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May 2021



# Alumni Newsletter

# WG HS

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Hi everyone,

Welcome to around 300 new graduates from the Westlake Class of 2020, joining our expanding network. There are nearly 6,000 members on our Facebook groups now, and 3,000 alumni in our LinkedIn group. Our newsletter reaches 3,500 alumni around the world. This is the first of three alumni newsletters for 2021.

It is always great to hear updates of our alumni, particularly so when the strength of Westlake connections comes into play through trying times.

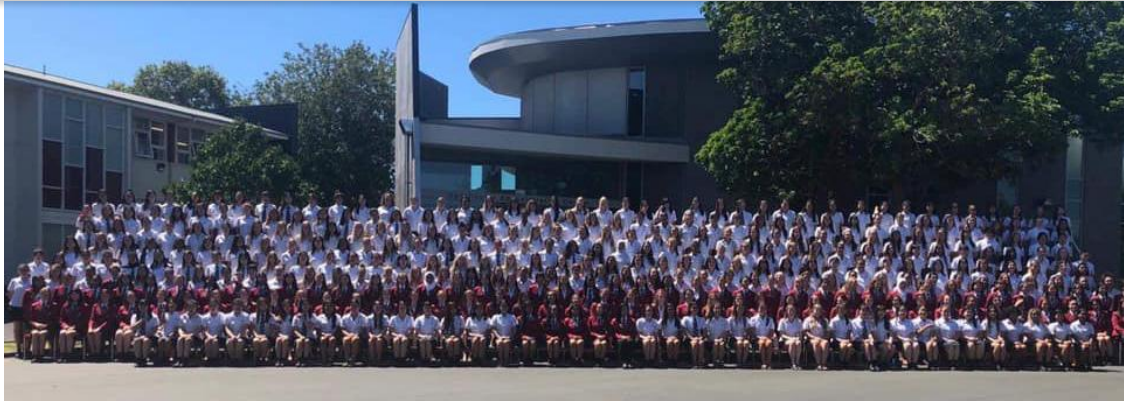
In this issue, we feature a letter from an alumna, **Meralon Shandler** from the Class of 1991, written at the end of 2020.

You can also read about **Delaney Tabron**, an actor based in LA, our first Head of Music at Westlake, **Stuart Manins**, and a farewell to long-serving Associate Principal, **Julie Saikkonen**.



## Alumni Community

Welcome to our new alumni from the **Class of 2020**



### Alumni Mentors - Class of 2018

Thanks to over 25 volunteer alumni mentors from the Class of 2018 who offered their support as mentors to the new Westlake graduates from the Class of 2020 who had a challenging year in their final year of schooling. The offers of help covered all the main tertiary institutions and a wide range of programmes. Great to see our Westlake connections working in this way.

### Westlake High School Founders Reunion

Around 50 former Westlakers from the co-ed Westlake Founders (57 - 61), had a reunion lunch at the Bays Club in Browns Bay earlier this year, just timing their gathering before an Auckland lockdown.

Thanks to **Robin Reid** for organising this second such gathering for the group - a popular event on the annual calendar. The Founders Facebook group now includes two of the staff who taught at Westlake in that period - **Stuart Manins** (Music), and **Phil Slight** (Art).

### [Westlake High School Founders \(WBHS and WGHS\)](#)



### Facebook groups

The Facebook group links are at the end of the newsletter. The alumni/peer year is your Year 13/Form 7 year of high school, regardless of whether or not you attended for those 5 years. For

# Events

## Alumni Events

### Alumni Year Reunions for 2021

Some alumni groups are underway with planning to meet up later in the year, after plans for 2020 and early this year were derailed with Covid-19 restrictions.

Thanks to **Jane Knox** and **Nikki Horne, Class of 1990**, for their great work in organising the twice-postponed Class of 1990 reunion.

Proposed date (tbc) Saturday 30th October. Details to be confirmed in the FB group.(now with 120 members)

[Westlake Girls Class of 1990](#)

**Sarah Sutcliffe** (Kavanagh) **Class of 1996**, has been in contact, and is organising a combined WGHS / WBHS Class of 1996 Reunion to be held on Saturday 16th October at the Fantail and Turtle at Smales Farm, in Auckland. For details, join the private Class of '96 FB group which now has 56 members

[Westlake Girls Class of 1996](#)

### Westlake Girls Class of 1995

**Carrie George (Lister)**, from the Class of '95 has re-scheduled the reunion, postponed from last year (25 year Reunion - plus 1). Keep in touch through the FB group (now with 152 members).

