

Heleen du Plessis | Cellist



South African cellist Heleen Du Plessis is the newly appointed Williams Evans Executant Lecturer in Cello at the University of Otago, New Zealand. She is well known in the South African music world as soloist, member of the most prominent Musaion Trio and lecturer at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. She has also performed internationally in the USA, Europe and New Zealand.

After completing post graduate studies in South Africa she completed a post graduate Performance Diploma at the Conservatory of Geneva in Switzerland with professor Daniel Grosgrin and later received the Graduate Performance Degree from the prestigious Peabody Institute of the John Hopkins University in Baltimore, USA under the tutelage of Israeli cellist, professor Amit Peled. Other mentors include Janos Starker, Mtislav Rostropovich, Heidi Litchauer, Antonio Ménéses, Carter Brey, Richard Aaron and Burton Kaplan.

Highlights of recent appearances include the Schumann Cello Concerto with the Cape Philharmonic under Martin Pateleev, a double concerto for violin and cello by New Zealand composer Anthony Ritchi, with violinist Tessa Petersen and the Hawkes Bay Symphony Orchestra, a concert tour with the Musaion trio in South Africa, with Zanta Hofmeyr (violin) and Malcolm Nay (piano), her inauguration recital in the Marama Hall, Dunedin, a solo recital at the Arts Festival of Otago and a trio concert with the newly formed TriOtago with professor Terence Dennis (piano) and Tessa Petersen (violin). Other solo performances include concertos with the Prince William Symphony Orchestra and the Nova Manassas Symphony Orchestra in Virginia, USA.

Du Plessis was principle cellist of the Prince William Symphony Orchestra in Virginia, sub principle in the National Symphony Orchestra of South Africa and co principle of the Chamber Orchestra of South Africa. Currently she is the principle cellist of the Southern Sinfonia in Dunedin, New Zealand.

Critics have referred to her playing as “velvet-like” “imaginative, story-like, sensitivity of expression and a huge sound” (*Burger-The Cape Daily Newspaper*). Recently a reviewer commented that “The cellist produced magical sound contrasts and meaningful phrasing... Du Plessis’ incredibly accurate technical control emphasized attention to fine detail on the one hand and explosive eruptions on the other hand, fully enlightening the contents of the work” (*Beeld-Gauteng Daily Newspaper*). *The Otago Daily Times* commented that “Du Plessis possesses a relaxed, unpretentious delivery with an engaging stage presence, compelling her audience to become immersed in her music-making, and the pathways of constant instrumental dialogue were concise and intuitive.”

Heleen du Plessis has a passion and gift for teaching and the products of her teaching are of the highest quality, described as “the best I have ever worked with” by the senior lecturer of Cello at the Conservatory of Stellenbosch. Recent master classes in New Zealand resulted in comments that “She had a charming and relaxed approach and a good rapport with the students, all of whom responded with interest to her suggestions of interpretation and technique.” “One encounters different types of music teachers... those who have the gift of transferring information in a way that the student understands and can absorb. Heleen du Plessis is the latter” *Soundpost* magazine.