

## PFS Member Profile

# Abbie Weisenbloom

By Ray Ashmun

*The demands of home, family, work, personal development, and the pursuit of happiness are aspects of life which we all must choose among and try to find a satisfactory balance. Apparently there's another way than seeking balance and that is to do it all. That is the way **Abbie Weisenbloom** takes on life. She is a devoted and involved mother and wife; has done her time in the software industry; progressed as a multi-instrument, multi-style musician in varying degrees; become learned in other languages and cultures; has made the choice to share the talents of performers by hosting house concerts; and been involved in the community in numerous ways. And she appears to handle it all with aplomb. (Note : An interview with her family members might reveal otherwise!)*



### The Early Years

Abbie mainly grew up in the Santa Barbara area. Drawing was her first love and much of her life she has had a pencil and pad within reach. One way she maintains her artistic touch is by drawing an annual card and by creating posters for the house concerts she hosts. She also has a love of France, has a degree in French, and lived there for 3 years.

She met her husband Harold while living in San Francisco. Once they realized that they couldn't afford to stay there and raise a family, they traveled for a year in the elusive search of a place to settle down—a combined research trip and honeymoon. They ultimately settled in Portland in 1998 where they felt they recognized the “neighborhood feel” that they sought. Abbie began working as a technical writer at a startup. She and Harold complement one another in that he's not musical, nor a Francophile, nor a rolling stone, and yet enjoys the conviviality associated with opening one's home.

Abbie has evolved gradually into becoming a house concert host since 2009, in order to regain her vocational footing after stepping out of the workplace to raise her children, create community, expose her children to music, and paradoxically, as a stationary stand-in for travel. During the past 6 ½ years she has hosted over 250 concerts. Her aims are to present a very broad range of music to a diverse audience and at the same time maintain her own excitement with these offerings.

### The Musician

Her musical pursuit has covered a vast territory. A static-filled radio introduced her to one of her first musical passions, classical music, around the time the public schools gave her the choice of an instrument in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Initially, she wanted to play the oboe because of its wonderful sound but what was readily available was her dad's flute. In addition, her grandparents always had Scott Joplin, Opera, Preservation Hall Jazz Band, and the San Remo Music Festival LPs frequently on the turntable as a way to set the stage for a leisurely conversation-filled dinner. Shortly after moving to Portland, she took up playing a mandolin she inherited from her grandmother. The instrument was a bit of a mystery since she never saw anyone in the family play it, yet its beauty implied a seductive promise.

She began taking lessons from **Jan DeWees** who introduced her to Brazilian choro music and humored her obsession with the music of The Three Penny Opera. She also tried out the fiddle along side her sons while they were learning the instrument with instructors at the Community Music Center. Ultimately, she found her way to Quebec, where her love of French and music collided. There she met fiddler **Lisa Ornstein** who her then fiddle instructor **Dan Compton** urged her to connect with if she ever happened to be near Montreal. These days she finds less time to play the violin, piano, and mandolin, and mainly plays the flute with her children to complement their musical lessons since it feels second nature.

### Musical Affiliations

Her musical affiliations are as varied as her interests. Depending on how much they can afford over the years and how much time life allows, they have attended many concerts and dances or subscribed to many organizations:

- ◆ PCDC dances and events
- ◆ The Community Music Center
- ◆ Artichoke Music concerts
- ◆ 45<sup>th</sup> Parallel concerts
- ◆ Friends of Chamber Music
- ◆ Portland Center StageT
- ◆ The Portland Megaband
- ◆ OBT dance
- ◆ White Bird dance
- ◆ Brazilian choro music community
- ◆ Oregon Symphony
- ◆ Folk Alliance
- ◆ PFS. In fact, PFS was the first place where she experienced a wide variety folk music in a community context as well as being a welcoming musical haven for her children. She is certified as an official Folk Alliance house concert which ensures that she has coverage for ASCAP & BMI licensing fees.

Her most recent undertaking is to stream her shows live via her channel on Concert Window, figure out how to financially sustain the series, and continue to develop skills (graphics, video editing, PR, Website development) “to get the job done” involved in producing the shows. The adventure continues!

*To find out more about this series or to contact Abbie, please visit her website: <http://www.froggie.com>.*