Date: Saturday 25th September 2021

Details: (tbc) 5pm in the school staffroom for a welcome chat and tour of the school. Then catch up at the Fantail and Turtle at Goodside (in Smales Farm).

[Westlake Girls Class of '95](#)

### Class of 1991

**Meredith McIlroy** from the Class of '91 has got the ball rolling for a 30 year Reunion for the Class of '91. Details to come on the FB group. The FB group now has 127 members.

[Westlake Girls Class of 1991](#)

*If there are former students interested in getting together for a decade reunion for their alumni class (50th, 40th, 20th or 10th) please get in touch, and/or post in your Facebook group to gauge interest from your former school mates. I can help in several ways if there are a few of you who would like to be involved.*

[Class of 1971 Westlake Girls](#)

[Class of '81 Westlake Girls](#)

[Westlake Girls Class of 2001](#)

[The Westlake Class of 2011](#)

# Alumni Updates

## Rowing Alumni



The Westlake rowing squad had a great few days at the Maadi Cup Regatta at Lake Karapiro in late March. Each year former Westlake rowers are on the banks supporting their old school. Amongst the supporters this year were two Westlake rowing parents who were former rowers themselves. Great to see 2-generation rowing families sharing the fun.

Pictured left is Ruth Findlay (Coveny) (Rowing 89-92) who was there supporting daughter Jade. Also featured is Amber Wylie (Rowing 87-90) who was supporting daughter Phoebe Dobson.



Pictured left are alumni rowing supporters Juliet Harris, (88-91) and Lynley Allison (87 - 91).

## Across borders - Reconnecting in 2020

We were delighted to hear from a former student from the Class of 1991 as 2020 drew to a close. Thanks to **Meralon Shandler** and her six former classmates for sharing their reflections on the year, Westlake and friendships.

'When we graduate high school, none of us has any idea where our lives are really headed. We might have general plans, like university, travel, or straight into the working world, but most of us think very little about where our lives might take us in the following decade or two.

The year I graduated high school was 1991, and it was a year that shaped the rest of my life. My Dad had just passed away from cancer (during exams, no less!), and my Mum and I were struggling to find our way without him. My six girlfriends who supported me during this very difficult time were my lifelines then, and are still my very best friends today.

Without their support, I would have never have been able to get through those first raw, seemingly endless weeks and months. I am so grateful for their friendship and love. Today, we are scattered across four countries - New Zealand, the UK, Australia, and Canada.

I visited New Zealand back in March 2020, and arrived home just in time for travel bans to come into effect across the globe. In the span of a few days, Covid-19 changed almost every single

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the pandemic, and making sure we had enough toilet paper and cans of beans.

My girlfriends and I quickly decided to create a WhatsApp group to keep in touch, and since then, we've connected on almost weekly Zoom calls (across four time zones!) and hundreds of texts, photos and videos. The seven of us have talked more in the past nine months than in the past 20 years. Our video calls have allowed us to learn about each other as adults, and given us so much opportunity to be vulnerable (there's nothing more humbling than shedding tears in front of six other people!).

We've laughed and cried with each other, we've given parenting advice, relationship advice, lamented relationships ending and important people passing away. We've endlessly discussed the pandemic, the cases in each of our countries, and of course, the chaos in the US. We've giggled hysterically over jokes that only our 17-year-olds selves remember, and thrown each other under the bus for stupid mistakes that seemed life-changing at the time, but actually were nothing but blips. What we found through all of this, was that 2020 was a year full of "unexpecteds" - and many of these have been gifts.

All of us have become successful women in vastly different ways, in our careers, yes, but more importantly, in life. It seems incredible that our 30-year anniversary from Westlake is just around the corner. As we move into 2021, my wish is to keep connecting with these wonderful humans, to keep learning about each other and supporting those parts of our lives that are yet to be."

We are:



Helen McCabe (Duske) - Auckland, NZ

Deborah Mitchell (Jessup) - Auckland, NZ

Isa Rive (Parkinson) - Auckland, NZ

Davina Boyd - Perth, Australia

Michelle Arnell (Stanley) - Cotswolds, United Kingdom

Ayleen Duske-Tucker - Bournemouth, United Kingdom

Meralon Shandler - Vancouver, Canada

### **Delaney Tabron, Westlake Class of 1997**

#### **Actor, Creative Director**

Delaney Tabron, an actor based in Los Angeles is the co-lead in a film that is due for release in mid 2021. It's a post-apocalyptic one, '*Northspur*', and was filmed in Marlborough in late 2019 and early 2020.

