Gwendolyn Masin

Biography (2026/27)

“A daring and exciting performer who ventures courageously into unknown territory with relish.” – The Irish Times

Gwendolyn Masin is one of today’s significant concert violinists and an innovator in classical music. Driven by a restless creative spirit and a deeply personal vision, the multihyphenate has built an abundant, inclusive corner in the world of music. Beyond her renown as an internationally acclaimed soloist, she is a conductor, published author, educator, festival founder and artistic director, as well as the architect of numerous transdisciplinary projects.

“She sets first-rate standards in concert performance with her technically superior, refined, intensive and richly contrasting expression.” – Der Bund

Her concerts have taken her across Europe, the Americas, Asia, South Africa, Russia, and the Middle East. Of Dutch, Hungarian, Czech, Irish, South African, and Swiss heritage and versed in five languages, she stays connected to those roots through frequent collaborations with leading orchestras across these countries — and extends that reach further afield with tours and recordings in the USA, Mexico, Slovakia, Poland, Spain, Portugal and beyond.

“Gwendolyn Masin impresses, guaranteed to lift your spirits with her luxuriant sound.” – The Arts Desk

Gwendolyn Masin records for Naxos, Orchid Classics, and Virgin Classics, with a discography spanning neglected works by Irene Wieniawska and Zara Levina to popular pieces such as Leonard Bernstein’s West Side Story — voted among Art Muse London’s top five releases of 2020. Her *GAIA Music Festival* has an enduring partnership with Virgin Classics resulting in a discography of live performances reaching back to 2009.

Gwendolyn Masin

"To Masin, sound is the last step toward making music."
– The Journal of Music

A commissioner of new music, Gwendolyn has premiered works by, amongst others, Antoine Auberson, Raymond Deane, Thorsten Encke, Thomas Fortmann, Ákos Hoffman, Don Li, Daniel Schnyder, Eric Sweeney, Dobrinka Tabakova, Martijn Voorvelt, and John Buckley, whose First Violin Concerto is dedicated to her. Buckley's concerto received its world premiere in Savannah, Georgia, with further US performances following, before its Irish premiere with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland. She has partnered with authors Lukas Hartmann, Melinda Nadj Abonji, and Meral Kureyshi on multidisciplinary productions. Since 2018, she has collaborated with Lukas Bärfuss, jointly realising and performing transdisciplinary work grounded in academic research. Her live performances have been broadcast on TV and radio by Switzerland's SRF 2 Kultur, Germany's Deutschlanfunk, NDR and SWR, the Netherlands' AVRO TROS, VPRO and NPO Radio 4, Ireland's RTÉ television and lyric FM, Hungary's Bartók Rádió, France Musique, Italy's Rai Radio 3, United States' Performance Today, Mexico's Radio UNAM, and so on.

"A formidable talent that demands attention."
– The Irish Times

Celebrated for her versatile programming, Gwendolyn is founding artistic director of *GAIA Music Festival*. Founded in Stuttgart in 2006 and held annually in Switzerland since 2009, GAIA presents renowned artists alongside rising stars in conceptually-driven performance that are created on site. GAIA is recognised as one of Switzerland's foremost chamber music festivals and won the Göppinger Culture Prize as early as 2007. Gwendolyn is also artistic director and faculty member of Dublin's *International Master Course* at the National Concert Hall, alongside artists such as Gilles Apap, Frans Helmerson, Gary Hoffman, Kim Kashkashian, and Mihaela Martin. In 2021 she went on to establish *Bridge Club*, an association hosting several salon gatherings annually to democratise access to music and the arts.

She also established the multidisciplinary series *In Search of Lost Time* in 2004, and from 2018 to 2023 created elaborate, one-off productions blending classical music with other art forms for Casino Bern. In addition, Gwendolyn was appointed Artistic Director for Ireland's Carrick Music Festival in 2007, a post she held for three years.

