

# **The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia**

Report by Lauren Manuel, 2017 Churchill Fellow

**THE MR AND MRS GERALD FRANK NEW  
CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP to study techniques and  
further develop skills to become a high horn player UK,  
Germany, US.**

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Signed:

Dated: July 23 2018

Lauren Manuel

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

For 8 weeks in April and May, 2018, I travelled to the UK, Ireland, Germany and the US in order to meet and study with the some of the world's best orchestral horn players and pedagogues.

The destinations that were chosen are historically significant as places with incredible orchestras and players who are top in their field. My goal was to obtain as much knowledge from them, technical skills and experience their playing in a lesson setting, as well as in performance with their own orchestras.

I would sincerely like to thank the players I met and with whom I spent invaluable time. Extra special thanks goes to a special few who were not only generous with their time but also with their support, contacts, care and even their homes; Sarah Willis in Berlin, Andrew Bain in LA and Tim Jones in London.

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust grants life changing opportunities to many Australians every year. I am proud of my Fellowship status and can't express how grateful I am. The support, guidance, and overall kindness shown to me by the Queensland Churchill Fellowship community has been invaluable.

Overseas travel provides enrichment which is vital to Australia's growth as a world leader and innovator. As an expensive endeavour, it's often out of reach for many and so philanthropic deeds are the vital missing link. My most heartfelt gratitude is extended to Mrs Patricia New for generously sponsoring my fellowship in honour of her late husband, Mr Gerald Frank New. The sponsorship has gifted me a once in a lifetime opportunity and I look forward to sharing my experiences with the community.



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Name: Lauren Manuel  
Address: 13/15 Archibald Street  
West End, Queensland, 4101  
Occupation: Tutti French Horn, The Queensland Symphony Orchestra  
Contact: [laurenmanuel81@gmail.com](mailto:laurenmanuel81@gmail.com)  
+61418803779

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

My project included seeking out the world's best horn players, with a special focus on principal horn players, in arguably some of the world's top orchestras. I obtained instruction in the form of lessons from the players and discussed techniques to develop my skills generally as a player, but more specifically as a 'high horn' player. I also viewed them in performance with their orchestras taking note of different styles, approaches and sound concepts. I will use this knowledge to continue developing my skills with the view of advancing my expertise as a player, teacher and colleague in the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

### PARTICIPATING MUSICIANS/HORN TEACHERS

- ◆ Simon Raynor, 1st horn Royal Opera House Covent Garden
- ◆ Richard Watkins, freelance horn player and horn teacher at Royal Academy of Music.
- ◆ Tim Jones, 1st horn London Symphony Orchestra, horn teacher at Royal College of Music.
- ◆ Angela Barnes, 2nd horn London Symphony Orchestra
- ◆ Eric Terwilliger, 1st horn Bavarian Radio Orchestra
- ◆ Jörg Brückner, 1st horn Munich Philharmonic
- ◆ Stefan Dohr, 1st horn Berlin Philharmonic
- ◆ Sarah Willis, low horn Berlin Philharmonic
- ◆ David Cooper, 1st horn Berlin Philharmonic
- ◆ Fergus McWilliam, low horn Berlin Philharmonic
- ◆ Andrew Bain, 1st horn Los Angeles Philharmonic and horn teacher at Colburn School.
- ◆ Gail Williams, horn teacher at Northwestern University Chicago
- ◆ Julie Landsman, horn teacher at Julliard School of Music New York
- ◆ Leelanee Sterrett, Principal 3rd horn New York Philharmonic

### MAJOR LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS:

The underlying theme coming from all of the lessons I received is that my air and the way I use it is of the utmost importance. The intake, the ability to sustain, the way the air is supported and the speed of release were all points that arose many times in the course of my lessons. Although I already understand the importance of air stream, the way each teacher described and demonstrated their individual methods has given me a wealth of techniques to draw on in my own teaching and practise. Other frequently mentioned concepts included the organisation that goes into preparing for high playing, including embouchure placement and simple exercises to prepare/train the embouchure and commitment to musical approaches and how to approach practising. I look forward to sharing recently acquired skills, knowledge and zest for the art form of horn playing with my colleagues in the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, my students and my continuing involvement with youth orchestra programs such as the Australian Youth Orchestra, as well as through my various networks in the orchestral community.

