

Donatella Flick Conducting Competition 2016: Simon Proust

By [Bachtrack](#), 28 October 2016

The [Donatella Flick LSO Conducting Competition](#), held every two years, was founded in 1990 by philanthropist Donatella Flick. Ahead of the three rounds which will crown the 2016 winner, between the 15th and 17th November, Bachtrack's insider Nicole Wilson meets the competitors who will have to prove their talent conducting the [London Symphony Orchestra](#).



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Do you come from a musical family?

My father is an organist and my mother is a choir conductor, but they're amateur musicians. They have other jobs and play music in the evenings for fun. I hope they are proud of me.

When did you decide to become a conductor?

I don't remember the moment I decided. I had gone to wonderful concerts in my home town in France and I had a chance to sing in a performance of Bizet's Carmen when I was 10. This is my first memory of being on the stage, with the orchestra and the conductor, and this was the first time I had the chance to meet a conductor.

Where have you studied?

I was a percussionist until the age of 19 when I went to study at the Paris Conservatoire and now I am in Glasgow. I have a conducting fellowship at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, so I'm inbetween student and professional life. I like this a lot, it's a great opportunity to learn

on the job. I have the opportunity to assist at the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, have lessons in the conservatoire, and work on projects with the students.

Do you find it difficult being in between being a student and a professional conductor?

It's a bit of a no man's land and I don't know if one day I will be good enough to be a professional conductor. There's a lot to learn for this kind of job. Maybe when I'm 80 or 90 I can confidently say yes! Then I will understand the music...

How do you practise conducting?

In conducting class we have technical lessons, just the beat, some gestural technique. Afterwards we discuss music, ideas, phrasing. We record our rehearsals with orchestra and afterwards we can watch the video and learn from our mistakes. The video is a wonderful tool to use.

How do you prepare a score?

If it's a very famous piece it's different as I will have heard a lot of recordings of it before. When I have a new piece or a piece I don't know, the first time I turn the pages and try to understand what the music is all about. Afterwards I take a pencil and the first thing I do is write some bar numbers. I don't know why! Then I look for musical ideas, for example in Mozart, Haydn and Schubert I look for the phrasing.

I have red and blue coloured pens and sometimes I use orange. In contemporary pieces sometimes I have 10 colours if necessary. But I try to understand the part and this helps me to see it more clearly.