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“She is as one with her instrument and enchants her audience.”
– Thuner Tagblatt

Chamber music plays an important role in her musical life. She has collaborated with violinists Philippe Graffin, Ilya Gringolts, Isabelle van Keulen, Mihaela Martin, Hyeyoon Park, Jan Talich, Kirill Troussov, and Maxim Vengerov; violists Gérard Caussé, Kim Kashkashian, Gareth Lubbe, Lilli Maijala, Vladimir Mendelssohn, Maxim Rysanov, and Lars Anders Tomter; cellists Adrian Brendel, Natalie Clein, Gary Hoffman, Benedict Klöckner, Frans Helmerson, Gavriel Lipkind, Torleif Thedéen, Julian Steckel, and István Várdai; pianists Kit Armstrong, Silke Avenhaus, Simon Bucher, Finghin Collins, Danae Dörken, Peter Frankl, Alexander Lonquich, Aleksandar Madzar, Hannes Minnaar, Cedric Pescia, Pascal Rogé, and György Sebök; wind instrumentalists Reto Bieri, Hervé Joulain, Christoffer Sundqvist, Kaspar Zehnder, and Jacques Zoon; singers Rachel Harnisch and Andreas Schaerer; electric bass player Wolfgang Zwiauer; and guitarist Kalle Kalima. In 2007 she co-founded the Lipkind Quartet, touring Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Japan until 2009. Her festival appearances include IMS Prussia Cove, Prague, Budapest and Seoul Spring Festivals, Festival Internacional de Santander, West Cork Chamber Music Festival, and Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival.

“Bubbling and crackling with mischief, an engaging communicator.”
– The Irish Times

Violin in hand, she has appeared as keynote speaker at conferences and institutions across Europe — including TEDx, the Utrechts Conservatorium, Hochschule für Musik Saar, and the National Conservatory School of Music in Lisbon — as well as at universities such as Princeton and Berklee College of Music, and major institutes across South Korea, Hong Kong, and the Middle East.

Gwendolyn Masin

“Rarely, if ever before, have I read such a competent, inspiring and amusing book on how children learn to play the violin.”
– üben & musizieren, Schott Verlag

At age twelve, Gwendolyn first began travelling back and forth between Dublin and Amsterdam to have regular lessons with Herman Krebbers. She discovered her curiosity for teaching during that time and began chronicling all her lessons, resulting in a vast library of written and recorded documentation. Gwendolyn would be one of Krebbers’ last students. In conversation with Schott Verlag she observed, “I have had the privilege of learning from and collaborating with some of the most acute musical minds of our time. This immersive understanding is of such value that I feel I owe it to the next generation to pass on ideas that were shared with me.” In 2009, Müller & Schade published her award-winning book, *Michaela’s Music House – The Magic of the Violin*, making her the youngest female violinist to author her own violin method, replete with her own studies and compositions. It has since been published with Künzelmann in both English and German. Elsewhere, her writing has appeared in The Strad and other specialist journals.

Her doctoral thesis from Trinity College traces, in its first half, a history of written documentation about the violin from 1750 until today. Drawing on personal experience with outstanding violinists including her own teachers, as well as representatives of all the main schools of violin playing such as Thomas Brandis, Nora Chastain, Boris Kuschnir, Gerhard Schulz, Ljerko Spiller, and Sándor Végh, the second half of the thesis is a chronicle of the contemporary history of violin and examines the similarities and differences within 20th-century violin pedagogy.

A guest lecturer at Bern Academy of the Arts (HKB), Gwendolyn teaches violin and chamber music masterclasses at institutes and festivals throughout Europe and North America. These include Hochschule für Musik Saar, Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar, Franz Liszt Academy of Music Budapest, Utrecht Conservatory, HSLU – Hochschule Luzern – Musik, the IPAC Academy in Seoul, Keshet Eilon and Jerusalem Music Centres in Israel, and the University of Hong Kong Department of Music. From 2013 to 2020, Gwendolyn was professor and researcher of violin studies at the Haute École de Musique de Genève, Switzerland.

