

Institution: University of Cambridge		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 33		
Title of case study: Rethinking Russian Music: Public engagement, changed audience perceptions, and impact on music practitioners		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 to the present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Marina Frolova-Walker	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Music History	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2000–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013–July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Marina Frolova-Walker's career-long research and public engagement in the area of Russian music, particularly while working at the University of Cambridge, have made her the indispensable voice of Russian music for UK and, increasingly, international audiences. Through public engagement via BBC appearances, participation in the Bard Festival (New York), public lectures, pre-concert talks and publications for general audiences in the UK, US, Russia, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg, Frolova-Walker has deepened understanding of Russian music, debunking stereotypes, introducing audiences to unknown composers, and demystifying the repertoire. Frolova-Walker's research has also directly benefitted practitioners, including radio producers and presenters (particularly at the BBC), festival organisers and arts organisations, whose programming she has guided. Her research has also had an impact on professional creative practice, influencing the interpretation and creation of musical works, including the award-winning soundtrack to <i>The Death of Stalin</i> (2017).</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Since her move to Cambridge in 2000, Frolova-Walker has reinterpreted the history of Russian music and musical life from around 1840 to the post-Soviet era. This long time-span was previously characterised by exotic fables and myth-making about what counted as 'Russian' music in the nineteenth century. Soviet composers were reduced to a select few, with Shostakovich and Prokofiev eclipsing all others. Post-Soviet histories of Soviet music also created heroes and villains among composers negotiating a power structure in which Stalin's personal decisions seemed decisive. Through extensive archival research, Frolova-Walker debunked many of these fictions, exposing the wishful thinking behind them. In the process, she has also devoted more clear-eyed attention than many musicologists to the workings of musical life and the making of musical reputations. Her work highlights the importance of understanding the backstage collaborations and disputes that lie behind famous works and composers. She examines the often banal decision-making that can reduce worthy composers to an obscurity from which her work is rescuing them—not as heroes, but as cultural figures we need to understand alongside the household names.</p> <p>Frolova-Walker's primary research outputs comprise two monographs [R1, R2], one co-authored book [R3], a solo-edited volume [R4] and a co-edited volume [R5], in addition to over 20 book chapters and articles [including R6].</p> <p>In <i>Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin</i> (Yale, 2007) [R1], Frolova-Walker exposed as a convenient national fiction the exotic and folk-like character of 'true' Russian music. She showed how this notion suited narratives of Russian musical emancipation in the nineteenth century, underpinned the export of an exotic Russianness to the west by Diaghilev and his Ballets Russes, and aided Soviet control of regional identity.</p> <p>In <i>Music and Soviet Power, 1917-1932</i> (Boydell and Brewer, 2014) [R3], Frolova-Walker analysed key Soviet sources hitherto unavailable in the West, contextualising them into a new history illustrating the aesthetic complexity of the pre-Stalin years.</p> <p>Her subsequent monograph, <i>Stalin's Music Prize</i> (Yale, 2016) [R2], and complementary article on Shostakovich [R6], analysed the complex relationship of composers and their music to an authoritarian state. The book challenged the idea that the coveted Stalin Prize meant that any rewarded composer was a personal 'favourite'. It showed the pragmatic messiness of backroom decision-making by musicians who both implemented and created state policy, and</p>		

uncovered the work of over 100 composers and over 200 performers only a fraction of whom were known to music-lovers in the West.

In *Russian Music since 1917* (OUP, 2017) [R5], co-edited with Patrick Zuk, and published to coincide with the centenary of the Russian Revolution, Frolova-Walker's own chapter reappraised the liberating and myth-destroying effects of *glasnost* on Russian musicology, contrasted with more recent imperatives of intellectual self-censorship under Putin. As a whole, the book destabilised 'common knowledge': it revealed how Russian and Western scholars of different generations had created wildly divergent histories of the same music, or different hierarchies of composers, as a result of their scholarly and political experience.