Delaney has had a varied acting career in television and arthouse and mainstream films. She may be best known to NZ audiences starring in the NZ comedy series '*Step Dave*'. She has also done stints on programmes *Spartacus* and *Shortland Street*.

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award-winning Creative Director. She completed a Bachelor of Art and Design at AUT in 2000, and later, also lectured there in the Bachelor of Design Programme.

Over her career she has consulted and worked on redesign projects for magazines and international fashion and beauty brands. She is also the founding publisher and creative director for *NO Magazine*, a contemporary culture publication that gained a global readership of 75,000.

Delaney's accomplishments include awards for excellence in design and creative direction such as the Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising Association Award, Young Guns Award,

Axis Advertising Award, MPA Award for Best Magazine Cover and Best Newstand Magazine, Canon Media Awards for Best Magazine Design and Best Magazine Cover. Her redesign projects include the Sunday Star Times magazine and Metro Magazine (2012 – 2014).

Delaney was in the Westlake Class of 1997. Reflecting on her Westlake days, she says, *'High School was hard. I was not a sporty kid, and I wasn't popular or particularly academic. I didn't fit in, but I was lucky that at Westlake, I had a few very inspiring teachers who nurtured my early interest in art and writing. Writing for the school newspaper led me to interview an editor at Pavement magazine, who offered me my first job as a writer and eventually creative director. That one interview led me down a path that has me now living in Los Angeles, acting and working as a creative director for a luxury fashion brand. I think my 16-year-old self would be chuffed.'*

*In 2017, shortly after moving to Los Angeles, I felt a tiny lump in my right breast, which was unfortunately aggressive, early-stage breast cancer. What followed was a bilateral mastectomy, six months of chemotherapy, thirty-three rounds of radiation. I have never felt so scared and so far away from home. Yavanna Hallam (Roberts), my best friend from high school, started a givealittle fund to help cover the eye-watering medical bills I was facing in the US. I was so humbled by the support from friends and people I hadn't seen for years. Girls I had been to Westlake with rallied around me, and fellow alumni Jasmine Platt even created a crisis support group for women in our year who were facing hardships. It's a beautiful example of women supporting each other and the kindness of humanity.*

*I have no idea what the future holds. I have spent the last four years fighting for my life and have*

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*such deep gratitude that I get to live another day of this beautiful, messy, chaotic thing we call life.'*



### Former teacher Westlake High School - Stuart Manins

Stuart Manins, Westlake's first full-time music teacher joined over 40 former Westlake High School students at a Founders lunch in late February in Auckland. He maintains a strong interest in Westlake music. He is pictured here with Fiona Wilson, current HOD Music at Westlake Girls.

Stuart was Westlake's first full-time music specialist, starting in 1959, before moving up the hill to the Boys School when the schools separated in 1962.

At Westlake he established and conducted the early choirs and orchestra, and was a conductor for the combined North Shore Music Festival for local schools. He helped the school prepare for its first Carol Service in 1960, conducting a full choir of 129, including seven members of staff. He was also a leader of the 'Crusaders' group which attracted around 100 Westlakers to its weekly meeting and social functions.

Stuart continued to be involved in the music and drama of both schools; operas, Pirates of Penzance; Dido and Aeneas 1961, leading to the first combined production, 'The Tempest' in 1962.

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gaining a LTCL in 1963 and later a Masters Degree in Music, at the University of Auckland, before becoming Head of Music at North Shore Teachers College and later at Auckland College of Education.

