



BRING YOUR HARP TO THE PARTY

For those who have always wanted to play the harp but have no experience of the instrument, Christina offers a special 'Harp Immersion Course' in Tunbridge inspired by her work as a tutor at residential courses in the UK. The seven-day course includes accommodation at Nellie's cottage, catering (with fresh Tasmanian produce) and the use of a harp. At the end of the course, an aspiring harpist can expect to have a repertoire of two to four pieces; a correct attitude towards healthy posture and movement in harp playing; an understanding of the instrument; and a knowledge of resources such as where to find teachers, sheet music and how to find and recognise a good instrument.



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saw her receive a pedal harp and, as luck would have it, Michael Jefferies, a Paris Conservatoire-trained harpist and teacher just happened to live in neighbouring Campbell Town. With home-schooling taking care of the rest of her education, the young Christina had little need to move far beyond Tunbridge.

And she sees no reason to shift her base, even though travelling far afield. These days Christina is less likely to fly interstate than to the concert halls of Europe and North America. When people ask her why she doesn't at least move to Tasmania's capital, she may respond with a joke, but privately thinks "that's rather snobby".

"When you live in the centre of Tasmania it's easy to travel anywhere from here," Christina says. "Actually, I'm entranced by the fact that Tasmania is harp-shaped... and, of course, if you live in a harp-shaped island you have to have a harp society."

So, in 2003, Christina founded the Harp Society of Tasmania: current membership a healthy 65; president, C. Sonnemann. It has welcomed many performers of global repute to the State, all of whom have been invited to stay at Nellie's (which, the proprietor announces, is "free to international harpists!")

When the Sonnemanns bought Nellie's at auction for \$5,000 it was "more like a chicken coop" than a refuge for international music stars. However, her Tennessee-born father called on skills from his family's construction background and turned a dilapidated home for sheep and possum cemetery into a sweet, light-filled, herb-bordered haven. Original hand-split cedar shingles and walls have been cleverly preserved as features in the one-bedroom, tin-roofed cottage in which Christina now runs week-long residential harp courses.

It's here that she recently welcomed Florence Sitruk, Professor of Harp at the University of Geneva, after a meeting at the World Harp Congress in Dublin last July. As Jack recalls, "When [Florence] walked in that front door, she told us, 'I used to have a boutique hotel in Paris that was my favourite place in the world to stay: now it's here.'"

Christina laughs at the extravagant compliment. "It really is a bush town," she says. "People come here and they feel like they've gone back years. It's the kind of Tasmania only a few people know about. It's lovely because you can stay here and have the genuine Tasmanian bush experience, and still go and get an espresso in Oatlands only 15 minutes away and woodfired bread in Ross in just 10 minutes.

"It doesn't want to be a tourist town; it's not pretending to be anything it isn't."

Christina Sonnemann can be contacted on 0417 796 396, or visit her website at www.christinasworld.com.au

Facing page,
clockwise from top
left Christina's lap
harp was made from
Australian timbers by
Doug Eaton; a clever
space saver in the
bedroom serves as
wardrobe, storage,
bedhead and window
frame; one of Margaret's
photographs hangs
above the fireplace.

