

# Gwen Laster

**For Bookings and Press Inquiries, please contact:**  
**Muffymarie Productions at: 845 265 2878**  
**Email: gwen@gwenlaster.com www.gwenlaster.com**

## Violinist, Composer, Teaching Artist

Surrounded and inspired by her mother's love for Rhythm and Blues, the Motown sound and Jazz, Gwen was motivated by the vision of her high school orchestra teacher Anderson White. Andy's organic approach of pointing and shouting "Stand up, take a Solo" created the breeding ground for her interest in Improvisation, Composition, Recording as a Solo Artist and educating the Classically trained String Player in Jazz and Global Music as a Teaching Artist.

Gwen's formal training began in the public schools of Detroit and continued to the University of Michigan School of Music where she earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Performance and Education. Her upbringing in Urban and Classical music was developed in NYC's eclectic environment where she emerged herself in playing Broadway shows, Jazz clubs, Traditional and Non Traditional Chamber Ensembles and Teaching Improvisation to String Players.

Wanting an individual voice and sound as an improvising violinist, she recorded two projects "Sneak Preview"(EP) and "I Hear You Smiling" that feature her original compositions and arrangements. The track "Send Love to the Equation" from the "Smiling" CD was selected for a very successful radio airplay campaign on AC Radio throughout the mid west. Gwen promotes her music as a performer in venues around NY and the U.S. and as a composer through licensing various tracks for television, advertising and film. She will also be publishing her first educational method book; "Music for the Creative String Player". It will be published in 09'.

Gwen's collaborative work on recordings, performances and tours include artists' Alicia Keys, Anthony Braxton, Angie Stone, Beres Hammond, Hubert Laws, Rhianna, Leroy Jenkins, Emeline Michele, Joe Giardullo, Joss Stone, Aretha Franklin, Shaggy and others. Her chamber and orchestral experience include Sphinx Symphony, Anthony Braxton Ninetet, Lake George Opera, Harlem Symphony Orchestra, Joe Giardullo Ensemble, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Sugar Hill Classical Band, Hudson Valley Philharmonic and others. Gwen has toured in Japan, Cuba, Haiti, Barbados, Anguilla, Jamaica, Canada, the Dominican Republic and the U.S.

Her next solo recording is inspired by her interest in Environmental Sustainability and elements of her yoga practice emphasizing compassion, nonviolence and meditation. It will be released in 09'.

## what The press says:

### **Denis Poole - Smooth Vibes**

"Gwen Laster, and her CD 'I Hear You Smiling' is a spectacular success in using the violin coupled with Laster's own soulful vocals to capture the essence of smooth and sensuous rhythms. One way or another the eclectic Gwen Laster looks to have lots to offer. Fortunately the world of adult contemporary smooth jazz seems particularly well served by her abundant talents."

### **Michigan Chronicle**

"Gwen Laster, an American classic music star (aka Jazz) has landed in New York. Gwen Laster is a Jazz Musician who forges ahead with new and exciting sound....using elements from both the traditional and contemporary idiom."

### **Forum "The New Perspective"**

"Violinist Gwen Laster performed recently at the Michigan Tastefest. Her performance was astounding as her audience got up and wandered like hypnotized zombies, while listening to the arousing reverberation of her violin."

### **Detroit Free Press Homegrown**

"Violinist has an extra set of strings for her bow... Gwen Laster lives a double life. One is as the flashy, soaring electric violinist who leads her own contemporary jazz group which won the Cognac Hennessy Best of Detroit Jazz Search. The other, more sedate Laster plays the acoustic violin in various symphonies and chamber ensembles. "Jazz gives you the opportunity and challenge of transferring your musical thoughts through the facility of the instruments" says Laster. "Your classical approach is the musical interpretation of what's already written out." The Hennessey prize of \$1,000 worth of studio time and \$10,000 helped finance Laster's debut CD "Sneak Preview" Her recipe for success? "I put a lot of positive thought into what I want to do and a lot of hard work."

# Gwen Laster - Violinist

## Resume

**For Bookings and Press Inquiries, please contact:**

**Muffymarie Productions at: 845 265 2878**

**Email: gwen@gwenlaster.com www.gwenlaster.com**

### **Professional Training**

University of Michigan School of Music (BM, MM)  
John Blake  
Dr. Billy Taylor  
Yusef Lateef  
Fred Martell

### **Discography**

Alicia Keys "Fallin"  
Alicia Keys "Diary"  
Alicia Keys "Unplugged"  
Angie Stone – "Bottles and Cans"  
Anthony Braxton – "Ghost Trance", "Shala"  
Clint Eastwood – "Eastwood After Hours"  
Emeline Michel – "Le Perternel"  
Hubert Laws- "Plays Bach"  
Jay-Z – "You Must Love Me"  
Joss Stone "Introducing Joss Stone"  
Joe Giardullo "Pearl Road"  
Khalil Kwame Bell – "Gift of Forgiveness"  
Luther Vandross-"So Amazing Tribute"  
Ruth Naomi Floyd – "Responsibility"  
Shaggy - "It Wasn't Me"  
Shaggy- "Strength of a Woman"  
Ty Stephens – "All Kinds of Love"

### **Festivals/Concerts/Tours**

Beres Hammond/New York,  
Kingston, Jamaica  
African Street Festival/New York  
Chicago World Music Festival  
Gateway Festivals/Rochester  
Global Arts Festival/New York  
Havana International Jazz Festival  
Ibero American Cultural Festival/Japan  
Institute of Cultural Arts/Dominican Republic  
Montreux Detroit Festival  
Sphinx Symphony Orchestra/Detroit

### **Grants/Awards**

Meet the Composer  
Jazz Study Fellowship/NEA  
Lila Wallace/NEA  
Jazz in July  
Cognac Henessey Jazz Search 1st Place  
Michigan Council for the Arts

### **Broadway Shows/Television/Orchestral/Chamber Ensemble**

Alicia Keys, MTV-Unplugged  
Anthony Braxton Ninetet  
Beauty and the Beast  
Brian McKnight The Apollo  
Catskill Chamber Orchestra  
Carousel  
Deborah Cox, MTV  
Eastwood After Hours, Carnegie Hall, PBS, NBC  
Erykah Badu, MTV Unplugged  
Jennifer Holiday  
Lake George Opera Festival  
Leroy Jenkins, "The Three Willies"  
Miss Saigon  
Rhianna, The Today Show,  
Rhianna, The View  
Rhianna, Barbados Music Awards  
Sphinx Symphony  
West End Symphony

### **Teaching/Master Classes/Workshops**

Creative Strings Institute  
Interlochen Arts Academy  
Creative Strings Institute  
New York  
Harlem School of the Arts-Director of Jazz Strings  
IAJE-Chicago  
ICA, Dominican Republic  
La Guardia C.C.  
Medgar Evers College  
NANM Convention  
Music Outreach  
Music of the Heart  
Poughkeepsie Day School  
St. Ann's School  
Symposium 2000  
Somers School District

### **Publications**

Music for the Creative String Player  
Incorporating Commercial Music in the Strings Curriculum  
(Field Study)  
(Available upon request)  
Jazz and Pop Arrangements for String Ensembles  
(Available upon request)