

FINE MUSIC
RADIO



OPUS
NEWSLETTER

AUGUST
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101.3 FM
GREATER CAPE TOWN

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IT'S A GLORIOUS THING

The Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance* sings, "It is a glorious thing, to be a Pirate King!" This line resonates because I'm grateful to our listeners who regard it as a glorious thing to be part of Fine Music Radio. (Also pirates get to wear the best frilly shirts and have perfect eyeliner ... but I digress.)

We had not a pirate, but a major general at FMR's 31st birthday concert. We also had a fleet of fantastic performers and listeners.

Six-year-old jazz fan Nico declared he only listens to FMR. We had a young man arrive on a skateboard, two previous station managers and also FMR members who have been with us since day one. It felt both nostalgic and current, and the question is: how do we move forward into the next year?

Two things. The first one we bang on about all the time – you know it – please become a member. Your support will help us to keep doing what we do.

The second is to introduce someone in your life to FMR. As fabulous as Nico is, it's his parents and grandparents who have encouraged his love of music.

As a parent myself I know there is a subtle art to sharing something you love, as opposed to force-feeding it, but you can be sneaky – if you do the school run, you have a captive audience! The *Children's Classic* is a weekday feature just after 7.20 am.

Which brings me to the next generation of musicians. The Fine Music Radio 2026 Music Awards are on **Tuesday, 28 July, and Friday, 31 July, at 6.30 pm** at the Baxter Concert Hall. Entrance is free (see below).

Every year we join up with Artscape's Associated Companies to pack lunches for Mandela Day with the Peninsula School Feeding Association. (This year we made 5 514 sandwiches.)

The fundraising manager, Charles Grey, in another life was a pirate in Act One, and a policeman in Act Two, of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*, which G&S staged at Artscape in July.

The production was wonderful and equally wonderful is the passion that keeps this society going.

That passion is something we are grateful to experience every day at FMR. People driven not only by a love of the arts, but more importantly by a desire to share it.

When it comes to sharing a love of music, Rodney Trudgeon has to be the maestro of radio maestros. (Even if there is no such thing as a radio maestro, the title seems fitting.)

On **14 September** we enjoy the final talk of the three in the *Behind the Music* series with Rodney Trudgeon, celebrating his fifty years in broadcasting (see below).

All glorious things!



Vanessa Levenstein
Opus Editor

STATION NOTES

THE FINE MUSIC RADIO 2026 MUSIC AWARDS

The awards celebrate South Africa's outstanding young musical talent across four categories – Classical Instrumental, Classical Vocal, Jazz and African Music. There is a total of R120 000 in prize money, thanks to the Rolf-Stephan Nussbaum Foundation. The event takes place at the Baxter Concert Hall and entry is free.

The finals will be broadcast on FMR on **16 August**: the Jazz and African Music Finals from **1 pm to 3 pm**, and the Classical Finals from **3 pm to 5 pm**.

Classical Instrumental and Classical Vocal Finals

Tuesday, 28 July at 6.30 pm

Jazz and African Music Finals

Friday, 31 July at 6.30 pm

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FINALISTS

Classical Vocal:

Chloë Loggenberg: soprano

Erin Beck: soprano

Nomgqibelo Sukwana: soprano

Classical Instrumental:

Trygve Nissen: cello

Madison le Roux: piano

Kyrah Adams: marimba

African Vocal / Instrumental:

Sinovuyo Balintulo: uhadi and nyunga nyunga

Laphakade Myataza: uhadi and umrhubhe

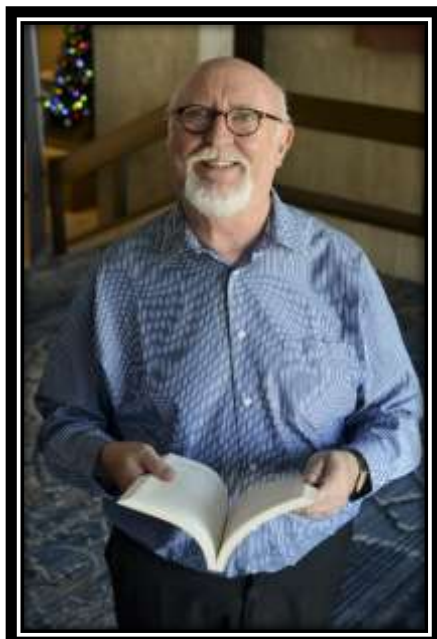
Likho Yonto: uhadi, nyunga nyunga and voice

