

Playing Piccolo for the Queen! ~ Hannah Dowsett

When I was young I dreamed of being a musician, perhaps an orchestral flute player, or an opera singer? The dream didn't include any practice, or study! But I knew that I wanted to give music to an audience!

Then I met David, and my dreams expanded to include a wonderful marriage and 4 children. I lived this life to the full. I loved being a mother. By the time we had our second baby, I had learned that breastfeeding was really important to me, and my contact with LLL began in earnest.

I became a group leader, and then a Co-ordinator of Leader Applicants, and after some years I was involved at national level as the NZ treasurer.

It took the death of David's nephew at age 16 to remind me that life was short. And I decided to play the flute again after a 17 year break. That first year I began to practice in earnest. I contacted the principle flute of the NZSO and asked for lessons. Now I can't believe that I did that! I really was a baby in the flute playing world!

And then I decided to try for a place at either of the two music schools in Wellington. Those auditions were hard but I got into the Wellington Polytechnic school of Music and so began some serious years of study. Somehow I found the time to attend lectures and lessons, to practice 4 hours a day. My lovely David was fantastic and somehow we kept the family going. Musically I started to grow up.

I made fantastic friends, they were younger than me of course, but

they shared the dream. And we learned how hard this music life is. Auditions for the NZSO where over 100 players vie for one chair. Only the best get there.

Thousands of flutes have passed through my hands. I really like to fix a flute and watch a player when they get that flute back. Their surprise when they sound so much better.



As a freelance musician I was asked to audition for the Central Band of the New Zealand Airforce. Over the last 14 years this part-time employment has been the mainstay of my playing career. I am principle flute, and I have performed a broad range of music all over New Zealand. I march and play the piccolo at various ceremonies for the NZ government. Fingers and feet working together? This is a brain exercise!

I went to London with the Airforce! I was the only piccolo player in a mixed services band and I played in front of the Queen. Who would have thought!

My first teacher Alexa Still showed me how to repair flutes, and I run a workshop from home.

My dream became a reality. I was absolutely driven to follow this path. Even now I love to practice and I do my first hour before breakfast. I am an adult flute player now. I know how hard every musician must work to gain the technique needed to allow the music to flow to an audience.

And I know how lucky I am to be able to say that I am a flute player; a professional flute player!