Frolova-Walker's most recent edited collection, *Rimsky-Korsakov and his World* (Princeton, 2018) [R4], was published as an integral part of the Bard Festival, as a handbook for the public attending. Building on *Russian Music and Nationalism*, it illustrated how folk-based Russian music depended on compromise and cliché, and spotlighted the conflicted and vulnerable poacher-turned-gamekeeper role of Rimsky-Korsakov, who morphed from amateur mentor of 'true Russian' folklorists to professional conservatoire teacher.

Frolova-Walker's research is pervaded by an explicit appreciation of how expediently music history is made, undone, and made again. It is crafted to make readers think anew about the human cost of music-making and to look beneath and behind shiny stories of national heroism, dissidence and genius. Widely applauded by academic reviewers of her research, this demystification and humanising of music history characterises both her public engagement activity and the direct impact of her research on creative practitioners.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. Frolova-Walker, M. (2007). *Russian music and nationalism from Glinka to Stalin*. Yale University Press. ISBN: 9780300112733. Reviewed as 'superb analysis...a masterly account' (*Music & Letters*, 2009).

R2. Frolova-Walker, M. (2016). *Stalin's music prize: Soviet culture and politics*. Yale University Press. ISBN: 0300208847. Reviewed as 'stellar...has single-handedly rewritten the history of Soviet music' (*Muzikološki zbornik*, 2018). Reviewed as 'a milestone' (*Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 2017).

R3. Frolova-Walker, M. and Walker, J. (2012). *Music and Soviet power, 1917-1932*. Boydell and Brewer. ISBN: 9781843837039. Reviewed as 'absolutely indispensable' (*Twentieth-Century Music*, 2014).

R4. Frolova-Walker, M. (ed.). (2018). *Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and his world*. Princeton University Press. ISBN: 0691182701. Reviewed as 'invaluable' (*Music & Letters*, 2019).

R5. Frolova-Walker M. and Zuk, P. (eds). (2017). *Russian music since 1917: Reappraisal and rediscovery*. OUP/Proceedings of the British Academy. ISBN: 9780197266151. Prestigious book series. Reviewed as 'visionary and indispensable' (*Twentieth-Century Music*, 2019).

R6. Frolova-Walker, M. (2016). 'A birthday present for Stalin: Shostakovich's *Song of the Forests* (1949)'. In E. Buch, I.C. Zubillaga, M.D. Silva (eds), *Composing for the state: music in twentieth-century dictatorships* (pp. 96-120). Routledge. ISBN: 9781472437495

Additional quality threshold indicators: all items peer-reviewed. Funding: research for *Stalin's music prize* [R2] was funded by a two-year Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship, 2011-2013, GBP98,760. Research for *Music and Soviet power* [R3] was funded by an AHRC Research Grant, January 2008-March 2008, GBP20,497.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Public Engagement and Cultural Impact

(i) Raising awareness of Russian music through the BBC

Frolova-Walker has benefitted UK music-loving radio and TV audiences, significantly raising awareness of lesser-known composers from the Soviet era and offering new perspectives on Russian music. As one broadcaster writes, Frolova-Walker plays 'a central role in the UK today in opening the world of classical music – and especially Russian and Soviet music – to those who might otherwise have had only limited chances to encounter it' [E1 p.4]. A key pathway to this impact has been Frolova-Walker's extensive public broadcasting work, particularly for the BBC: according to one BBC Radio 3 producer, Frolova-Walker 'has long