## **PROGRAMME**

### **London, UK**

*(April 1 - 17 2018)*

Lessons with:

Simon Raynor, 1st horn Royal Opera House Covent Garden Richard Watkins,  
Freelance horn player and soloist

Tim Jones, 1st horn London Symphony Orchestra

Angela Barnes, 2nd horn London Symphony Orchestra Performance Observations:

The Royal Opera, perf. Macbeth

London Symphony Orchestra, cond. Nosenda Philharmonia Orchestra, cond. Salonen

London Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Storgårds

London Symphony Orchestra, cond. Mälkki

### **Dublin, Ireland**

*(April 17 - 20 2018)*

Performance Observations:

London Symphony Orchestra, cond. Rattle

### **Munich, Germany**

*(April 20 - 24 2018)*

Lessons with:

Eric Terwilliger, 1st horn Bavarian Radio Orchestra Jörg Brückner, 1st horn Munich

Philharmonic Performance Observations:

Bavarian Radio Orchestra, cond. Jansons

Munich Philharmonic, cond. Bychkov

### **Berlin, Germany**

*(April 24 - May 7)*

Lessons with:

Stefan Dohr, 1st horn Berlin Philharmonic

David Cooper, 1st horn Berlin Philharmonic Sarah Willis, low horn Berlin

Philharmonic Fergus McWilliam, low horn Berlin Philharmonic Performance

Observations:

Berlin Philharmonic, cond. Gilbert

Staatsoper Orchestra, cond. Barenboim Deutsche Oper Berlin, perf. Rigoletto

**Los Angeles, US**

*(May 7 - 18 2018)*

Lessons with:

Andrew Bain, 1st horn LA Philharmonic Performance Observations:

LA Philharmonic, cond. Bychkov

LA Philharmonic, cond. Dudamel

**Chicago, US**

*(May 18 - 22 2018)*

Lessons with:

Gail Williams, horn teacher Northwestern University Performance Observations:

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, cond. Salonen

**New York, US**

*(May 22 - 29 2018)*

Lessons with:

Julie Landsman, horn teacher Julliard School of Music Leelanee Sterrett, Principal

3rd horn New York Philharmonic Performance Observations:

New York Philharmonic, cond. Bychkov

## London

I began my fellowship in London over Easter weekend. On the advice from one of my Churchill references and occasional colleague, Tim Jones I planned to have lessons with Simon Raynor, current Principal horn of the Royal Opera - Covent Garden and teacher at Royal College of Music. Before meeting Simon I had the opportunity to hear him perform in the Royal Opera's production of Macbeth and opera by Verdi.

I also attended concerts by the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Philharmonia.

Simon Raynor:

The first lesson of my fellowship was with Simon in a practice room at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. It began with me discussing my aims and goals for the fellowship and then I played Simon some of Mozart's Second Horn Concerto. It was a rusty start and the first lesson I'd had in years!

Simon began by asking me questions as to whether I feel the contact of my teeth on my embouchure, where was my jaw placed and are my bottom lips, jaw, teeth and horn all moving together?

This was leading to Simon's suggestion that in order to play fluidly and efficiently we explore moving my embouchure to a 50/50 ratio; 50% top lip on the mouth piece and 50% bottom. Traditionally horn players have an embouchure setting of 2/3 top lip and 1/3 bottom lip. We also discussed keeping the embouchure forward, like a cushion for the lead pipe which should point straight out, not angled down.

His most valuable tip, with the greatest success for me, was to set the mouthpiece from the lower lip. I've always had a problem with top lip fatigue when playing high. So Simon's suggestion of setting from the lower lip naturally engaged that area and 'freed' up the top lip. I think this is a common problem for a lot of horn players so this little tip will be something I'll use in my own teaching.

We spent the rest of the lesson investigating this and as well as going through a few simple exercises to facilitate the new setting.

Within the confines of the lesson setting I found that while I could achieve a good result with the new embouchure setting it wasn't something I could replicate in my practise in the following days and so I didn't find it worth investigating any further. An embouchure change is a huge undertaking and not something achieved quickly.

Richard Watkins:

Richard is a famous freelance horn player, recording artist and soloist in the UK. He has had a varied career, beginning as Principal Horn in the Philharmonia Orchestra but is probably better known for his horn sound on many famous movie soundtracks

such as *The Hunger Games*, *Prometheus* and *Inception* just to name a few.

