



Jill with full glass

**Although you've spread your wings much further, you grew up in South Australia. Is that where your music journey began?**

Yes, I came from a warm family based around the Brighton/Seacliff area. One brother and I have made music a feature of our lives whilst our sister and other brother prefer sport. But my early experiences learning piano weren't happy ones. Rapped over the knuckles for unsatisfactory scale playing, six year old Jill lasted only a year, although I already knew music mattered to me.

At a high school with no music program, I learned from a teacher who came in at lunch times. This experience was fun as I learned Elvis songs and pieces I enjoyed.

I knew the time would come to take it seriously, but first I had to work. I spent some time in advertising before, aged 19, I worked for the 1972 Festival of Arts, the festival that brought Cleo Laine and John Dankworth, and the Charlie Byrd Trio to Adelaide. A love of jazz was truly awakened and has stayed with me, influencing later choices and listening.

**How did your work life get in the way?**

I was based in Melbourne while flying as an air hostess with TAA for several years. Back in Adelaide, busy jobs meant I only dabbled in music for some time. I worked for four years as PA for the Marketing Director of John Martins in Adelaide, particularly enjoying that role's creative side. Later I spent three years with the

State Bank of SA as PA to Managing Director, Marcus Clark. That was followed by another year in marketing, all along developing a can-do attitude, to think outside the square and make ideas happen.

**You moved again to Melbourne and had a busy life there too.**

Yes I had studied interior design and ran a lighting showroom as well as consulting for clients. I then took some time out from work and returned to formal studies with the Australian Music Examination Board (AMEB) passing well up to Grade 6 and later up to Grade 8. Then back to being a PA, this time for the Managing Director of Diners Club. But music always niggled. Sixteen years ago, on returning to Adelaide, I had more lessons while working running a community centre for Unley Council.

**What made you settle your wings in Yankalilla?**

Looking to live south of the city I fell in love with 'Appletree Cottage' on line, and with my supportive family on board, I arranged to see the property. I loved the house even more on viewing. Kym Mitchell was the selling agent, and I moved to a new life with great enthusiasm and optimism.

**As I clearly recall, you were quick to use your contacts and event management and publicity skills to local benefit.**

Yes, I attended the 2011 public meeting called to establish the **Books and Words Group (BWG)** with its aim to provide literary events locally for readers and writers, and joined the founding committee. It was gratifying to bring some acts to the district through Unley contacts. For example, Splash Theatre's smash hit from the 2012 Fringe Festival brought alive CJ Dennis characters. BWG took it to Leonards Mill at Second Valley to a full house sharing food platters and wine. Knowing I could help community members and businesses alike, reinforced that I'd made the right decision to move. I contributed many ideas and acts to get this group under way and found other roles within my new community while commuting to Unley. But there was much to do in Yankalilla, and I was pleased to retire and refocus my creative energies on this, my happy place.

**Becoming the Coordinator of the 2015 Festival Fleurieu, you used your skills and experience to bring us an exciting and diverse program.**

That was a thrilling time. I was delighted to lead a dynamic team for that and the following 2017 festival. Our community comes together at festival times to unleash the energy of hundreds of participating artists, performers and volunteers. The 2015 festival won event of the year, locally and statewide, and I was privileged, along with others, to collect the award at Government House. I stayed on the Festival Board for 6 years and am proud of having set up the Festival Fleurieu Friends group.

**But your own interest in music hadn't faded?**

No, it became an increasing passion. In 2012 whilst new to the district, I found a music teacher in Victor Harbor who brought me up to speed and encouraged me to become a teacher and member of the SA Music Teachers

Association. My appetite for both learning and jazz led me to study in the Jazz Faculty at the Conservatorium of Music at Adelaide University in 2013.

Music has led me down many paths, and brought me in contact with a bevy of interesting people while pushing me well beyond my comfort zone.

**Performing was another role you embraced?**

I played keys for the *Tunisian Nights Little Big Band* for two years, doing charity gigs and performing during the 2017 and 2019 Adelaide Fringe Festivals. We featured at the Normanville Hotel during the 2019 Festival Fleurieu.

I've also been part of a duo with singer Judith Sweetman, and for fun have played in trios with others locally.

But now my music is taking me more into the Blues style, I'm enjoying the sounds, interesting chords and chord progressions of this genre and rethinking myself as *Lady Plays the Blues*.

**Many musical motifs decorate your house and in your lounge presides a baby grand piano. Doesn't your travel also have a strong musical theme?**

My big trips have involved music. I travel to capital cities for the bi-annual pedagogy conferences held by the Music Teachers Association. I love learning new teaching methods, hearing from experts, and sharing stimulating discussion with fellow teachers.

In 2019 I went on a Blues tour along Highway 61 in the USA from New Orleans to New York led by a brilliant Blues piano player Jules Boulton from Melbourne. Recently I toured in Queensland, again with Jules, beginning with the Bluesfest in Byron Bay. And of course, my shorter visits around Australia and to Adelaide always have a music and arts focus.

My musical journey continues to evolve and grow... there is so much to learn.



Jill at the piano

**And you've started many people on that journey. What do you take away from being a music teacher?**

How can I answer that? I just love it. I love to see young people developing musically as many don't have the opportunity to learn an instrument or understand the language of music. I love to provide that at least for some people and assist their musical development. I have students of various ages and teach to their needs and interests, from classical, pop and right across the board. No rapped knuckles, just a shared joy of learning occurs.

**Thank you Jill for sharing your enthusiasm, passion and glass half full attitude.**

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