

WILMA SMITH Violin

Concertmaster of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra since 2003, Wilma Smith combines her love of the symphonic repertoire with a busy chamber music life both in her adopted home of Melbourne and in New Zealand, where she was raised. After leaving Fiji, her birthplace, as a small child, Wilma took all musical opportunities on offer in her new home of Auckland, New Zealand, culminating in study at Auckland University and early professional experience with the Auckland Symphonia (now Philharmonia) and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. She then continued her studies in Boston at the New England Conservatory with the legendary Dorothy DeLay and Louis Krasner, playing in masterclasses for many others including Joseph Gingold, Yehudi Menuhin and Sandor Vegh. She was founding first violinist of the Lydian String Quartet, prizewinners at Evian, Banff and Portsmouth International Competitions and winners of the Naumburg Award for Chamber Music. Although the Lydian String Quartet was Wilma's professional focus in Boston, she also worked regularly in the Boston Symphony Orchestra and led the Harvard Chamber Orchestra, the Handel and Haydn Society and Banchetto Musicale, a period instrument baroque orchestra. An invitation to form the New Zealand String Quartet took her back to Wellington in 1987 and she was first violinist of the quartet until her appointment as Concertmaster of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in 1993. During her years with the quartet they toured New Zealand and Australia extensively and performed at the Tanglewood Festival. Prior to her departure for Melbourne, the NZSO honoured her with the title of Concertmaster Emeritus. Wilma has enjoyed a longstanding duo partnership with pianist, Michael Houston and since moving to Melbourne, has formed the Munro/Smith/Berlin Trio with Ian Munro (piano) and David Berlin (cello) with whom she has performed regularly in New Zealand and Australia. In the last two years Wilma has been a frequent guest with another Melbourne group. Ensemble Liaison, whose core is clarinet, cello and piano but who expand with other instruments to perform a widely varied and eclectic repertoire. The 2008 International Festival of the Arts in Wellington provided an opportunity for three concerts of stimulating chamber music collaboration with Steven Isserlis (cello), Melvyn Tan (piano), Michael Houston (piano) and Carolyn Henbest (viola). The connection with Mr Isserlis will continue in 2009 with Wilma's participation in his Open Chamber Music Seminar at Prussia Cove in Cornwall, England. While performing the symphonic and chamber music repertoire is undoubtedly the core of Wilma's musical life, she is also a committed teacher of violin at Melbourne University and privately. Wilma lives with her partner, Peter Watt, a computer consultant and reformed trombonist, their three daughters, Jessye, Rosie and Sophie, two dogs, two cats and ten fish at last count.

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