

## **Tina Holgate: Westwinds: My Community**

I joined Westwinds in 1993, when there were only three concert bands: Green, Red, and Gold. I had heard about Westwinds from my flute teacher, Eileen Hartman, who played clarinet in the band. Unlike many Westwinds members, I had never taken Band in school although I had studied piano when I was a child. I started flute lessons as an adult because I always wanted to learn how to play the flute.

After a few years of private lessons, I was convinced by Eileen to try Westwinds. Originally, I was very insecure because I really didn't think I was good enough; playing in a band seemed way above my abilities. I started in Gold Band; although the music level was fine, it did take me a while to figure out how to play with a band. It was a few years before I really trusted my own counting and stopped waiting for the other flutes to come in.

When I heard we were going to perform at the Jack Singer Concert Hall, I was amazed. Me, on the same stage that had been graced by Leonard Cohen and Harry Connick, Jr.? I remember that we played Leroy Anderson's 'Sleigh Ride' that year, and I must admit it is still one of my favourite songs to perform. My parents attended that first concert (and every one since then) and I think they were quite impressed at the ability of the bands, probably because they had suffered through my numerous piano recitals and my sister's accordion recitals when we were kids!

I have many memorable Westwinds moments, but my absolute favourite thing is the great group of friends I have met through the organization. I really can't imagine what my life would be like without band geeks. They have been a constant source of friendship, support, and good times. At my wedding in April 2006, I looked around and saw so many Westwinds faces. I was also very happy to have a sax quartet made up of Westwinds members play at the reception.

The other thing I love about Westwinds is that I'm learning how to play percussion. I had been in a taiko (Japanese drum) group in Japan in 1996, and really missed that experience. Percussion has really improved my counting and

given me confidence: you gotta come in loud and proud! Plus, as (conductor) Rob Cesselli says, "It's so cool!"

I love being in Westwinds. It has enriched my life in many ways. I love the camaraderie, performances, workshops, and hard-working conductors. Plus, Westwinds fulfills my yearly resolution to "learn something new."