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“The Exhale is a place to begin an inward journey to understanding, without outward expectation.” – in conversation with the BBC Music Magazine

In 2020, as a response to the pandemic, Gwendolyn brought her in-person retreat, *The Exhale*, online. The Exhale offers holistic courses and master-classes to musicians worldwide. During its two-year online presence, some 90 artists delivered more than 1,000 hours of classes to over 2,000 participants Faculty members including cellist Guy Johnston, violinist Géza Szilvay, violist Maté Szücs, bassist Leon Bosch, jazz pianist Charl du Plessis, singer Roderick Williams, conductor Peter Whelan and children’s book author PJ Lynch.

“Outstanding playing. She successfully avoided the pitfalls of child prodigy status to become a profoundly inspiring musician .”
– The Sunday Business Post

Born in Amsterdam into a lineage of classically-trained musicians from Central Europe, Gwendolyn Masin has Dutch, Hungarian, Czech, Irish, South African, and Swiss background, and speaks five languages. She grew up surrounded by preeminent figures such as Herbert Blomstedt, Ida Haendel, Radu Lupu, Yehudi Menuhin, David Oistrakh, Ferenc Rados, Henryk Szeryng, and David Zinman — an environment that would shape her artistry and creative curiosity.

At age three, Gwendolyn began playing the piano, taught by her maternal grandmother. For her fifth birthday she received a violin. A year later she made her debut in Budapest’s Liszt Ferenc Academy playing Bach’s A minor concerto for violin. Her father is a former concert master of the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, her mother a violist and founding member of the Amsterdam Kern Ensemble. Both parents were EMI recording artists.

Gwendolyn’s family moved frequently during her childhood years — from Gwendolyn’s birthplace of Amsterdam to Cape Town, where Gwendolyn’s mother established a strings school for children of all backgrounds. Some years later, because of the family’s anti-apartheid views, the Masins moved to Budapest, home to the maternal side of Gwendolyn’s family. Vivid memories of that time include watching the fall of Communism as soldiers left the city in tanks; snow blackened by the pollution of cars in winter and hours spent training on a ballet barre in the music school’s gymnasium as part of the physical movement programme that the Béla Bartók Conservatory offered its students.

The Masins moved to Dublin during a time when The Troubles were still felt in Ireland's capitol. Following a string of concerts in halls such as the Netherland's Concertgebouw and Muziekcentrum Vredenburg, South Africa's Baxter Theater, Cape Town City Hall, and the major concert halls around Hungary, Gwendolyn gained national exposure in Ireland when she appeared on The Late Late Show, a popular weekly TV show.

"The space between notes creates the poetry within music."
– in conversation with NRC Handelsblad

Early achievements include prizes at the Violin Days in Cape Town, the Nederlands Vioolconcours, the Carl Flesch Prize in Baden-Baden, and all the major Irish competitions, together with a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship and the Outstanding Young Persons of Switzerland Award.

Gwendolyn holds performance, teaching and conducting degrees with highest honours from the Royal Schools of Music in London; the Hochschule der Künste in Bern; the Musikhochschule in Lübeck, and a PhD from Trinity College Dublin. Her teachers include her parents, Herman Krebbers, Igor Ozim, Ana Chumachenco, Zakhar Bron, Shmuel Ashkenasi, and Florian Ziemen.

She is Switzerland's first Licensed Body Mapping Educator, and serves as director of the Music Instrument Fund of Ireland and expert advisory board member of the Cultural Commission of Berne.

Gwendolyn's love of playing is founded in her voracious curiosity to understand human nature, musical expression, and the psychological connection between both. As she told the Basler Zeitung: "The experience of live music is everything. To me, it's the ultimate form of communication, moving us into dimensions that language, for example, cannot reach. A word is not a sentence, but a note can be an entire story."

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