After a couple days practising trying to change my embouchure after Simon Raynor's lesson I was initially uncomfortable playing for Richard.

Richard's approach to fixing problems was completely different to Simon's. Richard advocated approaching technical problems from an entirely musical standpoint.

Deciding on how a piece was to sound, maybe even thinking of some adjectives to describe that sound and then trying to produce that. The suggestion was made that instead of always trying to "work things out" on the horn, actually spend time singing the piece/excerpt and record yourself signing it, over and over again until the picture of how you want to play something is incredibly clear. Then record yourself playing it. Is it the same?

Richard also had some interesting analogies that I will hold onto and use in my teaching. One such analogy was being "game ready" like the cricket bowler Dennis Lillee who was always warmed up to the point that when he went onto the field the actual game was a continuation of his warm up. Richard thought this was especially helpful in high horn playing; to be at the point where you're already 'IN the performance' in your warm up, whether it be for a concert or audition, so the actual performance is just an extension of that.

It was interesting talking about the psychology of playing horn with Richard. Similar to the cricket analogy Richard likes his mind to be in focus long before a performance or audition.

I met with Richard again while in London and this time we focused more on excerpts and audition repertoire. During the course of this second meeting he gave me some advice and strategies to build confidence and skills to become a principal player. He noted that it is easy to become 'pigeon holed' as a player so efforts must be made to keep putting oneself 'out there'. Advice included getting involved in chamber playing and even being proactive in putting on my own concerts including a solo performance and chamber group.

Angela Barnes:

Angela Barnes is the second horn player in the London Symphony Orchestra. Although not a Principal player Angela is in the privileged position of sitting to the right of one of the world's best Principal horn players, Tim Jones, in one of the world's greatest orchestras. We spent quite a lot of time at the meeting discussing the differences between how orchestras work; entitlements, long service leave and then agreeing on some similarities such as the difficulties with working with different Principals and how we manage the various personalities of different Principals.

I really enjoyed playing for Angela. Her advice was practical and simple. She had recently taken an audition and was advocating for being as organised with your musicality as possible. This means thinking, planning, trialing and then eventually

notating on your part and committing to performing it *that way*.

Other advice included taking care of the end of notes, limiting the bending of embouchure during a note and therefore keeping the pitch and sound consistent.

Tim Jones:

I have known Tim for several years and have had the immense pleasure of being 2nd horn to Tim on two Australian Chamber Orchestra tours.

Already knowing how I play Tim didn't need hear too much before we discussed the finer points of his horn playing ethos. Tim advised that there is an optimum embouchure for each individual note and if that embouchure isn't engaged different notes will have a different sound to them.

He pointed out that whilst most of my playing is engaging the optimum embouchure the few times when it doesn't the notes 'stick out' as being of a lesser quality of sound. His advice was to practise in a way that always leads me to the correct embouchure, to take away the musicality initially and listen for the overtones in the every note as a way of keeping myself on track.

In terms of high playing, Tim pointed out that it was merely a point of finding the right embouchure placement. Furthermore, he suggested I already have the skills but just need a little 'tweaking'.

## **Dublin**

My trip to Dublin was a little last minute but it was an opportunity not to be missed. London Symphony Orchestra performed Mahler's Ninth Symphony under the baton of their new chief conductor Sir Simon Rattle. Mahler 9 is a 90 minute symphony full of glorious horn and horn section solos. After spending time with them in the 2 weeks leading up to the Dublin trip, not only did I get to hear Tim Jones and Angela Barnes play together as horn 1 and 2, but to hear them perform from the 3rd row under the baton of probably the world's most famous conductor was incredible.

## **Munich**

My trip to Munich started with a concert by the Bavarian Radio Orchestra in the Gasteig Munich. They played Mahler's seventh symphony and I was blown away. The sound was different to the London orchestras I had heard. It was blended and harmonious but still with excitement and drive.

Eric Terwilliger:

After hearing Eric perform with his orchestra the night before, I was eager to meet him. He was also another teacher recommended by Tim Jones and to quote Tim “Eric taught me everything I know about playing Principal horn”. He is 63 years old, still very much at the top of his game and been a Principal horn for nearly 40 years. Focusing heavily on support and being a self confessed “old hippy” Eric’s approach was a combination of mindfulness and organised support. He suggested before playing I get myself into the habit of taking one nose breath, focusing my mind, getting my mental energy high but keeping my physical energy low, shoulders down, loose knees and hips and to feel the contact between my feet and the floor. Keep the sound of the note I’m about to play resonating in my head, chest open and relaxed and blow with warm air.

