

GWENDOLYN MASIN

Biography (2025/26)

“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. Born in Amsterdam, she is descendant of a lineage of classically-trained musicians from Central Europe. She grew up surrounded by iconic figures of music such as Herbert Blomstedt, Ida Haendel, Radu Lupu, Yehudi Menuhin, David Oistrakh, Ferenc Rados, and David Zinman. She is winner of prizes at the Violin Days in Cape Town, Nederlands Violconcour (Iordens), the Carl Flesch Prize (Baden-Baden), and received a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship, the Outstanding Young Persons of Switzerland Award, and first prizes at all the major Irish music competitions. She performs to critical acclaim, her concerts taking her all over Europe and the United States, as well as Asia, South Africa, Russia and the Middle East.

Extensive tours and live recordings include concertos and virtuoso repertoire with the the Irish Symphony and Concert orchestras, many of the Hungarian Symphony and Chamber Orchestras, numerous Swiss Orchestras such as the Bernese Symphony Orchestra, the Slovak State Philharmonic, and orchestras of the Americas such as Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM, Orquesta de Cámara de Bellas Artes (México), Savannah and Georgia Philharmonic Orchestras, Saint Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, Belarusian State Academic Symphony Orchestra, Musica Viva Chamber Orchestra (Moscow), and youth orchestras such as the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland and Portugal's Concerto Moderno with whom she recorded the complete Bach Violin Concertos.

Masin is a recording artist for Naxos and Orchid Classics. Her discography covers a wide spectrum of repertoire including neglected works by Irene Wieniawska or Zara Levina and much-loved favourites such as Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*. The latter was voted amongst the top five releases of 2020 by Art Muse London.

As a commissioner for contemporary music, Masin has premiered works by, amongst others, Antoine Auberson, Raymond Deane, Thorsten Encke, Thomas Fortmann, Ákos Hoffman, Don Li, Urs Peter Schneider, Daniel Schnyder, Eric Sweeney, Dobrinka Tabakova, Martijn Voorvelt, and John Buckley, the latter of whom dedicated his first violin concerto to her. She has collaborated closely with authors Lukas Hartmann, Meral Kureyshi and Melinda Nadj Abonji on productions. She's received support in such ventures from the Arts Council of Ireland, Swiss city and cantonal departments, UBS Bank, Mobiliar Insurance Company, and broadcasting companies such as SRF 2 Kultur (Switzerland), AVRO TROS, VPRO and NPO Radio 4 (the Netherlands), RTÉ television and RTÉ lyric FM (Ireland).

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, 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. Regular piano partners include Simon Bucher, Finghin Collins, and Caspar Vos. In 2007, she co-founded the Lipkind Quartet with the quartet's namesake cellist, of which she remained a member until 2009. The quartet performed with frequency in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Japan during that time. Festival appearances include Budapest, Prague, and Seoul Spring Festivals, Festival Internacional de Santander, West Cork Chamber Music Festival, Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival, IMS Prussia Cove, Internationales Musikfestival Koblenz, Internationaal Kamermuziekfestival Schiermonnikoog, Storioni Festival (NL) and klang Festival (CH).

Celebrated for her versatile programming, Masin is founding artistic director of *GAIA Music Festival*. Since its inception in 2006 in Stuttgart, *GAIA* presents renowned artists alongside rising stars in conceptually-driven events that are created at the festival. The annual festival held in Switzerland since 2009 is recognised as one of the country's most important. From 2010 until 2014, one of Gwendolyn's mentors, David Zinman, was patron of *GAIA*. Masin

established the multidisciplinary series, *In Search of Lost Time* in 2004 which has taken place in numerous cities in major halls in Ireland as well as in Berne, Switzerland. Notable artistic partnerships include her own series for Casino Bern for which Masin created elaborate, one-off productions involving classical music and other music genres and art disciplines from 2018 until 2023. Masin is artistic director of the *International Chamber Music Series*, and artistic director and faculty member of the *International Master Course* at Dublin's National Concert Hall. Faculty members of the *NCH IMC* summer festival academy have included Gilles Apap, Frans Helmerson, Gary Hoffman, Kim Kashkashian, Mihaela Martin, and Lars Anders Tomter. In addition, Masin was appointed Artistic Director for Ireland's *Carrick Music Festival* in 2007, a post she held for three years.