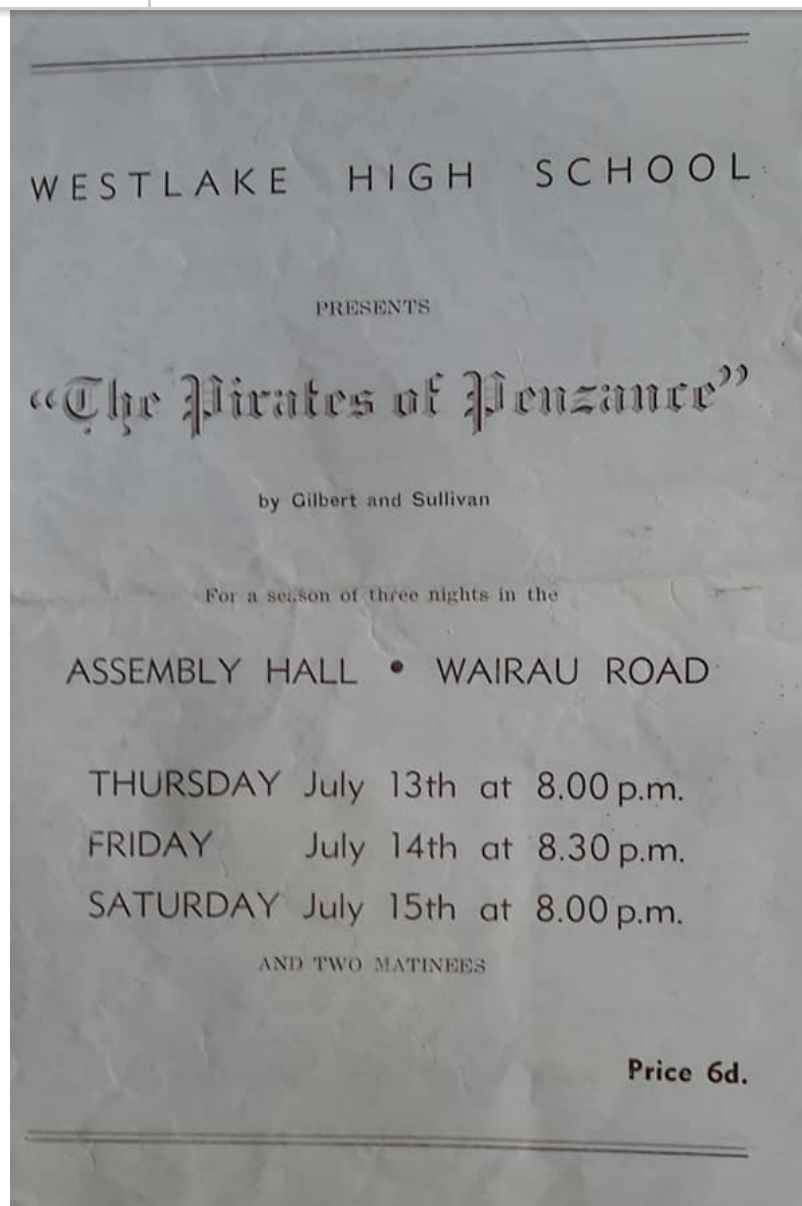
While at the Westlake High Schools he formed and conducted the highly praised North Shore Youth Choir and the Westlake Madrigal Group. During these years he was involved in the national and international development of syllabuses for music education.

Stuart retired from full-time lecturing in 1989 but continued to write, lecture, and consult. He wrote an acclaimed series of books, **Music Stories for Juniors**, to help young children develop musicianship by singing in tune and moving in time. He is also associated with promoting the place of Māori music in New Zealand music education.

In his later years Stuart has had an increasing interest in Theological Studies. When over 80 years old he completed a diploma in Mission Studies (LiMS) from Trinity Theological College. He is active in his retirement village, arranging and welcoming choral visits and connecting with former and current Westlake students. Last year he collected and published his 'Life Stories' in "An Upbeat Kind of Life".

Stuart's contribution to the musical life of the Westlake community through its early years is greatly appreciated.



