

GWENDOLYN MASIN

Biography / Medium Version (2024/25)

"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. She is descendant of a lineage of classically-trained musicians and grew up surrounded by iconic figures in music history, studying with luminaries such as Herman Krebbers, Igor Ozim, Ana Chumachenco, Zakhar Bron and Shmuel Ashkenasi. She is winner of prizes at the Violin Days in Cape Town in 1989, Nederlands Viololconcours (Iordens) in 1990, the Carl Flesch Prize (Baden-Baden) a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship in 1996, the Outstanding Young Persons of Switzerland Award in 1998, and all the major Irish music competitions. Gwendolyn enjoys a flourishing international career that takes her all over Europe and the United States, as well as Asia, Russia (until 2014), South Africa, and the Middle East.

Gwendolyn has performed extensively on four continents to critical acclaim and has toured as a soloist with various orchestras. Notable partnerships include that with the Saint Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, Bernese Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra and RTÉ Concert Orchestra of Ireland, Irish Chamber Orchestra, the Hungarian National Philharmonic as well as its Chamber Orchestra, MÁV Symphony Orchestra, Savaria Symphony Orchestra, Concerto Budapest Symphony Orchestra, Slovak State Philharmonic, Savannah, and Georgia Philharmonic Orchestras, Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Belarusian State Academic Symphony Orchestra, Musica Viva Chamber Orchestra (Moscow), Orquesta de Cámara de Bellas Artes (México), Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra (Budapest), youth orchestras such as the National Youth

Orchestra of Ireland and Portugal's Concerto Moderno with whom she recorded the complete Bach Violin Concertos.

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, 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. Festival appearances include Budapest (Hungary), Prague (Czech Republic), and Seoul Spring Festivals (South Korea), Festival Internacional de Santander (Spain), West Cork Chamber Music Festival (Ireland), Stellenbosch (South Africa), Prussia Cove (England), International Music Festival Koblenz (Germany), Internationaal Kamermuziekfestival Schiermonnikoog and Storioni Festival (the Netherlands). 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 great frequency in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Japan during that time.

Collaboration with contemporary artists is of particular interest to Gwendolyn. In an effort to make music more accessible, she commissions artists, working closely with them and performing their music or integrating their respective art mediums into her interpretations. She's received strong 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, AVRO TROS, VPRO, NPO Radio 4, and RTÉ television and RTÉ lyric FM. Premiered works include major compositions by Antoine Auberson, Raymond Deane, Thorsten Encke, Thomas Fortmann, 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 Gwendolyn. Buckley's concerto premiered in Savannah, Georgia, as the Savannah Philharmonic's season opener to a sold-out Lucas Theatre and was later performed in Dublin with National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland. She also has collaborated closely with authors Melinda Nadj Abonji, Lukas Bärfuss, Lukas Hartmann, and Meral Kureyshi on productions.

Gwendolyn is very active as an artistic director, speaker and producer. Most prominent for Gwendolyn is her role as founding artistic director of GAIA, an annual festival held in Switzerland since 2009, recognised as one of the country's most important. From 2010 until 2014, one of Gwendolyn's mentors, David Zinman, was patron of GAIA. Other notable ventures include establishing the international, multidisciplinary series, In Search of Lost Time in 2004, which has taken place in multiple cities in Ireland and in Berne, Switzerland, as well as Cocktail für die Musen, a series for Casino Berne for which Gwendolyn creates elaborate, one-off productions involving classical music and other art disciplines since 2019.

Gwendolyn is also co-founder and co-artistic director of the International Chamber Music Series and International Master Course at Dublin's National Concert Hall together with pianist Finghin Collins since 2016. Faculty members of the summer school have included Gilles Apap, Adrian Brendel, Frans Helmerson, Gary Hoffman, Kim Kashkashian, Mihaela Martin, Hartmut Rohde, and Lars Anders Tomter. In addition, Gwendolyn was appointed Artistic Director for Ireland's Carrick Music Festival in 2007, a post she held for three years.

Gwendolyn has been a jury member at Murten Classics and Kiwanis Musikpreis, as well as the World Vision Contest. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Music Instrument Fund of Ireland since 2022, and of the Cultural Commission of the City of Berne since 2024. 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, Swissfundraising, a string of colleges in North America including Princeton University, Berklee College of Music, Georgia

Southern University Armstrong Campus and the Faculty of Music of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), as well as major institutes in South Korea, Hong Kong and in Israel.

Gwendolyn authors books and articles and composes. She speaks five languages. In 2009, the award-winning, Michaela's Music House, *The Magic of the Violin*, was published. The book serves to instruct the beginner violinist. It is in three parts and includes Gwendolyn's own studies and compositions. Michaela's Music House is available in English and German and is part of the ESTA Edition collection available via Müller & Schade. At the time of publication, Gwendolyn was the youngest female to have authored a violin method. Her doctoral thesis from Trinity College traces 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, it is also a chronicle of the contemporary history of violin.

Presently, Gwendolyn teaches violin and chamber music masterclasses at institutes and festivals throughout Europe and North America. She was professor and researcher of violin studies at the Haute École de Musique de Genève, Switzerland, between 2013 and 2020. She is the first Licensed Body Mapping Educator (Association for Body Mapping Education) in Switzerland. In 2020, as a response to COVID-19, Gwendolyn brought *The Exhale* online. *The Exhale* is an online platform and in-person retreat providing professional courses and holistic masterclasses to musicians, practitioners, and artists from across the globe. It is unique in its holistic approach to music education. It employs more than 90 artists.

Gwendolyn 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.

Gwendolyn is an Orchid Classics and a Naxos recording artist.

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