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Please cite this publication as follows:

Gee, K. (2016) Centre story: conversations with virtuoso young conductors; Andrew Gourlay and Jamie Phillips. The Brass Herald. pp. 46-47.

Link to official URL (if available):

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I'm writing this column in the aftermath of the referendum, which, whether professional or amateur musician, educator or student, will hold untold impact upon our lives and our careers. I've been searching around for positives, but as a leftist expert in psychology, there are few. I'm mostly saddened that my work as an educator and practitioner is ignored and at worst maligned by politicians. Many musicians, especially those who frequently tour in Europe, whose orchestras and bands contain a cross-section of the best of European talent, whose identity at some level is European, I think feel a similar loss. (Yes I am aware whilst writing this a good proportion of you will not agree, and are currently filled with nationalistic spirit and bonhomie at the promise of a future with just a little bit too much of the 1970s about it for my liking; but just as when I'm teaching, we can agree to disagree.)

At times of change I always turn to music to connect, understand and reframe. Whilst researching conducting for this article, I came across a quote from Bernstein, who upon hearing of John. F. Kennedy's death said: *"This sorrow...will inflame our art. Our music will never again be quite the same. This will be our reply... To make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before."* I'm stealing the esteemed conductor's words, and applying them to the current political disarray, which I hope will make all of our musical lives more positive.

I did not, you'll be glad to know, ask this month's centre-fold stars for their political opinions. I did, however, manage to have two excellent conversations about musical life with conductors Andrew Gourlay and Jamie Phillips.

Andrew Gourlay began playing music at six, bashing the piano during his sister's lessons. A few years later at school in Tokyo, the entire year group were shepherded into a room containing a collection of American concert-band instruments. He picked out the trombone as the instrument that he could make some sort of noise on. Although Andrew liked playing, it wasn't the technicalities of the instrument that mattered to him,

but instead the social nature of doing music and the music itself; life was about performing in orchestras, chamber ensembles, jazz and salsa bands on both piano and trombone.

After moving up to Manchester to read Music on the combined college and university course, Andrew headed down to the Royal College of Music to take their postgraduate course in conducting. His long standing instrumental and conducting teachers (Chris Houlding, Lindsay Shilling and Neil Thomson) played a huge part in him becoming the musician he is today. As Andrew said: "I couldn't have asked for better teachers. They taught me everything I know and were all absolutely focussed on producing great musicians, not technical clones of themselves." As well as his regular teachers becoming an inspiration, he took lessons with many other superb musicians. For Andrew, retaining this breadth of musical ideas and approach was crucial to his development as a conductor.



Andrew Gourlay.

Photo: Lucas Dawson

There are often key moments of insight in our life transitions. It was no different for Andrew, who remembers being in the middle of an instrumental lesson with Chris Houlding, who said: "I get the sense that there's so much more that you want to do with the music, but you feel that your technique's getting in the way." Such a simple articulation of the problem enabled Andrew to look towards conducting as a space which gave him musical freedom to explore his ideas, ability and musical identity. As a brass player, Andrew adored the experience of playing in an orchestra. A tour with the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester (GMJO), the place for European orchestral musicians to develop their talents, was a time that Andrew will never forget. The standard of the orchestra was phenomenal, concerts were

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in beautiful world-class venues like the Wiener Musikverein and the tour was incredibly sociable. Sitting at the back, often on parts with plenty of tacet bars, gave him space to analyse and absorb the style and skill of the various conductors.

I asked Andrew about the differences in being within an orchestra and conducting it. He explained: "Both come with different responsibilities. As a conductor, there's a heavy weight of responsibility for shaping the overall picture. As a player, there's the same weight of

responsibility, but it's focussed on an individual part and the specific challenges that come with that. The pressure is very different. As a conductor, the nerves come and say hello to me the day before the first rehearsal. But in a concert I usually feel free. That sense of freedom begins immediately after the final rehearsal - the work is done and now I can perform. As a player it was

the opposite experience; rehearsals were usually fun and fairly nerve free, but then the nerves would build as the concert loomed."

We talked a little about musical heroes, Andrew saying how special it was to play under Claudio Abbado in the GMJO. And yet role models as a musician and a role model as a conductor seem to be different. No one, of course, wants to see a conductor copying another conductor. There seems to be a need for uniqueness about style and approach as a conductor. But it would be a compliment to say "that guy plays the trumpet just like Maurice Murphy!"

