

Bernice Kathleen Cartwright died on the 18th January 2001 at the age of 42 years just over a year after she was first diagnosed with cancer. She was a very talented bass player, arranger and composer and had performed on TV, Radio, and stage with many well-known groups and musicians including the Ivy Benson Showband, Lyn Paul (The New Seekers) and Carl Wayne (The Move and The Hollies).

Bernice was born on the 13th September 1958 in Rochford, Essex but moved to Twickenham at the age of 4 with her parents Bridie and Don and sister Deirdre. She had already started to play the piano and she began having piano lessons with well known local teacher Miss Ayles-Ransley. She entered the Richmond and Twickenham Music Festival for the first time when she was 5 years old and was awarded Distinction winning a Silver Medal. She won many more times at the Festival including the Piano Duets class with sister Deirdre in 1966, and the recorder group (which she led) in 1967.

She attended St James' primary school and then won a scholarship to St Catherine's Convent (which was a direct grant Grammar school at that time). She was a very popular pupil at the school and excelled at sports captaining the Hockey and Netball teams.

However, music was her first love and at the age of 16, much against the headmistress Sister Hilda's wishes, she left school to join the world famous Ivy Benson Showband on bass guitar. She played full time with the band for two years from 1974 - 1976, but until Ivy Benson's retirement in 1986 she was always the "first call" bass player and she continued to play with her making appearances with her at the Barbican Centre, London and on the Russell Harty TV show.

In the late 1970's Bernice formed her own group "Tour de Force" with her older sister Deirdre on guitar. They wrote their own material and in 1980 signed a record deal with United Artists and a publishing deal with EMI. Their managers were Pete Brown and Harvey Goldsmith.

When Tour de Force disbanded in 1982, Bernice played with many different groups from big band to blues, pop and rock. She was a very charismatic performer and many people remember the way she combined singing with her bass playing at many gigs all over the country.

In 1992, she joined the "Cockney Rooms" as Musical Director and she was working as Musical Director at the "Talk of London" when she had to stop playing in December 1999.

She was positive she would beat her disease and she was able to step in and play bass for a production of Godspell at the Richmond Theatre in January 2000. Unfortunately, this proved to be her last public performance.

Her cancer continued to spread and she was unable to play again. She was a greatly admired musician within professional circles and people who met her during this last year commented on her courage, her sense of humour and her kind nature. Bernice had a profound effect even on the nurses who looked after her and whom one would imagine would be used to this scenario.

She died peacefully at her parents' home in Hanworth Park on the 18th January 2001 at 2.30pm with her parents and sister at her bedside. Her funeral, which took place at St Edmunds RC Church in Whitton and Hanworth Crematorium on the 25th January, was attended by a large number of family, friends and colleagues. They were unanimous in feeling that they had lost a very warm talented and special person.