



The harp retreat was a new experience for me as a beginner harpist. It was great to have the chance to improve my skills at my own level as well as playing in an ensemble with more experienced players.

The choice of music we learned was interesting and varied, and gave us an opportunity to try pieces that were above our standard, in a non-judgemental environment.

Whatipu was a magical setting. That it could also accommodate family members that weren't harpists was great. Playing in the cave was a highlight.

It was a wonderful weekend for the young, and the young at heart

Libby Losenby (Devonport)





Music at the Whatipu Caves – harps, whistles, violin and voices!

Saturday night entertainment – The debut of The Pajama Harpers



The Aunties singing “50 Ways to Set Your Levers” (Sorry Paul Simon!) reworded by Lea Arnow Brown (USA)



“ALL HANDS ON HARPS”

This was a fun activity with the Pajama Harpers where the family members of the harpers had to join their harper in playing Frere Jacques..... on their harp. The winning family belonged to Lucy Makinson (above with Doug (Dad), Rose (Mum) and Harry (brother) and all four of them played on her 26 string harp – great co-ordination and team work!!!!



← Siobhan and Lisa (Mum)
 ↓ front Linda, Tabea and Trixi (Mum)
 Back Kayla and Kerry (Mum)



Joining other harpists of all ages for the harp retreat in May was such a wonderful experience for me, from the picturesque location at Whatipu, to having my musical ability pushed beyond what I thought my limits were though both the smaller group lessons, larger ensemble playing, and everything in between. A definite hi-light for me was walking through the bush, small harps in tow, to play in the caves nearby, sound enveloping in the half-light, as we learnt the basics of simple improvisation. I'm so grateful to everyone who made it possible, and such a fun weekend to be a part of. Meeting and being around other harpists for an intensive few days was magical, and I came away filled with inspiration and enthusiasm for music and our beautiful instruments.

Nadia Benton (Auckland)



I confess to having felt quite nervous prior to arriving at Whatipu for this year's Harp retreat. As an adult learner with little time for formal lessons or playing with other harpists, I worried that I wouldn't be able to keep up. I needn't have worried, of course. Anna and her team had developed a programme that suited all levels of ability, and after playing a few pieces together on the Friday night I really started to relax and enjoy myself.

I had been able to attend a couple of beginner ensemble (BegEnz) practices over the previous couple of months and this definitely helped prepare me for playing with a

larger group. However when I heard 30 harpists playing together over the weekend, and realised that I was one of them, it gave me such a boost of confidence and pleasure. It was also valuable to learn from other participants, from tuning tips to helpful suggestions about reading music.

The venue at the Whatipu Lodge is an old favourite of mine, having been a 'Westie' for well over a decade now. Such a peaceful, inspiring location...and playing harps in the cave was definitely a highlight of the weekend. If the Harp Retreat continues to grow in popularity though, we will definitely need a bigger venue to play in.

Lynx (Auckland)

Whenever I try to pinpoint what makes events like the Harp Retreat such a fantastic experience, I always end up thinking the same sort of things – the most beneficial part is the contact with other harpists. Harp Retreat was an opportunity to meet other harpists, hear them play, enjoy the sound of many harps blending their voices, and most of all to observe what others could do. Hearing more advanced harpists play is invaluable and always inspires me to new goals and ambitions. The tutors at this year's Harp Retreat were great and certainly gave my aspirations a kick-start, and the whole weekend was so much fun besides! Have you ever improvised harp music in a sea cave before? I have! Looking forward to the next one...!

Wendy Piddington (Auckland)

We had such a wonderful time at the Harp retreat, I just want to thank you again. The setting was wonderful out there in the wild but still tucked away safely like a little village.

I loved the walk through the nature and then arriving at the caves and hearing that acoustic of the caves when all the harps started playing. Just magic.

Thanks for letting us be a part of this event I think Tabea really got a kick out of it - she is now practicing more often like she sees another purpose and has experienced the sound of the harps all around her which is an amazing feeling.

Trixi (Mum) Leonhardt

Best parts for me were being with others who love harping – all at different levels – all welcoming and helpful. Playing together – the poignant musical story of the Nightingale and its beauty, playing it together, and finding that with much harp music there are levels to suit everyone including a beginner like me. The walk to the cave with the waves crashing nearby and then the spontaneous music happening. Great food and conversation with interesting people of all ages and backgrounds. Amazing location for someone immersed in the city – the wild and wonderful west indeed. Memorable and definitely repeatable please!

Denise Kelsall (Auckland)

HEAVENLY HARPING ON 3 CONTINENTS

Receiving an email from Anna Dunwoodie entitled 'Would you be interested in a Harp Retreat?' was a bit like asking our daft dog would it like to chase a bird on the beach OF COURSE I WOULD BE!!! So having packed an enormous amount of 'stuff' into my car I followed Anna on probably the most hair raising drive I have yet had in NZ (I don't get out much!) to the Whatipu lodge in Huia. The accommodation was perfect in that we were all within short walking distance of the main house for rehearsals but private enough to enjoy an early morning yoga session overlooking the view to the beach. Anna began the weekend with a unique and highly interesting activity grouping us first into a long line according to how long we had played the harp, then into another line as to our perceived standard and then into a final line up showing how many years we had taken formal music lessons on any other instrument, this prompted some very useful conversations and hopefully reassured many of the newbies that progress is made up of many factors not just how long you had been playing a harp!

We had on offer a variety of group ensemble rehearsals plus opportunities to play as a large Harp Orchestra, everybody enjoyed playing DHC's "Nightingale" which was then sent to Deborah to celebrate Mother's Day! I was lucky enough to join a small group of intermediate harpists with whom I had a go at playing 2 pieces (a Grade 5 and 7) neither of these pieces would have been my choice as I would have thought them way too hard for me at present. However, with the patient and encouraging skills of Lys, who rehearsed us, I actually managed a good bit of them. One of the great things about attending events/retreats like this is the progress you inevitably make, often because you are put into new and challenging circumstances and find out that actually you cope better than you thought you would! Anna provided music for every rehearsal and we even had a fun 'name the note race' to see who could go the fastest.

Everyone had brought food for a 'Pot luck supper' on the first night with Marie Christine kindly preparing all out meals, with our other harp Mums, for the rest of our time at the Retreat enabling us to focus on playing music. Some of the highlights of the weekend were walking a labyrinth whilst beautiful harp music was played, visiting and playing in the Whatipu caves with its fabulous acoustics, having a go at playing Irish music with the wonderfully talented Doug, Kara, David and Shane and making friends with so many lovely harpists. Anyone who has ever organised an event like this will know how much work goes into it, therefore it goes without saying that everyone who attended was super lucky to have this opportunity not just to play but to learn, listen, be inspired and forge new friendships and skills. I remain extremely grateful that Anna, with the help of her family, enabled me to have such a wonderful experience and can't wait till the next one!

Marion Titmuss (KatiKati)