Jazz Vocal / Instrumental:

Sarah Pengilly: vocals

Adam Powell: piano

Nomvuselelo Phoswa: vocals



BEHIND THE MUSIC: THE THIRD MOVEMENT WITH RODNEY TRUDGEON

Behind the Music: The Second Movement was a resounding success. You can watch it here: [The Second Movement](#). Don't miss the final talk in the series, *Behind the Music: The Third Movement*, in which Rodney celebrates fifty years in broadcasting.

The Third Movement takes place at the Artscape Opera Bar on **Monday, 14 September, at 6.30 pm for a 7 pm start**. Tickets include a complimentary glass of wine on arrival. Book now through Webtickets. Discounts are available for FMR members.

NEW VOICES ON FMR: AN OPUSCAST WITH WILLIAM BERGER AND KARABO RABALOI

In this Opuscast (*Opus* podcast) we're shining a light on two new voices who will be presenters at Fine Music Radio. I'm speaking to baritone William Berger and, staying with opera, soprano Karabo Rabaloi. They will be on air on **Sundays from 9 pm to 11 pm**.

WILLIAM BERGER

Vanessa: Anyone who was at Fine Music Radio's Birthday Gala last year, attended *The Barber of Seville*, or simply loves opera, will certainly know the voice of baritone William Berger.

Congratulations are in order because you've just won a Cape Town Theatre Award for your title role in *Bluebeard's Castle*.

William: Yes, that was Sunday night.

Vanessa: I think I can honestly say you're the only good thing that Covid brought, because it brought you back to South Africa.

William: That's very nice of you.

Vanessa: How long were you in the UK before returning home?

William: I went to the UK straight after finishing matric to do my undergraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London. I then lived there for 25 years, building a career, buying a house, getting married and all of that.

Then Covid happened and, as listeners might remember, it felt as though the world was ending. I frankly thought, "I need my mum and I want to come home." It has turned out to be the best decision I ever made.

Vanessa: We're certainly going to benefit from that decision. What do you hope to share with listeners on Fine Music Radio? Obviously, you come from an opera background ...

William: Actually, when I listen to music for pleasure, it's very seldom opera. As they say in England, it's a bit of a busman's holiday. If I'm listening to opera, it's usually because I'm studying a new role or analysing a score.

I actually enjoy orchestral music very much. Anything that doesn't have singers in it is generally what I choose to listen to.

I'm new to the team, so I don't decide what goes on air – I'm simply the voice behind the microphone. But the music selections are fantastic. There are some real gems that even I have never heard before, so I do quite a bit of preparation before each programme.

Vanessa: That's something we pride ourselves on. Bernhard Gueller has said that when he listens to Fine Music Radio, sometimes he hears a piece of music he's never heard before.

William: It's one of the things I love most. I don't think I'll ever hear all the classical music that's been written – it's impossible. There will always be something new to discover, or a forgotten manuscript waiting to be found in a dusty library somewhere in Europe.

Vanessa: If you could create your dream playlist, what would it include?

William: I think it's a personality flaw, but I don't really have favourites. I don't have a favourite colour, favourite dish or favourite drink. Why choose just one when you can enjoy them all? So I wouldn't have a favourite playlist either. It would depend entirely on my mood or even the weather outside. Finding the perfect piece of music for the moment is what's important.

Vanessa: That philosophy couldn't be a better fit for Fine Music Radio.



KARABO RABOLOI

Vanessa: What are some of your recent highlights?

Karabo: One of the highlights was performing with the Free State Symphony Orchestra in their Young Concerto Festival, which takes place every few years. I also travelled to Sweden for a workshop where people from all over the world come together to teach one another traditional songs from their own countries.

Vanessa: What songs did you share?

Karabo: We shared South African songs in Afrikaans, isiXhosa and Sesotho – many of them hymns that are widely sung here. We also taught the choreography and explained the cultural context behind the songs and why they're sung.

Vanessa: That sounds fascinating. Before Sweden, you were studying at UCT.

Karabo: Yes, I completed both my undergraduate degree and my postgraduate studies there.

Vanessa: What was your postgraduate experience like?

