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MY OTHER LIFE

EUPHONIUM EUPHORIA

Her love of music and the euphonium have taken **Nicole Cannon** to some unusual places – including a military-style boot camp

WHEN NICOLE Cannon took up the euphonium, as an eight year-old in her primary school band, she could never have anticipated it would lead to a ride in a Black Hawk helicopter, the hardest seven weeks of her life and the opportunity to perform before the then Prime Minister, John Howard.

Nicole started playing the euphonium after expressing an interest in music and her doctor suggesting that playing a brass instrument might help with her bronchitis.

Little did she know that her love of music would lead her to become a member of the

Army Reserves and experience the most intense seven weeks of her life.

Since May 2002, Nicole has been a member of the University of New South Wales Regiment (UNSWR) Band.

"To actually get into the band, I had to do the basic military training," she tells *The Adviser*. "It was seven weeks of very intense boot camp.

"I'd only just started as a broker," she says. "Juggling the business and the Army Reserves can be very difficult."

Despite these difficulties, Nicole is "absolutely committed" to her Defence Force.

"I have so much respect for the women and men out there and what they're doing to serve our country," she says. "Being in the band has made me more proud of our country, who we are and what we do to have the wonderful country that we do."

With that sentiment in mind, it should come as no surprise that Nicole's favourite moment in the band was playing at the ANZAC Day Dawn Service.

"The absolute highlight since joining was playing at the Dawn Service last year in [Sydney's] Martin Place," she says.

"When we marched down George Street, I felt 10-feet tall, and so proud to be part of the Army Band."

Her respect and admiration for the band and its rules, however, hasn't kept her completely out of trouble.

"I've had so many embarrassing moments in the

band, I can't even think of my favourite," she laughs.

In fact, Nicole had to survey her fellow band members to decide on her most comical mishap. Emerging as favourite was the time she forgot her shiny black army boots for an important Order of Australia Ceremony.

"I sit in the front row, so we had a problem! I couldn't possibly play with no shoes," she says.

The band master was running late, so the layout was shuffled to hide Nicole's feet.

"As soon as we finished the gig, I quickly ran out to get changed, and my lack of shoes went undetected," she says.

Nicole also credits the band with expanding her musical abilities. Even though she is a euphonium player at heart, she had to teach herself the trombone to assist the band.

"Our whole section of trombone players left in the space of 12 months, so I had to teach myself, which was an awesome challenge," she says.

Her perseverance, however, has been rewarded.

"The Defence Force is very mindful that we're reservists, so our commitments can be flexible," she says.

This flexibility has made it easier for Nicole to balance her musical commitments with running Pink Finance.

The band was also taken on a Black Hawk helicopter flight in appreciation of their performance at a ball.

Nicole has also made great friends, had a laugh, increased her "me time" and played in front of former Prime Minister John Howard.

Most importantly, she says, the band keeps her grounded.

"The band definitely keeps me sane." ■