

# Violinist fuses classical with kapa haka in nationwide tour

by Kathryn Philpott

A Wellington violinist is hoping to share her passion for classical music with Maori in a nationwide tour of marae and kohanga reo.

Elena, of Ngati Kahungunu descent, has been a member of Wellington Sinfonia for 10 years and is recognised for her energetic and unusual performances.

With a mohawk and ears studded with spikes, the classically-trained musician is a distinctive performer who doesn't buy into the traditional stereotypes given to classical music.

"It's great not to be categorised. And that's just reflecting how I am. I don't like to be categorised," says the passionate performer who chooses to forgo a surname.

It is this determination to be different and a desire to break down barriers to classical music that Elena hopes will shine in a tour next year.

"I think that classical music is very accessible. A lot of people think it's highbrow because it feels foreign and different. When they go to a concert, everything is proper. But it's the same when you go to a marae. Everyone is nervous about the protocol."

Elena says the primary aim of the tour is to show young Maori their musical talents need not be confined to the guitar.

"I want to showcase to our young ones that there are other options. And that's not to put down the fact that most of us play guitar. It's just that there's another life apart from guitar and three-note chords."

Elena wants to make the performances interactive — fusing traditional Maori sounds with European musical styles.

"I'd like to work with the locals so that I can use them as my kapa haka group. So the plan would be to go to the marae three days before the public performance and rehearse together. Then we would perform."

This fusion of Maori and pakeha cultures is a growing interest for Elena, which she says started with the release of her first CD— *Elena* — in April.

The album showcases the eclectic nature of Elena's repertoire. She says this diversity is demonstrated best by a recitation of her mihi alongside Pachelbel's 400-year-old classical favourite *Canon*. It is also captured in *He Tango mo Elena*, a Maori tango that incorporates the haka.

"Both are very rhythmic pieces. They're very passionate styles of communication. The tango is in four-four rhythm, the haka is also in four-four rhythm and it's also in six-eight. If you put them against each other that's a really powerful combination."

Elena says creating the album to fit with criteria set by its backers, Te Mangai Paho, led her to the combinations of Maori and classical sounds.

"They challenged me to be creative



UNIQUE: Elena says her passion for music makes her feel different from her family.

in what I do as a modern musician. Because I knew I had to do that, it has meant an evolution of my music."

Te Mangai Paho is dedicated to promoting te reo Maori and Maori culture. Despite mainly positive reactions from the funding agency, Elena says there was some concern her classical style was at odds with their objectives.

"They said, 'But you don't sing. You play an instrument. How can we support that when our criteria is to support te reo Maori?' I did say as a joke that I play the violin in Maori," she laughs.

Wellington recording engineer Neil Maddever, who worked on the album, says Elena has successfully blended music from two cultures. He says this is something many have tried and failed to achieve.

"I used to work for Radio New

Zealand and we attempted to blend the two cultures on many occasions. It's quite hard to get it to sound good, but this is one of the first times it's worked properly."

Mr Maddever attributes this success to Elena's determination to treat both Maori and pakeha sounds with equal importance.

Elena says the self-titled CD has

"You're skinny, you've got blue eyes and you play that violin. Maori are fat, they've got brown eyes and they play the guitar."

sparked a personal journey, taking her back to her roots.

"While I was brought up in Mahia and Hawkes Bay with my family, we were really of a generation that weren't taught about Maori taonga.

It's been wonderful coming back to what I know is inside me after all these years."

At age eight, Elena was encouraged by her parents to learn the violin — a talent that led her to Wellington and then to the Trinity College in London.

"After about a year I ran out of money. I wasn't earning anything and I was spending what I had on lessons.

I ended up coming back to New Zealand," she says.

"I was different because I was Maori, I had blue eyes and I played the violin.

My cousins used to say to me, 'Who do you think you are? You're skinny, you've got blue eyes and you play that violin. Maori are fat, they've got brown eyes and they play the guitar.' That's how they saw themselves. So they put me in another box."

# Vow to visit gym after fab binge-fest blowout

by Amanda Kyne

Porridge in the morning was not a good idea on the day of the Hospitality Show — Sunday, August 24.

What set out to be one of the most scrumptious Sundays of 2003 turned into dietary fallout — with all due respect to my nutritious breakfast.

From the moment I arrived at the Auckland Showgrounds, I knew I had come face to face with temptation.

The annual trade event was a public food orgy, a blatant binge session that promised the best belly-clutching behaviour ever.

From lattes to liqueurs, pancakes to pesto, everywhere I turned generous-sized tasters beckoned me over to tempt my tastebuds. It was a case of "Oh, ok, just one more".

Designed to target chefs and hoteliers, exhibitors displayed a range of commercial kitchen gadgets, timesaving utensils and new culinary technology. And for the lay punter like me, well, there were always the tasters.

"Strawberry is the most popular flavour in the world."

At most of these events, gorgeous looking models are employed to entice potential customers to their stalls, but the Hospitality Show was different.

Entrepreneurs manned the exhibits themselves and keenly shared trivia about their niche in the industry.

Chocolate fruit producer Alan Plumb, wearing a strawberry patterned tie, smiled unforgivingly as he handed me my 34th taster of the day.

"New Zealand is an untapped market," he said. "And strawberry is the most popular flavour in the world."

While I savoured the magnificent morsel, I vaguely heard him say he had a different tie for the next three days of the event. Tomorrow was lemons.

With no queues and endless opportunities to sit down and have a break, it is not surprising that most visitors spent more than half a day at the show.

But for those whose eyes were bigger than their stomachs, half a day was more than enough. Clutching my doggie bag I waddled out the back door and vowed to visit the gym.

# Spicy chai a trendy alternative to cappuccino

by Charlotte Winstone

Tea has never been quite as trendy as coffee. But in cafe culture chai tea is increasingly popular and can be a refreshing alternative to the staple flat white.

Like coffee, chai can be good and, well, not so good. In search of the best chai in town, I was recommended to go to Cafe Logos (formerly Espresso Love) at the end of Ponsonby Rd.

The oldest cafe on Ponsonby Rd,

Cafe Logos is a far cry from the souped-up, friend-serving eateries in that part of town.

The walls are painted hospital-green, the vinyl seats match and it's a bit dingy. My chai (\$4) came with dairy milk in an unusually tall, cracked cup.

It was fantastic — spicy, just sweet enough and hot. There was brownish sediment at the bottom that apparently means it's the real thing.

Owned by Nicole and Craig

Sharman, Cafe Logos was set up more than six years ago and is the first cafe in New Zealand to make chai. It's a secret recipe they make themselves.

Nicole, originally from Germany, says they import all the ingredients directly from India, the chai is caffeine-free and the ingredients have special healing qualities.

Chai is the word for tea in many countries. It is the Indian spicy tea that is known as chai in New Zealand. Made with a concoction of Indian

spices, such as cardamom, cinnamon, ginger and cloves, chai is usually combined with dairy or soymilk.

The food at Cafe Logos is homemade, the ingredients organic where possible and there is no red meat. Along the counter top is a tempting selection of cakes, including plum tart, chocolate cake, baklava and muffins. They specialise in vegan cakes, which Nicole bakes herself.

Serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, the cafe has extra room upstairs

where there is a lounge room, complete with cosy corners and low chairs, and a dining room with luminous green walls.

The couple say Cafe Logos is about their individuality.

They make all their own products and don't want to be just another trendy cafe.

"It's a European approach to cafe culture," says Nicole.

Cafe Logos is open seven days a week.