Karabo: It was interesting and definitely a learning curve. During my undergraduate studies there was a very structured programme, but postgraduate study was much more self-directed. You have to motivate yourself and manage your own time. There are no modules – it's all about preparing for competitions, concerts and building a repertoire that could eventually open doors internationally. Your options are broad at first, and then you gradually begin to narrow your focus.

Vanessa: And you won a competition as well?

Karabo: Yes. I won the duet section of the Aviva Pelham Opera Competition two years ago with tenor Luvo Maranti, who is now based in London.

During my postgraduate studies, my goal was to take part in these competitions and hopefully become a finalist in all of them. That happened, and winning was an added bonus.

Vanessa: That's a wonderful achievement. You seem to be very goal-oriented. Is a master's degree on the horizon?

Karabo: Not immediately, but it's definitely something I'd like to pursue. I've realised that I'm not just an opera singer – I'm an artist. That's one of the reasons I'm excited to be presenting on Fine Music Radio.

For my proposed master's thesis, I'd love to explore the relationship between music and medicine. It's a field that already exists, but I think there's still so much more to discover.

Vanessa: Singing can be such a powerful healing modality. You're currently on the fifth floor with Cape Town Opera, and now you're coming down to the Marble Foyer to Fine Music Radio. What are you most looking forward to?

Karabo: I love learning, especially beyond what I already know. I'm looking forward to discovering what presenting can offer me. As an opera singer, you're constantly researching – you need to understand the music, the text, the language and why you're on stage. Presenting is similar because you can't speak authentically about something you don't know. Working with different people and researching new topics will broaden my knowledge even further. It feels like the perfect fit.

Vanessa: Your love of research combined with your performance skills is now all coming together behind the microphone.

Karabo: One hundred percent.

Vanessa: What do you listen to at home?

Karabo: I'm a huge jazz lover. My favourite jazz artist, Abdullah Ibrahim, has just passed away, and a few years ago we lost Hugh Masekela. It feels like we've lost such incredible musical giants, artists who still had so much to teach us because they never stopped performing. Whenever I want to unwind, jazz is always my first choice.

To listen to this interview visit www.fmr.co.za/fmr-plus

ANNA'S BAROQUE BON BON

Ancient and Modern, by Anna Stoddard

The image below, *Amateurs of Tye-Wig Music*, painted by Charles Burney's nephew Edward, shows the clash between ancient and modern music. Still dressed in the clothes of the previous century with their "tye wigs", these musicians are giving a cacophonous performance of music by Corelli while, in the foreground, undisturbed, are scores by Beethoven and Mozart.

The painting reflects the clash of two contrasting musical ideals: a taste for the latest music from continental Europe and a growing reverence for the masterpieces of the past. These forces became evident in the late 18th century and are represented in two opposing ventures: Robert Bremner's *Periodical Overtures* and the launching of *The Concert of Antient Music*.

In 1763, Bremner began publishing a new symphony each month, bringing fashionable European music to Britain's expanding community of amateur musicians. Carefully adapted for domestic and amateur performance, the series introduced audiences to leading composers of the day. Amateur music societies outside London could subscribe to the series, with scores delivered to booksellers and coffee houses for collection.

Not everyone approved of this new music. Critics such as Charles Avison complained that foreign overtures were "pouring in" and confusing public taste. In response, a group of noblemen founded the *Concert of Antient Music* in 1776, deliberately using the outdated spelling of the word "ancient". Dedicated to music at least twenty years old, the concert programmes celebrated composers such as Handel, Corelli and Purcell. This society continued until 1848.

I will be exploring these two ventures in *Anna's Baroque Bon Bons* on **4 and 11 August**.

Anna's Baroque Bon Bons is on **Tuesdays at 7.15 am** and available as a podcast at www.fmr.co.za/podcasts/annas-baroque-bon-bons



Burney, E.F. (c.1820) *Amateurs of Tye-Wig Music* ('Musicians of the Old School'). [Oil on canvas]. Tate Gallery Collection, London.

WOMEN'S DAY

It has become an annual tradition that Woman Zone celebrates Women's Day by hosting a programme on Fine Music Radio. Produced by Beryl Eichenberger and presented by Theresa Smith, this year's programme will feature women in the arts sharing their stories as part of the annual Artscape Women's Humanity Festival.

