

Irene Hundleby

PhD – Music

For Irene Hundleby, the PhD she is about to embark on is just part of her journey into the musical traditions of her Solomon Island roots.

From Malaita on her mother's side, and New Zealand on her father's, Irene will spend the next three years researching the music of women in Lau Lagoon, Solomon Islands.

"It's something I've been aiming towards for about 10 years. This research is close to my heart and something I'm passionate about, and as such, it has more significance to me than the PhD alone."

Irene began her study into this area of music through her dissertation as part of her Bachelor of Music (Honours) degree at Otago in 2013.

While that looked at traditional music from the 1960s to 2012, her PhD will be part conservation of culture and preservation of knowledge, and part analysis of Malaitan women's music.

"For me, it has a myriad of potential opportunities.

"I hope to support Pacific Island research, to break ground in a new area of research – no one has studied women's music from the Solomons before – as well as contribute to my community and give a voice to my people."

Irene was raised in Auckland and started her academic career studying science.

In the early 2000s she began a career in neuromuscular therapy and then moved to Dunedin for love, but always knew she wanted to continue to study and eventually chose music.

"Music was always an important part of my life and for a while there was a tug-of-war between my love of science and music."

When she moved south she found a "really supportive community" of locals with roots in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

"There are very few students who come to Dunedin from that area of the Pacific, and it can be very lonely if you're on your own.

"Otago's Pacific Island Centre is fantastic and is a great help to connect students to other groups as well as providing a sense of unity for Pacific Island students.

"That's one of the joys about Dunedin – thanks to the University it's multicultural and a large number of people from lots of different places have made a home here."

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