

Dr Madeline Melrose

Making music accessible

Madeline is an accomplished violinist and music educator, establishing successful music schools since her teenage years that have supported many students achieve their musical dreams.

Madeline grew up in Campbelltown until the age of 12 when she moved with her family to Mt Torrens. Her grandparents have lived in Campbelltown since the mid 1970's when they arrived from Darwin after Cyclone Tracy.

Family support from her mother, grandparents and a loving stepfather from ages three to ten were strong influences in her early life, until Madeline lost her stepfather to cancer at the age of 10. Madeline first saw the violin on television as a pre-schooler however, no music school would accept her so young and she had to wait until almost seven to have her first violin lesson.

Madeline commenced schooling at St Joseph's Hectorville but transferred to St Ignatius College after receiving a full music scholarship. At the end of year seven, she transferred to Marryatville High School and then left to attend classes at Open Access College. Madeline never completed Years 10-12 as she transferred to the Elder Conservatorium and studied for her degree that she was awarded by age 18.

At 18, Madeline moved to Sydney to commence her Master of Music Studies and while studying, she also taught for several music schools to supplement her finances. This led to Madeline establishing her violin academy from her home. Madeline soon had over 30 students ranging from hobby musicians to serious scholars; developing a curriculum tailored to her students and taking on staff to expand her business.

In December of 2014, Madeline returned to Adelaide to undertake her PhD which she completed in 2020 with a Dean's Commendation for The University Medal. The PhD focuses on the musical and technical challenges required to overcome the notoriously difficult Paganini Caprices for Violin Solo.

On her return to Adelaide, Madeline had a custom-built studio at the rear of her property to continue teaching. Their first concert was held with 10 students in her garage: a memorable event. As the Academy continued to grow, a second studio was built and staff employed to help with over 55 students and 70 classes, a weekly string, piano and theory tuition. Madeline introduced a range of authentic experiences for students including performances in the Botanical Gardens and Ukaria Cultural Centre. Madeline also engaged colleagues from the Conservatorium to provide technical assessments and reports for her students and set up peer mentoring amongst her students.

The impact of her own PhD study, the lockdown and issues associated with Covid saw Madeline regretfully closing down her wider business to focus only on a few serious students and supporting them with tailored teaching. Madeline also teaches at The University of Adelaide, notably in the University's Open Music Academy which offers weekly lessons, master classes and a range of ensembles. She is also engaged with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, the Australian Music Examinations Board, The University's Senior College, and has guest lectured for students of the Elder Conservatorium.

Madeline would love to see a stronger focus on the Arts in Campbelltown with a concert venue, a grand piano available, an Eisteddfod and possibly a community orchestra. She hopes to continue to live in Campbelltown as she loves the environment with its many parks and trees and the convenience of the area.

As a younger student, Madeline felt that she had to win to be seen as successful, nowadays she sees success as being content in life and being able to be genuinely happy for others and their successes. If she was to give her younger self advice it would be that you are enough, just as you are.

"Music has been my safe place, my contentment and confidence in troubled times."

Celebrating International Women's Day with the Women of Campbelltown project – inspiring stories of local women, their achievements and contributions to the Community'.

Thank you to the women who participated and the volunteer interviewers Di Booker and Katrina Spencer for their time.