The programme is on **9 August from 3 pm to 4 pm**.

Woman Zone's collaboration with the Artscape Women's Humanity Festival continues with a programme of writing, storytelling and book launches. This year, highlights include two EVERYWOMAN Textile Artworks commemorating 55 years of the Artscape building and 70 years since the Women's March of 1956.

To find out more, follow the Woman Zone Facebook page www.facebook.com/Womanzonect

Editor's note: One of Cape Town's best-kept secrets is the Woman Zone Library on the ground floor of Artscape. Open every Friday from 12 to 2 pm, it is a peaceful space filled with fantastic books and kind people – a book haven of sorts.



EVENTS

cpo
CONCERTS OF THE PEARCE ORCHESTRA



VISIONS IN SOUND

DANIEL RAIKIM CONDUCTOR
LEO GEVISSER PIANO

THURSDAY 27 AUG
7 PM

27 AUG

webtickets

PROGRAMME: Four Seasons Op. 29
RAVEL: Piano Concerto in D Major
MOZART: Violin Sonata in G Major, K. 540
DEBUSSY: Clair de Lune, Op. 9, No. 12
CHOPIN: Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op. 9, No. 3

13th
SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET
INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION



ARTSCAPE

Dancers: 3rd - 6th August 2026
Public: 4th - 8th August 2026

webtickets

ALAN COMMITTIE
as **HERCULE POIROT** in
AGATHA CHRISTIE'S
THE MURDER OF
ROGER ACKROYD

adapted for the stage by
MARK SHANAHAN



16 July - 16 August
21 August - 27 September

THEATRE ON THE COAST
MONTE CARLO
HERCULE POIROT

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SYMPHONY CHOIR OF CAPE TOWN

Stabat Mater

by Karl Jenkins

Cape Town City Hall
Tues: 18 August 2026
Wed: 19 August 2026
7 pm

Soloist - Minette du Toit-Pearce
Conducted by Levi Alexander



webtickets

ARTSCAPE PRESENTS

55

VOICES
in
UNISON

A Celebration of Choral Music in Cape Town

8 August 2026 | 16:00 | Artscape Opera House |
Tickets: R80

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Cantiamo Chamber Choir
Maranatha Male Choir
Tygerberg City Choir (Tygerberg Stadskoor)
Cape Peninsula University of Technology Choir
Stellenbosch University Chamber Choir
The Cape Town Chanters
Cape Malay Choir Board Choir
Treble Clef Female Choir

webtickets

MOUTHPEACE, IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE BAXTER PRESENTS

ANDREW BUCKLAND in
THE FOOL'S GUIDE
...TO LIVING AND DYING...



04 - 15 AUG 2026
BAXTER FLIPSIDE
Written by Andrew and Janet Buckland
Directed by Janet Buckland

BAXTER **KKK** **webtickets**

SUZIE MILLER'S
PRIMA FACIE

DIRECTED BY NEIL COPPEN COSTUME DESIGNER DANICA DE LA REY JONES



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Klein Karoo Klassique
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7 tot 9 Aug. 2026

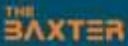
 




*Opera*UCT |  UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
THE FIFTH
AVIVA PELHAM
Operetta
Competition

Tuesday | 18 August 2026 | 7pm
BAXTER CONCERT HALL

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**R30 000 IN PRIZES
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CAPE TOWN Concert Series 2026
in Collaboration with 

Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra
WIND QUARTET

A BREATH OF AIR



Férol-Jon Davids Clarinet
Lisa White Oboe
Gabriele von Dürckheim Flute
Simon Ball Bassoon

FRANCAIX : VILLA-LOBOS : ARNOLD : RUBTSOV : AURIC

15 August 2026 | 11am

COMBRINK'S CORNER

"She plays like a man!" by Albert Combrink – pianist, agent and concert promoter

Once upon a time, in a music practice room far, far away, I was talking about pianist Martha Argerich. I had seen her in a live broadcast of Rachmaninov's massive Third Piano Concerto, which she had chopped up and devoured, seemingly without breaking a sweat, and still found time to flirt with the conductor, Riccardo Chailly – mid-cadenza. "She's really good!" I said. "She plays like a man!" I said. The other person looked at me and said: "So, which man does she play like?" I still blush. Because, of course, I do not know many men – if any – that I would put at that top elite level. I no longer use that sentence, but since it took decades to drill the sentiment into my psyche, it will take decades to unlearn it.

