

My Life in Culture: Violinist Gwendolyn Masin



Gwendolyn Masin is a concert violinist, educator and founder and artistic director of the National Concert Hall's International MasterCourse. Returning to Dublin from July 29 to August 3, the course offers musicians the opportunity to partake in a series of masterclasses facilitated by prominent, distinguished artists.

The last thing I saw and loved ... on my way to answering these questions, I scrolled through my social media feed and found part of Orbital's performance at Glastonbury with Tilda Swinton. I loved that part of their set – great drive combined with the power of Swinton's delivery.

The book I keep coming back to ... there are many books I keep coming back to. Some are ones I teach from, others are encyclopedic in nature which I refer to when I'm curating programmes. In my free time, I love the writing of Zadie Smith – she writes in such a way that I can immediately immerse myself in the worlds she creates.

I find inspiration in ... music. Right now, so as to create a sound sphere, I put on music by Max Richter. It helps unlock my imagination and in so doing, paves the way for my curiosity.

My favourite film is ... *Les Enfants du Paradis*, a film by French film director Marcel Carné. It tells the story of one woman and how four men love her in entirely different ways.

My career highlight is ... always around the corner.

The song I listen to to get in the zone is ... anything by Ani di Franco or Jeff Buckley. Both artists have followed me around the world since I was a teenager. Their music transports me to a feeling of elation or contemplation within a few chords.

The last piece of work I recommended is ... a genre-defying contemporary opera called *Liebesgesang*, with only two characters performing a cappella.

I never leave the house without ... my lip balm and a house key. And preferably my family and a few close friends, en route to an adventure.

The performance I still think about is ... a general rehearsal I attended a few months ago of *Les Sieclès*, a French orchestra. They produce a fantastic sound.

My dream piece to perform would be ... at the moment I am loving Philipp Glass' violin concerto.

The best advice I've ever gotten is ... "Soar!" It's the word my mother frequently uses when she knows I'm feeling nervous about an upcoming performance. She began to say it when I was about to go on stage as a child. The act of maintaining an oversight of any piece I'm performing or project I'm working on continues to guide me and release tension.

The art that means the most to me is ... one that feeds my inspiration.

My favourite thing about the National Concert Hall's International Master Course is ... the sense of excitement that permeates through everything. It's the only time of year that the building experiences a complete takeover with musicians in every nook and cranny, making all kinds of different music from classical and contemporary to traditional and improvised music.

The most challenging thing about being a musician is ... not the hassle, the hustle.

After a performance, I ... feel fulfilled and in balance. There is nothing comparable to live performance.

If I wasn't a musician, I would be ... someone who enables musicians and artists.

The magic of classical music to me is ... that it creates spaces without words in which the human experience resides.

The National Concert Hall's International Master Course runs from Monday, July 29 – Saturday, August 3 with public masterclasses taking place each day. Individual lessons and ensemble coaching sessions will be open to observers. You can find out more details [here](#).

Photography by Tabea Reusser.