Andrew's career took off in 2010 when he won the Cadaques International Conducting Competition and was awarded the job of Assistant Conductor to



**KATE GEE
TALKS TO TWO
YOUNG
AND VERY
SUCCESSFUL
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THEMSELVES**

Sir Mark Elder at the Hallé Orchestra. In the six following years he has conducted most British orchestras and many European orchestras, and he has worked in Australia, Russia, New Zealand and South America. (In fact it would probably be easier to ask him to list where he has not worked or with whom he has not worked than list what he's done). In 2016 Andrew took his first Music Director role with the Orquesta Sinfonica de Castilla y Leon, one of Spain's top orchestras, based in the Auditorio Miguel Delibes in Valladolid, just outside Madrid.

His career highs are many and varied, from the first time conducting a professional orchestra - a masterclass with Gergiev and the LSO - to conducting the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra doing Tchaikovsky 6 at a summer open-air gig in front of an audience of ten thousand. Perhaps the most bizarre was conducting the offstage anvils in *Das Rheingold* for Sir Mark Elder, whilst wearing weapons-grade earplugs! You can see Andrew conducting a prom with the London Sinfonietta at The Roundhouse on August 20th 2016. The prom takes place inside a visual art installation and so it's not only the music, musicians and audience he must think about, but using that space to his advantage. They are performing a piece by Haas, where the musicians are spread around the audience and video monitors are used for synchronisation. There will be a couple of world premières, plus Ligeti's *Ramifications* and Birtwhistle's *The Message*, as well as a piece by Johnny Greenwood which includes two ondes martenots, one of the earliest electronic instruments ever developed. You can find more about Andrew Gourlay at www.andrewgourlay.com

Jamie Phillips is nearly ten years younger than Andrew, yet there are parallels between their careers. Jamie's parents were both musicians; his dad is a French horn player with the City

of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) and his mum an oboist with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. In such a musical household it's no wonder that he started playing music at four and a half, when Father Christmas bought him a cornet. He apparently wanted a trumpet, but wasn't big enough to hold it and play. Although his parents were hugely supportive of Jamie's talents, they certainly tried to put him off music as a career as they saw themselves as lucky to have orchestral jobs.

Brass banding wasn't Jamie's path, instead he worked his way into the National Youth Orchestra (NYO) as a trumpet player. It was during one of the week long NYO courses that Jamie asked the director if he could take a few players out of the orchestra and play through a Beethoven symphony. And so he found the bug for conducting.



Jamie Phillips.

Similar to Andrew, Jamie went to Manchester to take the joint Music courses, and as he entered his second year was able to major in conducting. By taking his principal study at Manchester University in conducting, the whole of the music department ensembles were opened up to him, under the expert tutelage of Mark Heron.

At 19 he took part in the International Competition for Young Conductors in Besançon, where he acquired an agent. When asked what it was like to conduct a professional orchestra for the first time, Jamie said: "Well it feels as though you've been put behind a Rolls Royce without having had a driving lesson. It can simultaneously be the best feeling in the world and the worst."

Five years ago, at just 20, Jamie was invited to audition for the Assistant Conductor position at the Hallé. After three years he was promoted to Associate

Conductor. A large part of this job was being Musical Director of the Hallé Youth Orchestra. We talked a little about becoming a conductor and it was again the inspirational example set by Sir Mark Elder (MD of the Hallé), who encouraged him. Jamie admired his "command of so many different types of music and his ability to work across orchestral, opera etc. You would watch him rehearse and learn so much, but you would also think how on earth am I going to be as good as this?" I asked him about other conductors he admired, but naturally, many are dead!

So we talked instead about the need for authenticity to be accepted as a good conductor. Jamie said: "As a conductor it can be quite challenging - there's such a huge amount of experience in the room with adult orchestras. You have to try not to pretend to be anyone you're not and you must convince the people in front

of you that your ideas are worth hearing. You're not there to teach them anything, or to give the impression you know more than they do, but that you're working together to create something valuable to them, to you and to the audience. "In terms of the process of learning conducting, apparently it's all about getting the physicality right; being able to precisely embody meaning within gesture as well as the usual forms of communication.

As well as orchestral conducting, Jamie has had the pleasure of working with the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain (NYBBGB) on their recent Easter course. Over the course of a week working with the band, he challenged their assumptions about banding and musical

ideas, gradually supporting them to develop a sense of creating something more than the traditional approach to some brass band classics and brass band arrangements of orchestral favourites.

One of Jamie's favourite musical moments was the opportunity to conduct Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* with the Royal Ballet of Flanders and the Brussels Philharmonic. His lifetime ambition is to conduct all of the Haydn symphonies (of which there are 104 with numbers and a few with letters); he's managed twenty so far. Over the next year, Jamie is looking forward to returning to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra where he will be doing his first subscription concert next season, within a year of guest conducting as far afield as Zagreb, Oslo and Thailand.

For more information about Jamie see his website <http://jamie-phillips.com>