Female instrumentalists are so much more prevalent these days that we forget how few there were before. Conductors are a different story. While we are now beginning to see many more female conductors on podiums, we also see more of the "Conductor" label on programmes and fewer instances of the "Woman Conductor" label. But it is a relatively new phenomenon, outliers aside. Recently, a violinist said to me: "To see a woman conductor in front of an orchestra just looks odd to me." Not for long, dear, not for long. But as we go into Women's Month, I wonder why this is still the case.

Historically, decorative women were always welcomed in male-dominated spaces. On stage, on record covers, at the donors' dinner. Not so much in the boardroom. Violinist Hilary Hahn, arguably one of the greatest violinists on the international circuit, was in the news recently. Not for her astounding performance of Mozart's Fifth Violin Concerto, but for sporting "frumpy grey hair". "She looks 60!" yelled some anonymous keyboard warrior.

Yuja Wang performed all five Rachmaninov piano concertos at Carnegie Hall in a single concert, and the most prominent reporting was a vicious article about her clothing. She even made a public statement about online bullying from critics. One of the greatest living pianists was forced to make a public statement about her live recording of the most challenging works in the piano concerto repertoire by ... defending her choice of clothing.

We know the story of soprano Deborah Voigt, who got sacked from a production for being considered too plump to fit into a little black dress. She responded by having a laparoscopic adjustable gastric band fitted to restrict her stomach. Complications from the operation led to the premature end of her career. As a consolation prize for losing her voice, those same opera houses where she sang lead roles now employ her as an interviewer for telecasts.

I once did a recital with the brilliant horn player Frøydis Ree Wekre. Her CV and website used to refer to her as "arguably the best female horn player in the world." I just checked her Google profile, and it says: "Frøydis Ree Wekre is widely considered one of the absolute greatest horn players of all time. A Norwegian virtuoso and pedagogue, she served as co-principal of the Oslo Philharmonic for decades and profoundly shaped modern brass performance through her masterful tone, contemporary repertoire advocacy, and teaching." She is 84. And finally, she just is who she is, and not "arguably the best female" anything. All it took was decades of being one of the actual best horn players on the planet – of any gender – being president of the International Horn Society, getting knighted by King Harald of Norway, and, for the rest, just blowing her own horn.

I remember when we were announced on stage. I was credited as one of South Africa's top accompanists – which, at the time, was hardly a title I could claim. And the star of the show had



to listen to her career being reduced to “arguably the best woman”. She shrugged and laughed. We walked on, and she played (“arguably”) the best horn recital I had ever heard. And she smiled and took it with grace, knowing that not even that performance would guarantee her simply being respected as a brilliant horn player.



L to R: Martha Argerich, Hilary Hahn, Deborah Voigt, Frøydis Ree Wekre

That was twenty years ago, and things are shifting. But another little nudge won't hurt. Now, don't get me started on women composers. I am sure if I look, I can find one or two who “write like a man”.

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WORDSMITHS: NIC'S DOODLE OF THE MONTH

Wordsmiths is an insert on *Nic's Classic Drive* weekdays just after **5.15 pm**. Nic Ciro chooses weird and wonderfully obscure words and Hadley Tituss has to guess their meaning. Nic's doodles are created to give Hadley clues.

systole – the contraction of the heart that allows blood to flow from the chambers

siege tower – a medieval engine of war used for storming a castle

syncopation – a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music

Editor's note: While baritone William Berger doesn't have favourites (see Opuscast above), I do. This image has to be one of my all-time Nic favourites! At any rate, coming into work and finding an original Ciro artwork on my desk is always exciting.



PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS FROM MY PRIVATE COLLECTION, BY SAAN MAHOMED

JOÃO GILBERTO – AMOROSO

“A Masterclass in Whispered Beauty”

Each morning before leaving for the office, I take a few minutes to play a record. That ritual grounds me, and today I reached for *Amoroso*. As the needle dropped, João Gilberto’s meticulous artistry filled the room. Listening in that quiet moment reminded me why this album feels timeless in my collection.