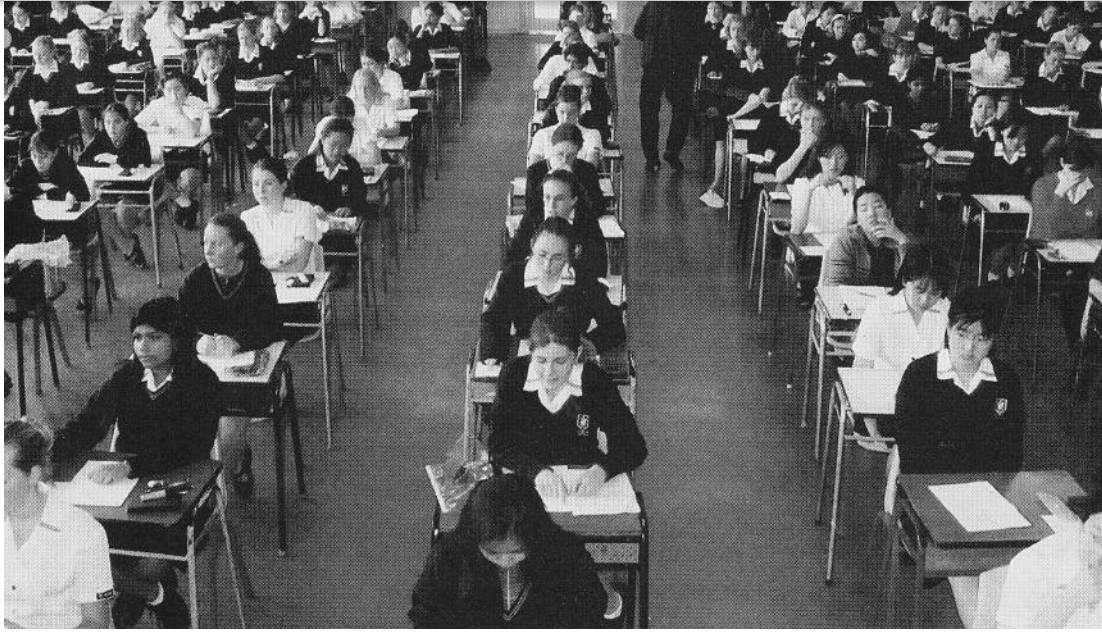
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*First major musical production - 1961*

## Looking Back

### 20 years ago - 2001

The final year of the 'School Certificate' exam. Students wait to start the exam in the now demolished school hall.



# Westlake News

## Update on the Event Centre

We expect the Event Centre to be completed in late July with the official opening in August.



### Farewell to Associate Principal

Julie Saikkonen, the Associate Principal was recently acknowledged and farewelled after 22 years of service at Westlake. Lots of tributes flowed from her many colleagues over the years.

Julie arrived at Westlake from Rangitoto in 1999 as the new Head of Mathematics, moving into Senior Leadership roles four years later. She took on various portfolios including IT, timetabling, curriculum and assessment.

She has been in the forefront of changes over that time as the school transitioned through

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digital learning. She has also led the learning community, Pupuke Kāhui Ako, a cluster of learning institutions in the area.

At her retirement function, Julie said, “*My time at Westlake Girls has been full of highlights. Working with and for talented and hard-working staff across all areas of the school has been a privilege.....*”

*Big schools such as Westlake provide many opportunities for students to try out new things in sport, clubs, and develop*

*their sense of responsibility and citizenship. These opportunities are there for all to try – whether as novices or experienced participants and it never ceases to amaze me that so many students juggle a range of activities whilst excelling academically.*

*These students leave Westlake well equipped to take on anything that life presents to them. I am proud to have been part of an organisation that has provided those opportunities.....*

*My thanks to everyone I have worked with; staff and students; for your friendship and stimulating conversations as we tried to solve problems both in the classroom and across the school.*

We wish Julie well as she takes on new challenges and works on her ‘To Do’ list.

## Alumni Association Update

Westlake Girls Alumni

Westlake Girls LinkedIn Group

Westlake Girls Class of 1966

Class of 1967 Westlake Girls

Westlake Girls Class of 1968

Class of 1969 Westlake Girls

Class of 1970 Westlake Girls

Class of 1971 Westlake Girls

Class of 1972 Westlake Girls

Class of 1973 Westlake Girls

Class of 1974 Westlake Girls

Class of 1975 Westlake Girls

Class of 1976 Westlake Girls

Class of 1977 Westlake Girls

Class of 1978 Westlake Girls

Class of 1979

Westlake Girls Class of 1980

Class of '81 Westlake Girls

Westlake Girls 1978 - 1982

Westlake Girls Class of 1983

Class of '84 Westlake Girls

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Class of '87 Westlake Girls  
Westlake Girls Class of 1988  
Class of '89 Westlake Girls  
Westlake Girls Class of 1990  
The Westlake Class of 1991  
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Westlake Girls Class of 2019  
Westlake Choralation Choir Alumni  
Westlake Girls Key Cygnetures Choir alumni  
Westlake Symphony Alumni  
Westlake Girls Alumni Australia  
Westlake Girls Alumni UK  
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Westlake Girls Rowing Alumni  
Westlake Boys Alumni Page (Westlakers)



## Westlake Girls High School

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