He pointed out that committing to this practice will help long term to teach my body to be relaxed as possible as it impossible to play high horn when you’re tense. “The Beach Position” is the name Eric gave to his theory of supporting the air. He made me imagine I was at the beach in my bathing suit, sucking in my lower stomach muscles in order to appear slimmer. By doing this I could feel my chest automatically lifting and shoulders broadening, my lower abdominal muscles were engaged and my air felt free and easy to blow.

Eric used a lot of mental images and analogies to describe his approach to playing which really worked for me. He likened the intake and support of air to tightening the frog (the screw on the bottom of a violin bow) but unlike a violinist we have to ‘tighten the frog’ every time we take in a breath.

Jörg Brückner:

Jörg is the Principal horn of the Munich Philharmonic. I met him in a dressing room of the Munich Philharmonic concert hall after he finished a rehearsal. Knowing very little about Jörg I had no idea what to expect. After playing the exposition of Mozart’s Second Horn Concerto Jörg explained that, for him, music is only a language and you have to feel love and play ‘in love’. He said that I should always be striving to say something when playing. With the Mozart concerto he paints a picture of Mozart as a coy, girl chasing cad; cheeky and flamboyant. Playing through the exposition again Jörg helped me stay true to the musical image by singing along with me while I played. He used the words ‘I love you’ sung in hefty operatic tone.

I found this particularly useful as it made me focus purely on music rather than on smaller technical aspects, many of which ‘took care of themselves’ once my focus was on a musical dialogue.

We then spent some time on a few little technical aspects such as trilling. His approach to trilling was like “bouncing a ball, the bottom is always more important.” Meaning focus on the lower tone and bend the note up, gradually increasing speed. I

found Jörg's advice for feeling abdominal support particularly helpful, especially for high playing. He suggested pulling the stomach in, feeling it around the bottom of the ribs and to replicate the muscles you need to isolate, all you need to do is cough. This is a simple example which I will find useful when teaching students the crucial skill of support.

## **Berlin**

Being the cultural home of classical music and the world famous Berlin Philharmonic I was incredibly excited to arrive in Berlin. Over the time I spent there I fell in love with the city and enjoyed being immersed in its history and arts culture. My contact in Berlin was Sarah Willis - a low horn player with the Berlin Philharmonic. Sarah is famous in the music world for her Deutsche Welle TV program, her Youtube channel interviewing famous musicians and her work throughout the world promoting music and horn playing. Sarah kindly put me in touch with all her colleagues in the Philharmonic, accompanied me to a concert of the Berlin Phil and even offered me her apartment to stay in.

Seeing the Berlin Philharmonic perform in their concert hall was a highlight of the trip. They are without a doubt the best orchestra I've ever heard. Through such a high calibre of playing they seem to create new musical 'colours' by perfectly blending sounds. This is something I've never heard when listening to live orchestras before.

Stefan Dohr:

Stefan has been the principal horn of Berlin Philharmonic for 25 years, although I have met Stefan a few times and heard him give master-classes I was anxious to hear what advice he could give me.

We spoke a little about my goals, wanting to improve my high register and developing a more effortless way of playing. I also mentioned some concerns I've had in my playing. Feedback over the years from colleagues or teachers has been that I can sometimes come across as an aggressive player and my articulation is too strong.

I started off by playing some Mozart Horn Concerto. Upon hearing, his first point was that I push my air a little too fast, especially for my instrument. I play on an Alexander 103 horn, the same as the horn players in the Berlin Philharmonic. Stefan commented that 103's are not a horn that should 'sound from the bell'. They should 'sound from the body of the horn'. He got me to try slowing down the air, without reducing the amount of air. Immediately the sound was wider and with more overtones. It felt like an instant fix. I also found the image of blowing into the body of the horn a really easy concept to grasp.

We continued working up the registers but trying to maintain the sound of the overtones in the body of the horn. This was achieved by keeping the vowel sound/shape of 'ohh' in the mouth rather than the brighter 'eee' sound I had been using. He suggested a really simple exercise of progressing up through the registers playing arpeggios, listening for the wide open sound of the overtones.