There are albums that demand your attention, and then there are albums that gently invite you into their world. *Amoroso*, released in 1977 by João Gilberto, belongs firmly in the latter category. It doesn’t shout, it doesn’t seek to impress with grand gestures; instead, it quietly unfolds, revealing layer upon layer of elegance, intimacy and emotional depth.

Listening to *Amoroso* feels less like hearing a collection of songs than sitting across from João Gilberto in a softly lit room while he shares stories about love, longing and life’s fleeting moments. Soft and subtle, his voice speaks volumes. Each phrase conveys significance, every pause feels sculpted, every note perfectly placed, creating a sense of inevitability in the music.

What makes *Amoroso* particularly fascinating is the balance between simplicity and sophistication. The album features lush orchestral arrangements, yet they never overwhelm the music. The strings drift gently in the background, creating an atmosphere that feels almost dreamlike. João remains at the centre, accompanied by his unmistakable guitar style, proving once again that subtlety can be more powerful than spectacle.

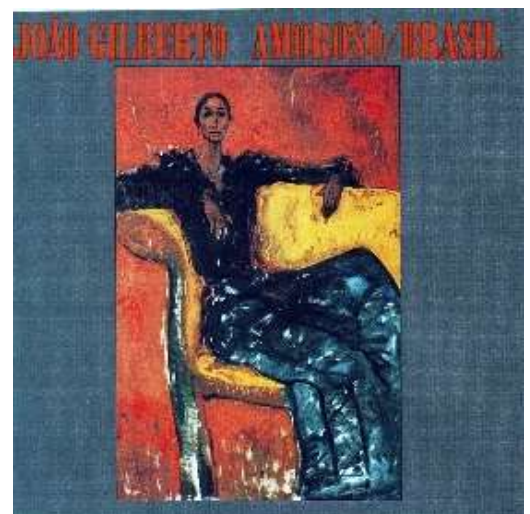
One of the album’s most memorable moments is his interpretation of “S’Wonderful”. In Gilberto’s hands, the classic American standard becomes something entirely new. He doesn’t merely sing the song – he inhabits it. The familiar melody takes on the warmth of a Brazilian sunset, demonstrating his unique ability to bridge cultures through music.

Throughout *Amoroso*, love is a recurring theme, but not in an obvious or dramatic way. This is not music about grand statements or despair. Rather, it explores the quieter emotions that linger long after the excitement has passed – the memories, the reflections and the gentle nostalgia that accompany a life fully lived.

João was renowned for his meticulous approach in the studio. Some labelled him a perfectionist, but it’s more fitting to say he sought truth in every sound. On *Amoroso*, nothing feels unnecessary – each detail has purpose. The result is an album of rare clarity and balance, timeless in its restraint and untouched by passing fashions.

Nearly five decades after its release, *Amoroso* continues to captivate listeners around the world. Its beauty lies not in its complexity, but in its ability to create space – for thought, for memory, and for feeling. In an increasingly noisy world, João Gilberto reminds us of the power of restraint.

Perhaps that is the album’s greatest achievement. It teaches us that music doesn’t always need to be loud to leave a lasting impression. Sometimes a whisper is enough. And on *Amoroso*, João Gilberto whispers with extraordinary grace. Peace and blessings till next time.



PEOPLE OF NOTE

with RODNEY TRUDGEON

Discover previous *People of Note* guests and listen to their full conversations at www.fmr.co.za/podcasts/people-of-note/

People of Note is brought to you by Pieter Toerien Productions.

Joining Rodney Trudgeon and our audio engineer, Jordan Jones, in the studio are (clockwise from top left):

Alistair Cockburn – Music Director and Conductor of G&S.

Miclen LaiPang – international violinist.

Delia Sainsbury – founder and director of the Waterfront Theatre School.

Denis Hutchinson – set designer.



HOOKED ON BOOKS

Thanks to Exclusive Books for sponsoring Fine Music Radio's *Book Choice*. It's broadcast once a month on a Monday at noon. It's also available as a podcast, as is *Book Choice: Shorts*, with individual interviews and reviews. Visit www.fmr.co.za/podcasts/book-choice



UNLEASHED: A VET'S MEMOIR OF HEARTACHE, HAIRBALLS AND HOPE, BY CAITLIN VENNIKER

Unleashed invites us into a world defined by all sorts of interesting dualities. Vets must face one of the most marked professional paradoxes: a vocation born of passion that simultaneously casts one of the darkest shadows in modern medical practice. Venniker's memoir is a beautifully written, funny, but also poignant account of, on the one hand, the love, light and healing of animals and, on the other, the darker weight of grief that balances the profound stress of a life lived at the intersection of human complexity and animal health.