been the “go to” Russian/Soviet music expert for Radio 3’, as a ‘peerless ... expert commentator’ on this repertoire [E2]. The reach of her research within the UK is evidenced through this relationship with BBC programme makers. Since August 2013 she has made 29 contributions to BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4, the World Service, and BBC Four, including five Proms Extra events, and five conversations about record releases for BBC Radio 3’s *Record Review*. She has also written and presented six editions of *Record Review’s Building a Library*, one of which was the first ‘favourite’ from the archives to be rebroadcast at the start of the Lockdown in March 2020 (average live audience figures 143,000; available indefinitely as a podcast) [E3]. One BBC Radio 3 producer notes the significance of Frolova-Walker’s research and approach to this area of scholarship, observing that she ‘never comes to predictable conclusions or holds a fixed dogmatic view and so she is especially valuable to us and our audience’ [E2]. This is confirmed by listeners to BBC Radio 3 *Record Review*, who have thanked Frolova-Walker ‘for pointing me in a new direction’ [E4 p.3]; for ‘sensitive, intelligent, deeply perceptive criticism that enhances enjoyment of the music!’ [E4 p.5], and for enlarging their ‘appreciation & understanding’ of the works under review [E4 p.6]. Her listening recommendations have also provided economic impact by influencing consumer purchases: ‘I bought these renditions of Rachmaninov’s four concertos after Marina Frolova-Walker rated [them] as the best of those currently available ... Marina has steered me in the direction of some excellent pieces and performances over the years’ (*Amazon review*) [E4 p.7].

In November 2017, Frolova-Walker was the guest specialist in a double-length edition of *Composer of the Week* on Soviet Composers (*Soviet Russia, 1917-1953*), for which she was interviewed daily (average live audience figures 110,000; one month on iPlayer) [E3]. The programme’s host later tweeted: ‘she was simply brilliant: one of the best guests I’ve ever had on the programme. The perfect amalgam of erudition, specific detail, broad brush, wit and humour’ [E4 p.8]. Listeners to the programme responded enthusiastically: ‘real eyeopeners’ [E4, p.4]; ‘Fascinating informative stuff. This is what the station does best’ [E4 p.9]; ‘Catching up with splendid Composer of the Week programmes ... composers from Soviet Russia, well-known and unknown, presenting a century to our ears’ [E4 p.10]. Also in 2017 Frolova-Walker participated in, and curated, a live three-hour feature on the centenary of the Russian Revolution, *Breaking Free: A Century of Russian Culture*, presented by Tom Service (November 2017). As one listener tweeted, ‘this Breaking Free season about Russia is really fantastic, so informative and imaginatively curated and presented, especially Professor Marina Frolova-Walker’ [E4 p.14].

In addition to her Radio work, Frolova-Walker contributed to the acclaimed BBC 2 film *The Leningrad Orchestra that Defied Hitler* (January 2016; rebroadcast February 2019, April 2020), for which she was interviewed, and also acted as a historical consultant. As one viewer wrote: ‘Once in a while there comes along a programme of such quality, so deeply moving and respectfully made, that alone it commands an entire year’s licence fee’ [E4 p.13].

(ii) Scholar-in-residence at the 2018 Bard Music Festival

The international reach of Frolova-Walker’s public engagement was particularly emphasised when she was invited to be Scholar-in-Residence for the 2018 Bard College Festival at the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts (Annandale-on-Hudson, New York). Acclaimed as ‘a highlight of the musical year’ (*Wall Street Journal*), each Festival features a composer whose reputation is in need of re-evaluation in light of recent scholarship: Frolova-Walker chose Rimsky-Korsakov. The Festival takes place across two weekends each year, bringing together two kinds of audience: ‘those with a long history of interest in concert life and first-time listeners, who find the festival an ideal place to learn about and enjoy the riches of our musical past’ [E5 p.4].

For the Festival, Frolova-Walker curated concerts, panels and film showings, gave two talks and provided the commentary for a concert on ‘Russian Folk Music in the Mirror of Art Music’. Under Frolova-Walker’s guidance, the entire Festival challenged the established idea of Rimsky-Korsakov as a superficial Oriental colourist (*New York Times*) [E6 p.2]. It also transformed audience perception of the composer’s oeuvre: as the *Wall Street Journal* observed, Rimsky-Korsakov’s popularity in the West ‘has essentially ridden on [a] mere handful of works. But what about the rest?’ [E6 p.7] Frolova-Walker shifted public attention on to these neglected works: ‘those who remember Rimsky as simply the composer of *Flight of*

the Bumblebee (1899–1900) or *Scheherazade* (1888) will be surprised to learn that, in the words of Marina Frolova-Walker ... Rimsky “staked his reputation on his operas” (*New Criterion*) [E6 p.10].