The next point and one of the most profound was the organisation that goes into playing high. Stefan advised me to set the embouchure in the 'high' position BEFORE playing an ascending line. This was my first glimpse into how deliberate and organised the playing actions of some horn players are. Although an incredibly simple idea it's easily utilised and only requires more thought than muscle.

I met with Stefan twice more during my time in Berlin in order to make sure I was implementing his advice correctly. Another small detail he noticed during our meetings resulted in a correction to my posture, head back and straight.

**Sarah Willis:**

Although Sarah is not technically a high horn player she plays in the world's best orchestra next to the world's best Principal horn players so her insight is was incredibly valuable. Not to mention that Sarah is a formidable horn player, personality and musician in her own right.

After playing through a loud, high Strauss except Sarah noticed my breathing appeared to happen sideways, and out. She suggested dropping the larynx and think breathing in 'dark'. She had me place my fingers on her mid throat whilst she demonstrated the correct breath so I could feel the drop in the larynx and the breath travel down quickly.

The most amazing revelation I had with Sarah was to do with support. I have always been taught that support should felt in the lower abdominals and with some teachers like Eric Terwilliger in Munich, I could actually see his stomach move when support was engaged. Sarah suggested that it may be felt differently in a woman, and definitely in her own experience. This 100% resonated with me as I always thought I was doing it incorrectly or not enough. Again Sarah had me place my palms on her torso whilst she played through the range of the horn and I could feel that her support was more dynamic. She likened it to a concertina type breathing machine, 'the type you see on Grey's Anatomy', was her description. This lesson has stuck with me since my trip and I'm looking forward to discussing variations in support between men and woman and possibly researching as to why, physiologically speaking, we may be different.

Complementing the support we then worked on a more 'pinging' attack, as Sarah called it. But instead of coming from the tongue and articulation, the ping resonates from the chest and high in the diaphragm. She asked me to cough as a way of identifying which muscles should be engaged.

Much like Stefan, Sarah also had some advice on how to use an Alexander 103 horn and she instructed me through the correct tuning which is something I've always been curious about.

David Cooper:

I was really excited to meet David as he's the newest member of the Berlin Philharmonic Horn section (on Principal horn), the only American ever to be employed in the brass section and he has had many different roles and jobs. The first thing David made note of after hearing me play was something that had been mentioned in other lessons, keeping the chest open and the sound resonant. His advice was to also aim for the bottom of notes, keeping the sound warmer and richer. This also creates more space, more of a target for the notes, especially when playing high, so less chance of missing or splitting. He suggested a practice of note bending to locate the bottom of each note.

As David has been so successful in auditions I quizzed him on his advice for auditioning and audition practise. He cites meditation as having a big influence on him. Being a self confessed impatient person he has found that the practice of meditation before he practises or plays has paid dividends in keeping him calm. "Non impatient practise and non impatient playing"

Being in a state of calm he finds the he can concentrate better of every facet, every articulation and every note ending.

I met with David again while in Berlin and during this time David took me through his warm up. We also concentrated more on playing through some standard excerpts and working on finer details. David made very practical suggestions of playing everything under tempo and with a metronome. Furthermore he described setting the metronome into subdivided beats. David gave me a copy of his warm up and I'll definitely continue to use some of his routine and teach others.

Fergus McWilliam:

Another member of the Berlin Philharmonic horn section, since 1985, and author of the book 'Blow your OWN horn - horn heresies' is Fergus McWilliam. He calls the book 'an anti horn-method method'.

Straight after playing some solo repertoire Fergus offered the observation that he could hear two people fighting for control, the orchestral brass player and the operatic singer. Without offering any advice straight away he asked me to play a passage again as the opera singer. The result was that immediately I felt freer to express and play, without feeling constrained by trying too hard. Physically I felt I was blowing more focused and with a clear intention for the music.

Using a Mozart horn concerto as an example Fergus then took me through his 'McWilliam Four-Step' system.

1. Sing it - in tune
2. Whistle the same thing - in tune
3. Buzz the same thing on the mouthpiece - in tune
4. Add the horn

Only adding the horn in as the very last step, and committing to singing, whistling and buzzing in tune you're giving your body and mind a chance to re-learn the music. He advised me to go as slow as needed to make sure the intonation is correct. The end result is a more natural and well-structured musical phrase.