Unleashed is also riotously funny. Venniker clearly understands that the consulting room can be a theatre of the absurd, where the animals themselves are often the most straightforward participants. She populates her narrative with a whole menagerie of quirky patients and owners with outsized expectations, but she refuses to romanticise her world. Her biases are laid bare with refreshing, deadpan honesty. While she harbours a deep, soulful love for horses – often finding her truest sanctuary in the saddle – she is endearingly, and rather rudely, dismissive of bovines. She summarises the entire milky species with the ultimate brush-off: "A cow is a simple functional unit. Likes grass. Says moo. The end."

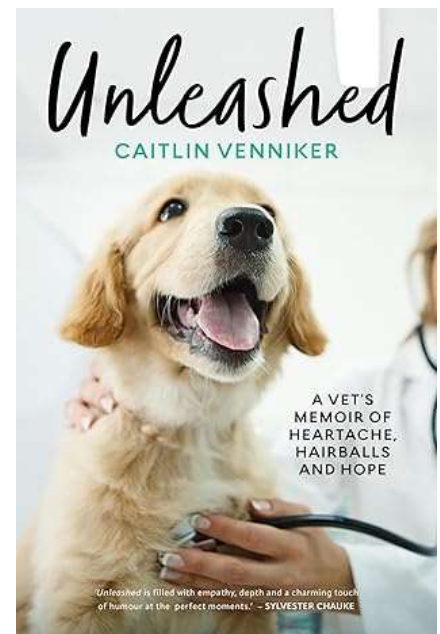
Yet, the animals are sometimes just the catalysts; the true, unspoken subject of this memoir is the messy human condition. We are introduced to the grounding anchor of Venniker's life: a profound, special and enduring relationship with her surgeon father. His presence provides a beacon of stability throughout her daily chaos and possibly has something to do with the sharp contrast she paints between this relationship and the turbulent landscape of her own romantic life. She chronicles her unfortunate relationships – including one particularly less-than-wonderful boyfriend – with weary resignation and a patience that strains credulity, relying on dark humour and an unhealthy dependence on coffee to survive the wreckage. These personal vignettes remind us that the woman wielding the stethoscope is often juggling her own quiet crises while managing the physical demands of her patients and the trickier emotional demands of her clients.

The true delight of Venniker's writing lies in her seamless ability to move from light, self-deprecating humour to the shadow side of her calling. She does not shy away from the extraordinary mental health crisis facing the veterinary world – one of which I was certainly not aware.

It seems somewhat counterintuitive that a field entirely populated by people doing what they love could harbour such staggering suicide rates. Yet, Venniker explores the heartbreaking reality behind the Not One More Vet movement. She reveals how the daily emotional whiplash – delivering a healthy litter one moment and euthanising a cherished companion the next – slowly hollows out the caregiver. Her humour, we realise, is not merely for our entertainment; it is vital, life-saving armour.

This duality is perfectly mirrored in her chapter headings, which read like poetry from the medical trenches – titles such as “Conversations in Colic Season” and “Haemorrhage, Hidrosis and Lacrimation”. These frame a narrative that is inherently multi-layered, refusing to reduce the veterinary experience to a binary of simple triumphs and tragedies.

Ultimately, *Unleashed* asks us to consider a question of identity: is Venniker a writer who happens to practise veterinary medicine, or a vet who found salvation in the written word? Perhaps the distinction is false. For *Opus* readers who appreciate the complexity and power of the written word, this memoir is a beautifully crafted testament to love, compassion and humour. Venniker uses her pen as skilfully as her scalpel, deftly dissecting the heartache of her profession only to reveal the enduring, stubborn hope beating steadily beneath it.



With thanks to **Book Choice** guest reviewer and educator Marc Falconer

FMR'S COMMUNITY

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FINE MUSIC RADIO'S 31ST BIRTHDAY CONCERT



Thanks to photographer Joan Ward.
Top row: Miclen LaiPang, Louise Howlett, Peter Martens
Middle row: Albert Combrink, Mike Mills, Bevan Timm
Bottom row: the Ramon Alexander Trio

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