

## Maria Botha and the Masidlale strings



*Appearing in photo:* Back row: Thembisa Ntshongontshi (trainee teacher), Syathemba Nteta (trainee teacher), Maria Botha De Girardier, Siposethu Gontsi (learner), Front row: Mandisa Jordan (learner), Khethiwe Shingenge (learner) Nolovuyo Nteta (trainee teacher).

**Maria Botha De Girardier** teaches violin in Nyanga, Gugulethu and Langa townships in Cape Town. This month, her work made front page news in the world-renowned magazine, *The Strad*. In 2009 she was asked to lead the establishment of the Masidlale Strings Project, a music outreach and development project under the auspices of the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra. We asked her about her experiences and how it has impacted on her life. ...

Where did your passion for playing the violin start originally?

I started violin lessons with Alan Solomon in Pretoria at the age of six. From a very early age, I jumped on tables and pretended to conduct an imaginary orchestra...and I even have photos of myself with violins that I built from any material I could find. So I definitely had a passion for the violin from the start.

Both my parents played the violin too, which might have been the reason for my being exposed to it so intensely. They played 'for pleasure', which surely contributed to my later views on the importance of the violin to be learnt in a joyful manner. I also think I was born a 'performer' and have loved playing all my life.

While living in Europe, I invented creative ways of earning a living through my violin playing and I really enjoyed playing, because I was not in the usual competitive scene where you have to be the best at all times. I played to make people feel good, and loved giving people a feeling of well-being through music. I think this saved my love for music, because I was on the 'good side' of the violin...

I believe the essence of music is firstly what it creates within us and how we can express emotions through an instrument. I enjoyed giving listeners an experience of some kind. I like to see music making as a journey from the player to the soul of the listener and then it returns back to the player in the form of the delight it creates for the listener.

Did you EVER think of becoming a teacher?