We applied his four step system to some excerpts with very pleasing results. During the course of playing through a Brahms excerpt we got on the topic of breathing. Fergus' advice was to only breathe in as much as what is required for any given phrase, where possible taking the start of the breath through the nose. Beginning the breath through the nose I found my chest and torso remained relaxed and open. Having met and played for Fergus I now look forward to revisiting his book. His methods are very much a 'teach yourself' mentality and to keep your practise and approach very, very simple.



*Me and Sarah Willis at the Philharmonie watching a Berlin Phil Concert, and with Stefan Dohr post concert*

## Los Angeles

By now, already 5 weeks into my Fellowship, I could feel my playing becoming easier and slightly more effortless. Advice was filtering through from the lessons into my playing and despite the lack of practice due to simply nowhere to practise, I was beginning to feel like I was on the right track.

I was incredibly excited to see Andrew Bain, principal horn of the LA Phil and teacher at the famous Colburn Music School. Being a native Australian and growing up in the same town, I have known Andrew since I started playing horn. I have had intermittent lessons over the years and also played many times with Andrew. Andrew's career progression has been nothing short of astonishing. LA Phil is

considered one of the best orchestras in the US and is the highest paid, hence a well sought after position.

Andrew was incredibly generous with his time and access to his studio for practise at the Colburn School. He also gave me access to attend orchestral rehearsals where I could see, close up, how the section works together and develops. I also sat right behind the horn section in their concert of Dvorak's 7th symphony. I noticed that Andrew's sound seemed to sit above that of the rest of the section. On questioning if this is a conscious effort he pointed out that it's his section's ethos to have the first horn louder, more present than the rest of the section. But he admitted it may be just a difference in their sounds and what carries in the hall better.

*Walt Disney Concert Hall, LA*

Andrew Bain:

Because of my relationship and history with Andrew our time wasn't confined to strict lesson settings. I spent many moments playing for Andrew, with Andrew and going through warm up and routine, during my time in LA.

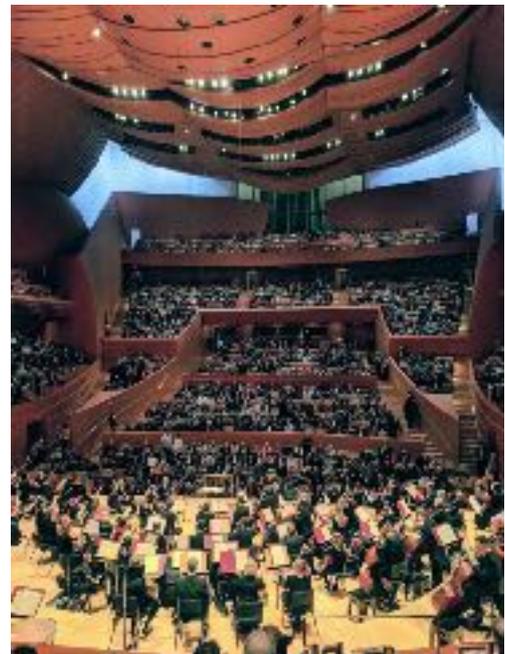
So the following is more of a synopsis of the time I spent with Andrew, his ideology and the way he practises and teaches.

As a result of having such a high pressured job playing huge repertoire week in week out, Andrew realised he needed to develop of a mechanism that will work to high level every day, even when he's not feeling 100% and with little preparation time.

The basic ideology of Andrew's practise is to detach himself from result based practise and instead focus solely on process. Or as he puts it "process, process process". The end game being no matter how he's feeling, he's inbuilt the processes he needs in order to play well. He explained that if we are always trying go from the angle of achieving a particular result, for example hitting a high note in an excerpt, we may or may not achieve but the path we used to get there will be random. So rather than try to hit the note, practise the process and continue to go over the processes needed to get the note.

Andrew builds mechanisms quite simply on breathing and blowing.

We spent a quite a bit of time focusing just on breathing in. Andrew uses the imagery of hooks on his sides, just under the rib cage, pulling out allowing the air to be sucked



into the lungs. As for blowing out into the instrument, it just happens as a consequence of the 'in' breath, therefore detaching yourself from an result. The idea is to find and practise a consistent 'in' breath so that the resulting note after will also be of good quality, solid and consistent.

We spent quite a lot of time just on this most basic of techniques. The results were astonishing. Although I feel like I've only just skimmed the surface of Andrew's practise methodology I am excited to continue working at it.

