

Eleanor, now 11 (2021) and her mum, Alison, in Dunsandel.....

Having a child say that they want to play the harp is quite a big thing for a parent. Where to get a harp? How to get a harp? And where do you find a teacher when you live in rural Canterbury?

Thankfully Anna was able to answer all of those questions and, most importantly, offered lessons by Skype. This was in 2016 when no-one else seemed to be offering such a wonderful service to an already time-poor mother!

We learned a lot in the first few lessons:

- remind child to get ready before the lesson time as they have to switch from sitting at home mode to lesson mode with no travel in-between
- check your connection before the lesson is due to start, including checking whether the tablet was charged
- how to position the tablet on a second stand so that the harping hands could be seen
- play in a place where the natural light was good but not bleaching out the strings
- stay nearby so you can fix any issues - missing pencil, printing music, dodgy rural internet connection
- have phone nearby and/or warn family to keep quiet during lesson time
- keep an ear out for technical issues to work on; you are the only physical adult so you might be needed...
- know your child's stalling techniques so you can give gentle encouragement

We are onto our fifth year of online lessons. I think all the above are still pertinent and I still hang around in the background which helps with practice throughout the week. The challenge is the other way round than most people - one day she will have to get used to a real live teacher in the room!

From Eleanor:

At the start it was okay. I didn't see a problem with it and I still don't. I think it is very good if you can't get to Auckland to learn and you just want to be at your house. I don't know any different. If I have a problem one of us can mute and play along with each other and if you don't feel good with the piece you get to try it on your own. Anna sends videos and audio tracks that I can play along with.