing my appreciation and thanks, firstly to all the members of the committee for their support during my time in office, and secondly to the societies up and down the country which it has been my pleasure to visit. It would be invidious to pick out individuals, so I'll just say, "Thank you, everyone, you've been a great team!"

Allan Child, FRMS Chairman



2023

As you may recall, last year we were finally able to return to a 'live' AGM, the long-postponed Leicester event. The Leicester Music Society organised a wonderful event for us with a comfortable hotel, an interesting speaker and an end of day dinner and musical entertainment. Unfortunately, although those who were able to attend had a very enjoyable day, attendance was lower than we had hoped, not helped by the fact that the event coincided with another round of national rail strikes.

As a result, I conducted a survey of all affiliate societies earlier this year to ascertain preferences for future AGMs. There would be little point in going to all the effort and expense of organising another live event if members are not able to attend. The results of the survey indicated a very clear and majority preference for conducting the AGM online, as we had done over the pandemic and when we had our highest AGM attendance for many years.

Therefore, this year's AGM will once again take place remotely on Zoom; and this is likely to be the pattern for the foreseeable future. It is undeniable that there were many advantages to holding the meeting virtually as the online meeting allowed a much wider geographical range of societies to attend and it provided a productive platform for discussion and interaction. And all in the comfort of our own homes!

The only downside to the Zoom meeting is that there is no real chance to meet fellow music-lovers – and it is hard to enjoy a dinner together online! Sadly, the cancellation of this year's music weekend means that the FRMS will no longer hold a live event at all during 2023, although we hope that this will mean that there will be greater interest in the Torbay Music Weekend which we are helping to promote again this year.

So, the date for the next AGM is **Saturday 4th November at 2pm.**

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AGM 2023

The Zoom technology will allow everyone who has an internet connection to be involved and it really is very easy to use. It costs nothing and all you do is submit an email to me – using the form which you will receive in the AGM invitation letter – and our website manager will then ensure that you are sent an electronic invitation. I do hope that as many of you as possible will be able to join us. In addition, joining the Federation committee has never been easier as all our meetings will now be held in this way. There are still vacancies on the committee, so please do think seriously about joining us. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on **4 November at 2pm.**

Adele Wills, FRMS Secretary



Society News...

Afternoons vs Evenings!

It is a fact that some societies are struggling to keep existing members and attract new ones for various reasons. One factor can be the reluctance of people to travel during the evening, whether due to poor light during the autumn and winter periods, inclement weather or perhaps just not wishing to go out towards the end of the day.

“Rochdale Gramophone Society changed from evening to afternoon meetings... This change took place in 2001 and has worked satisfactorily since.”

The above is a quote from an email received a few months ago from George Steele, member of RGS and FRMS Vice-Chairman.

There may be ‘downsides’ to holding meetings during the afternoon, however. For example, if professional speakers are invited but may not be available due to work commitments. This could apply to any members who might have commitments during the day too. There could also be difficulties booking the venue. So, afternoon meetings may not be suitable for all, and it is

clearly a matter for individual societies to decide when they meet.

I would like to include my local society here, if I may, Weston-Super-Mare Music Appreciation Society. Just before and immediately after Covid, we only had around eighteen members on the books, with an average of fourteen to fifteen attending on a regular basis. We had plans to change from evening to afternoon meetings before the pandemic hit but were unable to do so until 2021. Since changing to afternoons, our numbers have gradually increased to currently thirty paid-up members with usually around twenty-six attending most meetings. We occasionally welcome guests (temporary members) at some of our meetings, boosting the numbers even further! Our programme consists of twelve meetings during the spring/summer period, generally every two weeks and then additional monthly meetings during the autumn/winter period. We have professional guest speakers from time to time and changing to afternoons has not put any of our regular professionals off.

“If the meetings weren't held during the afternoons, we certainly wouldn't be coming”.

A recent comment made by two members of WSM Music Appreciation Society.

The following note was recently received from Michael Henderson, Secretary Northampton RMS:

“The Northampton RMS has a membership of nineteen with two non-attending members. Two years ago, there was a meeting to discuss changes that may be of benefit. The first change was to meet from March to December. The second change moved the attendance from evening to the afternoon. Both changes were agreed and proved to be beneficial. There is now an average attendance of > 72%”.

Also from David Wherrell, Chairman Letchworth RMS:

“Like most societies, we have been losing members steadily over the past few years and the situation was not helped by Covid. Most members are ‘getting on’ and all are retired, and it was becoming difficult for some to venture out in the cold and dark winter months.

The committee discussed the situation and we found we were able to change our meeting bookings at our venue, The Settlement, in Letchworth. We decided to ‘test the water’ and hold one meeting on a Friday afternoon, starting at 2:30pm, instead of our usual time of 7:30pm. This was an additional presentation by our then chairman, Mervyn Miller.

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We were delighted to have almost all members attend, plus one or two guests, so we decided to start the 2022-23 season with afternoon meetings and attendance has held up well, with members happy with the new time. Two guests have now become full members which has further swelled our numbers, which hover around twelve to fifteen members attending. Not a large number, but enough to make it worthwhile.