The rest of the time I spent playing with Andrew was entirely through the lens of keeping true to the process. We went through his warm up routine one day and my only job was to breathe in and blow out consistently, focusing not on the notes I was playing but making sure my air was good. Andrew even applauded me when I played an incorrect fingering because my sound was great and my focus was on my air - not my fingers.

## Chicago

Gail Williams:

Gail is respected around the world for her teaching as the horn professor at Bienen School of Music, Northwestern University, just outside Chicago in Evanston.

Although retired from the position of Associate Principal Horn with the legendary Chicago Symphony Orchestra Gail still performs regularly as a soloist and chamber musician.

We began our time by having a chat about my fellowship. Gail gave me a great analogy. She likened all the information and advice from teachers I'd received like a big stew, it's going to need time to marinate and cook. This made complete sense, even though I could already start to feel the results of all my lessons I knew I still had a long way to go in my practising and sorting through the information.

Naturally the conversation turned to finer details of playing the horn. In her younger years Gail took lessons from Arnold Jacob - a famous pedagogue, tubist with the Chicago Symphony and expert on breathing for performers. So for her whole career Gail has had a firm grasp on the techniques of 'correct' breathing and blowing. She has recently changed her thinking due to becoming a grandmother and observing her grandchildren. "They don't stop and prepare their air before they yell "Mum!", they just breathe and yell." Yet again, another very simple and basic approach. Another discovery Gail made only in recent times was to go back a step further and concentrate on breathing 'out' before the preparation to play 'in' breath. She found that way her lungs are empty of air, allowing fresh air in, it calms her body but still keeps her mind in the music. This was a tip I could use immediately and when we finally got around to playing I could feel the benefits especially in maintaining focus

and releasing tension from vey body.

Gail uses a few devices and lots of analogies to describe playing. She gave me an Incentive Spirometer. By placing my mouthpiece in the pipe and buzzing through you can see where then air dips and is unsupported, as the ball in the Spirometer drops. She recommended a phone app called 'TonalEnergy' where you can see visually the shape of the note you are producing, thus getting an instant feedback. She uses the analogy of bowing a string instrument to describe air stream. This I found extremely helpful as the bow is always in contact with the string (our air) and you can think in terms of bow speed and length (or air speed and length).

Gail had so many little tips that aided concentration. For example she hears particular phrases as colours because it's something visual she can see in her mind's eye. She also instructed me to actually look at the notes I was playing. Obviously this is basic advice but she correctly diagnosed me as a player who constantly thinks ahead rather than taking care of what I'm actually playing at the time.

## **New York**

New York is the home of the famous Juilliard School and the teacher Julie Landsman. Julie, now retired from her job as Principal horn of the Met Orchestra was probably the first female Principal horn of her time. This was a big part of my reason for choosing to travel to New York City.

On the advice from other colleagues I also made contact with Leelanee Sterrett who is one of the principal horns with the New York Philharmonic and is about the same age as myself. On my first night in New York I saw the New York Philharmonic perform Shostakovich's 5th symphony and later in the week, Strauss' Alpine Symphony. Both are heavy brass programs it gave me chance to hear the horn section in action.

Julie Landsman:

Julie teaches a specific method called the Caruso method. Carmine Caruso was actually a saxophonist by trade but was Julie's teacher in her early years. Julie has since developed the method for the horn. The basis of the method is precision timing and coordination.

After playing through some Mozart Julie applied some of the Caruso methods in order to clean up some coordination issues. By slowing down the tempo and subdividing very carefully I could work out what was going wrong. It was air speed and tonguing. She had me practise without the instrument just blowing and tonguing through the phrase, keeping the tongue forward in the mouth. This made the tongue action less likely to interrupt the air, keeping the air consistent. Generally Julie

advised me to 'keep the tongue in the general neighbourhood of where it's going to strike'.

Julie's recommendation for helping with high register was to practise her 'note tasting' exercise, an exercise that spans over 3 octaves with large interval leaps. Keeping the mouthpiece on the face the at all times, breathing through the nose, attacking the notes with breath and really feeling the subdivision before playing. This method gets the embouchure used to setting in the correct position, in time a split second before the note sounds; in essence, taking the guesswork and fear out of playing high.