Through her work for the Festival, Frolova-Walker also led its audience to new ways of thinking about the relationship between art-music and Russian folk-song. The ‘Mirror of Art Music’ concert involved the Russian folk troupe Virtual Village interrupting, with dance and music, a sequence of performances of folk-song as it occurred in art-music settings intended for bourgeois or aristocratic audiences. The point was to imagine the discomfiture of art-musicians being presented with the rawness of ‘real’ peasant music. For one critic: ‘this concert achieved the lofty ambitions of the festival; it was hands down the best marriage of scholarship and performance I have witnessed. ... I came away both moved and contemplating new thoughts’ (*Hudson Review*) [E6 p.17].

(iii) UK and international talks and publications

In the UK, Frolova-Walker’s reach has continued to increase through high-profile public engagement appointments: first as Visiting Gresham Professor of Music (November 2018-May 2019) and, since July 2019, as Gresham Professor of Music at Gresham College, London. Her cycle of four lectures on Russian Music and the State (2018-19), drew 254 audience members, and has been viewed more than 8,030 times on YouTube [E7 pp.2-4]. In 2019-20, Frolova-Walker’s in-person public lectures on the Ballets Russes ‘were filled to capacity’ [E7 p.15] and have been viewed 9,492 times on YouTube [E7 pp.4-6]. Audience members commented on the ways in which these lectures changed their perception of Russian Music: ‘greatly enhanced my listening to Russian music with a new ear’ [E7 p.7]. Others noted that the lectures introduced them to ‘more pieces and works I wasn’t familiar with or even heard of’, inspiring them to seek out ‘those [ballets] I haven’t yet seen and to hear more of the less-well known music’ [E7 pp.12,14]. Additional audience feedback noted that Frolova-Walker’s lectures ‘brought out wider connections’, shedding light on often overlooked figures and collaborations behind the scenes, leading to greater understanding of ‘how all composers, choreographers, designers worked together but also competed with each other’ [E7 pp.12, 9].

Frolova-Walker’s high-profile public engagement activities are underpinned by public lectures and pre-concert talks (42 since August 2013) and publications (84 short essays, CD liner notes, programme notes and magazine articles since August 2013), delivered and distributed to leading performance venues and festivals throughout the UK and beyond to Russia, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg and the US. Her books have regularly been reviewed in the mainstream media: *Stalin’s Music Prize* was featured on BBC Radio 3 *Music Matters* (2 April 2016), and selected as one of the Books of the Week by *The National* [E8 p.1]. An Amazon review of the same book once again praised Frolova-Walker’s recovery of unfamiliar composers: ‘The book whets one’s appetite to search out for those recordings by little-known composers such as Amirov, Karayev, which are mentioned through the book’s pages and other more familiar names whose works are too neglected still today’ [E8 p.2].

In order to increase the accessibility of her research, Frolova-Walker launched a website in July 2019 (www.marinafrolova-walker.com), to bring together her multi-media open access materials on one platform: users have noted that they have ‘have gained a deeper and more subtle understanding of Soviet music in a political context’ [E4 p.15].

Impact on Practitioners

(i) Impact on programming (media and arts professionals)

Frolova-Walker has regularly acted as consultant and advisor, benefitting broadcasters, producers, and arts organisations, and shaping their programming. As the co-director of the Bard Festival explains, the desire to work with Frolova-Walker thanks to her combination of ‘dazzling’ scholarship and ‘unmatched’ ability to communicate with non-academic audiences, ‘was a major factor in choosing Rimsky-Korsakov’ for the 2018 festival... This is not how we had ever worked before; we usually know what composer we want to be the focus and then try to identify the best scholar with whom to collaborate’ [E5 pp.1-2].