The 2023-2024 season has also seen us include three guest presenters in the programme, which has not happened for some time. Having afternoon meetings makes it easier for the guest presenters to get to Letchworth. It is good to be able to report some good news and I sincerely hope this trend continues. Perhaps other societies may be able to maintain, or even boost, their membership this way."

I suspect there are other societies now meeting during the day rather than the evening. However, as already stated... it must be a decision made by each society as to when they meet. So, please regard the contents of this article as simply 'food for thought!'

I am sure many societies are looking at ways to enhance their membership recruitment and retention. Perhaps you or your society have other ideas to promote activities and increase interest. If so, please send us your ideas which we could perhaps include in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Another thought... Other groups, such as some u3a groups, for example, hold morning meetings!

Simon Rawlings, Editor

A Forthcoming Weekend Event!



**17th – 20th
November 2023 at
The Grand Hotel,
Torquay
TQ2 6NT**

Although not an FRMS event, the Torbay Musical

Weekend is supported by many FRMS members, and we are pleased to promote this event. The Grand Hotel is located on the sea front, adjacent to the railway station.

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, 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 given by **Ensemble Hesperis**. (Mary-Jannet Leith – Recorders, Magdalena Loth-Hill – Baroque Violin, Florence Petit – Baroque Cello and Thomas Allery – Harpsichord).

Saturday

Saturday's programme starts off with an outreach presentation by the members of Ensemble Hesperis, followed by **An introduction to the life and times of 'The Ninth'** by Peter Fender. Later, Robert Mansell will present **Franz Liszt, his music and his women-but no wedding!!** The evening concludes with **A look around Opera** by David Duncan.

Sunday

Following breakfast on Sunday morning, **The Friends of Torbay AGM** will take place. After which Andrew Borkowski will present **Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: Maestro of Song and Aria**. Sunday afternoon starts off with **The Other Side of the Pond** by Kevin Valerian Ryland, followed by David Wherrell **'It's all the Seine to me'**. The climax of this year's Torbay Musical Weekend will be a recital **'An Evening of Harp'** given by Fiona Hosford, followed by closing comments from John Isaac.

Monday

Enjoy a hearty breakfast to finish off your 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 2023 Leaflet, and details were correct at the time of going to print but are subject to alteration without notice.

musicwebinternational.com

For nearly thirty years MusicWeb International has been a respected recording review site. We post new reviews every weekday and to date we have published just over 58,000. We used to post ten reviews a day but recently are happy to be able to post eight but sometimes we only manage six. The record labels respect us so much that almost all of them send us all their new releases. So we have no shortage of recordings to review; in fact at present we simply can't cover all the releases sent to us. At any one time we have about forty active reviewers, but it is not enough to give the full range of coverage we like to provide. We are seeking additional reviewers. You do not have to be a musician or be able to write analytical notes but just to have a keen interest in classical music with the ability to express how you feel about it.

Once a month you would be sent a list of available recordings and you can indicate your preferences for review. We would hope for at least two reviews per month of approximately 500 words, although there is no actual word limit. MusicWeb runs on a voluntary basis so there is no fee, but you do get to keep the CD or download. You would be writing for a worldwide readership numbering tens of thousands. In January we launched a new-look site which has been very well received but all our previous reviews remain available on our old site, and we have plenty of evidence that people regularly use us, not just to keep up with the new releases, but also to read our 'back catalogue' of reviews.

Over the years a number of FRMS members have written for MusicWeb. So, would you like to join them?

Do visit the site at: <https://www.musicwebinternational.com> so you can see the style of our reviews. If you are interested in joining our team of reviewers, or would like more information about what we do, I'd love to hear from you at: len@musicweb-international.com.

Len Mullenger, Founder of MusicWeb

A message from the editor

I would like to inform all our readers that I will be standing down from my present position on the committee and as editor of this Newsletter at the AGM in November. It has been a privilege compiling, editing, and distributing the Newsletter for the past five years which I think, due to the feedback received, has generally been found to be interesting and appreciated by members. I would like to thank Allan Child and Ron Mitchell for their invaluable help.

Should you, or anyone you know, be interested in the role of editor (which can easily be done from home), please contact Adele Wills in the first instance at: secretary@thefrms.co.uk

Thank you all for the support and interest shown.

Simon Rawlings, Editor

The current FRMS Officers and Committee

President	Vice-President
Julian Lloyd Webber OBE	Paul Astell

Chairman

Allan Child – chairman@thefrms.co.uk

Vice-Chairman

George Steele – george.steele@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

Committee (in alphabetical order)

Simon Rawlings simon.rawlings@thefrms.co.uk

Tony Sanderson tony.sanderson@thefrms.co.uk

David Wherrell david.wherrell@thefrms.co.uk

Distribution of Newsletters

If you are now willing to receive future newsletters electronically instead of hard copies, and have not already notified us of this, please contact Adele Wills at: secretary@thefrms.co.uk

The next newsletter should be published in January 2024. Please send any society news or articles by 1st December to the secretary at the email address shown above.

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