Leelanee Sterrett:

Being that Leelanee is a similar age to me and has a principal job in a top American orchestra I really enjoyed picking her brain. She is the first woman ever to be employed in the New York Philharmonic brass section.

We spent the first part of our lesson talking about why it seems a lot of auditions, both in America and Australia, lead to no hire situations. Leelanee offered that maybe it's a generational issue. A lot of famous names in the horn world have recently retired after incredibly long careers of 30 or 40 years. Leelanee suggested that maybe people have forgotten that everyone had to start somewhere and that even the "gods" of the horn world were young once too. Also on the topic of women in brass sections and in Principal positions Leelanee thinks that slowly the balance is shifting. There are more and more females studying horn at university level, so in time hopefully there will be more females in Principal orchestral brass jobs.

Leelanee has also taken auditions recently so we had a candid conversation about how she manages her nerves. Similar to Gail Williams advice, Leelanee commits to controlling the 'out' breath, she takes beta blockers like a lot of musicians (but most musicians don't like to discuss it), she does a lot of mock auditions in front of colleagues and prepares as best she can.

I decided to play some excerpts to Leelanee. In a Brahms 3rd horn excerpt, we worked using different vowel shapes in the mouth to get around the register changes. One of the hardest things on the horn is playing high and quiet. Leelanee described that, as the volume decreases, the support needs to increase, almost creating a compression in the abdominals.

In the famous Shostakovich 5th symphony 1st horn excerpt we worked on using this compression to support the leaps. This worked really well and the next piece of advice was to find some relaxation in the sound. Leelanee coached me to keep the support active and engage again just before the change of notes. The result was exactly what I wanted. The sound was effortless and even, all the work was going on under the surface and not showing through in the sound.

I really appreciated Leelanee's description of support and it's something I will continue to focus on.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

Traditionally when learning an instrument a student is with one teacher for one hour a week, quite often the same teacher for several years. Through my fellowship I was in the unique position to gain a snapshot of the teaching styles of some of the world's most renowned horn pedagogues and their advice on my playing. As a result I am now able to articulate the fundamentals of "good" horn playing.

Although my main aim was to investigate the skills to advance my high horn the conclusion I came to was that when the rudimentary skills are working at optimum level my high playing isn't a problem. By this I mean that the basics of good horn playing are the same no matter what range the player is in.

For effortless and easy horn playing physically speaking; support, in a dynamic and flexible way must be engaged at all times. The air stream is paramount and with the least interruption as possible. In order to free up the air stream posture is important, keeping the head straight and the body relaxed. The tongue should be forward in the mouth and the action minimal as not to interrupt the air.

Mentally, approaching any piece should be in a considered and organised fashion. This includes commitment to a musical style and having a clear image in the mind of how you want to play. This work can be done without the instrument and is purely mental. Body awareness is key to managing the physical elements of playing and also useful to practise in stressful situations. Having a firm idea of how you want to practise the fundamentals, and adhering to processes rather than results, pays dividends in the long run.

As a recommendation I have come to the conclusion there are two main areas I need to work on. The first is formulate and adhere to a process based routine. I need to spend time feeding all the new information I've received over my fellowship into my playing. The second is to seek out more playing opportunities in a Principal role. As a low horn player at Queensland Symphony Orchestra it is my role to match, support and mirror the playing of the Principal horn. During my fellowship I realised that this role has eroded some of my own ideas and skills as a player. Being involved in chamber music is a great way of bringing my own playing to the fore. Through my job at Queensland Symphony Orchestra we have opportunities with our Chamber Players series and I look forward performing as part of this series this year and in the coming years.

I look forward to sharing the skills and knowledge I have gleaned from my travels with as many musicians as possible. I am in the fortunate position with Queensland

Symphony of being involved in community outreach programs, tutoring and mentoring. I also have private students who will benefit and I maintain close ties with the horn students at Griffith University. Colleagues at QSO have even expressed interest in reading this report and discussing my findings.

Overseas travel for a musician is incredibly rewarding. I found it particularly beneficial in reaffirming existing ideas, exposing me to new concepts and teaching styles. I feel reinvigorated in my love for playing the horn and as an added benefit I feel my confidence in playing is at an all time high. I'd like to yet again thank the Trust and Mrs P.D. New for granting me this once in a lifetime opportunity. I look forward to keeping a relationship with the Churchill Trust and encouraging friends and colleagues to apply.