Since 2014, Frolova-Walker has advised on the annual Zaubensee Festival of Russian Chamber Music in Lucerne; as the festival’s co-founder has written, Frolova-Walker was his ‘secret weapon’, ‘able to provide expert advice ... on possible programs and repertoire that will

prod and inspire the festival's second decade' [E1 p.6]. In May 2017, Frolova-Walker acted as a programming consultant for the Sheffield May Festival 'Russia in the Round': the Artistic Director of the series commented that Frolova-Walker's 'perspective on Russian music opened up any number of fascinating lines of enquiry for me that helped us to assemble a whole variety of programmes that, I would like to think, has resulted in a very comprehensive overview of Russian chamber music' [E1 p.7]. Frolova-Walker's work has also had an impact on public radio programming in the USA: the creator of a 20-episode series, *Soviet Singers*, for WMNR radio, has relied heavily on insights from her research to recreate playlists and produce historically-informed programmes [E1 p.8; E4 p.15].

(ii) Impact on creative practice

Frolova-Walker's research influenced the composition of the award-winning original score for the 2017 film *The Death of Stalin*, directed by Armando Iannucci (worldwide gross USD24,646,055). Cinematic Sound Radio described the score as 'one of the greatest film music debuts, I think, of all time'; it won the International Film Music Critics' Association award for Best Score for a Comedy Film in 2018, and made the shortlist for nomination for the 2018 Academy Award for Best Original Score. As composer Christopher Willis explains, 'central to the success of the score is my attempt to pastiche the sound of Soviet film and symphonic music of the 1950s, and it would be hard to overstate how much my compositional approach owed to the influence of Marina's teaching, books and articles' [E9 p.1]. In preparing the score, he had to study the history of the music of the time and place he was composing for; it was through Frolova-Walker's work, including her published articles, that Willis 'not only educated myself on the Soviet music scene in the middle of the 20th century, but also – vitally – understood the Russian traditions reaching back into the 1800s' [E9 p.2]. *Stalin's Music Prize* was also important in shaping his approach to the score: 'there are composers in there that I had never heard of. I bought lots of scores I didn't know about' [E9 p.3].

Frolova-Walker's work has also benefitted performers, influencing their understanding and interpretation of Russian music. After reading *Stalin's Music Prize*, cellist Laura van der Heijden (winner of the 2012 BBC Young Musician of the Year competition) asked Frolova-Walker to be part of the project for her all-Russian, award-winning debut CD, *1948*. Frolova-Walker wrote the CD liner notes and appeared in the accompanying documentary film. As van der Heijden writes, Frolova-Walker's 'involvement in the project was hugely important to the development of my relationship to the works on the CD ... I wanted to try to steer away from the usual stereotypes of this era presented in the West, and instead provide a nuanced representation of the many different shades of composition coexisting at the time. Reading Marina's work gave me the opportunity to gain important (and indeed nuanced) contextual knowledge for my interpretations'. More than this, for van der Heijden, 'one of the great difficulties of recording this CD was striking a balance between bringing out my own musical persona, and showing appropriate understanding of musical traditions and historical contexts. Marina's contribution eased this process greatly, as her approach to historical information never failed to encompass and demonstrate human emotionality.' The CD led to van der Heijden winning the 2019 BBC Classical Music Magazine Newcomer of the Year Award and the 2018 Edison Klassiek Award; she notes that 'always central to the positive feedback the CD receives, is the thoroughness of the disc in its entirety – to which Marina's contribution is an absolutely vital part' [E10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- E1** Testimonials from industry professionals.
- E2** Testimonial from a BBC producer.
- E3** Average listener figures for BBC Radio 3 *Record Review* and *Composer of the Week*.
- E4** Comments from the general public via emails, social media, and the case-study website.
- E5** Testimonial from the co-director of the Bard Music Festival; Bard Festival website.
- E6** Bard Festival Reviews.
- E7** Gresham College: audience figures, lecture feedback, and testimonial from the Provost.
- E8** Non-academic reviews of Frolova-Walker's books.
- E9** Testimonial from, and published interview with, the composer for *The Death of Stalin*.
- E10** Testimonial from a professional cellist.