She is a director of the Music Instrument Fund of Ireland which celebrates 30 years in 2025 and is a member of the Cultural Commission of Berne.

Violin in hand, she has been a keynote speaker at platforms as diverse as international conferences of the European String Teachers Association, TEDxBern, TU Dublin's Conservatory of Music and Drama, the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Conservatório de Música da Metropolitana Lisbon, Swiss Fundraising, a string of colleges in North America including Princeton University, Berklee College of Music, Georgia Southern University Armstrong Campus, as well as major institutes in South Korea, Hong Kong, and Israel.

In 2009, the award-winning, *Michaela's Music House, The Magic of the Violin*, was published. It marked her as the youngest female violinist to have penned her own violin method. The book includes her own études and compositions and is available in English and German as part of the ESTA Edition collection available via Swiss music publisher house Müller & Schade. Masin's articles have been published in *The Strad Magazine*, *The Journal of Music*, and other trade 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 it examines the similarities and differences within 20th-century violin pedagogy.

Masin teaches violin and chamber music masterclasses at institutes and festivals throughout Europe and North America. These include invitations to 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. She frequently gives masterclasses and seminars for the Swiss Music Pedagogy Association (SMPV), and the Polish Association for Chamber Musicians (Stowarzyszenie Polskich Muzyków Kameralistów). From 2013 to 2020, Masin was professor and researcher of violin studies at the Haute École de Musique de Genève, Switzerland.

In 2020, as a response to COVID-19, Masin brought her in-person retreat, *The Exhale*, online. *The Exhale* provides professional courses and holistic masterclasses to musicians, practitioners, and artists from across the globe. During its two-year online presence, a team of 90 artists created more than 1,000 hours of classes, attracting more than 2,000 participants.

Faculty members include prominent musicians from all over the world, including cellist Guy Johnston, violinist Géza Szilvay, violists Maté Szücs and Matthew Jones, bassist Leon Bosch, jazz pianist Charl du Plessis, singer Roderick Williams, conductor and bassoonist Peter Whelan and children's book author PJ Lynch.

Masin began an arts association called *Bridge Club* in 2021. Patrons of the club are invited to salon gatherings and mixed art and performance events several times a year. The club's intention is to democratise the delivery of music and the arts.

The 2025/2026 season sees Masin in production for the second installment of *The Journey*. She conceptualised, researched, and developed the stage production with writer Lukas Bärzfuss, who plays his first acting role in it. Featuring her ORIGIN Ensemble, *The Journey* will once again tour multiple cities in Switzerland and Liechtenstein during the season. Further performances include solo and guest concert master appearances with Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra in Hungary, Turkey and Switzerland; recitals with Finghin Collins in Ireland; and numerous solo and chamber music concerts throughout Europe.

Masin holds degrees with highest honours from the Royal Schools of Music London; the Hochschule der Künste Berne; the Musikhochschule Lübeck, and a PhD from Trinity College.

Her teachers include her parents (Young European Strings School of Music), Shmuel Ashkenasi, Zakhar Bron, Ana Chumachenco, Herman Krebbers, and Igor Ozim. She studies conducting in the class of Florian Ziemer since 2024. She is the first Licensed Body Mapping Educator (Association for Body Mapping Education) in Switzerland. The violinist has Dutch, Hungarian, Czech, Irish, South African, and Swiss background, and speaks five languages.

Masin's love of playing is founded in her voracious curiosity to understand human nature, musical expression, and the psychological connection between both. In an interview with the Basler Zeitung she explains, "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."

(1578 words, August 2025)

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