

**CURRICULUM VITAE**  
**Gwendolyn Brown, Contralto**



**GWENDOLYN BROWN**

517 N. Wolf Road  
Hillside, Illinois 60162, USA  
Nationality: USA

Cell: 708-426-9101  
Fax: 708-406-1614

**gwen@dan1132b.org**  
**contralto@gwendolynbrown.com**  
Website: **www.gwendolynbrown.com**

**UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS**

**Lyric Opera of Chicago**  
**Showboat - Queenie (Understudy)**  
Kern, Hammerstein  
January – March 2012

**The Industry, (Los Angeles, CA)**  
**Crescent City (New Composition)**  
Anne LaBaron  
Marie LaVeau - (Lead Character)  
April, 2012

**Boston Symphony Orchestra (Boston, MA)**  
**Porgy and Bess (Concert version) – Maria**  
Gershwin  
September, 2012

## PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Boston Symphony at Tanglewood	2011
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Seattle Opera	2011
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Washington National Opera	2010
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Grand Rapids Opera	2010
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	New Orleans Opera	2010
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Charlotte Opera	2010
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Hartford Theater (Hartford, CT)	2010
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	National Theater Manheim*	2010
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Leipzig Opera (Leipzig, Germany)*	2010
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Komische Opera (Berlin)*	2010
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Royal Theater Carre (Amsterdam)*	2008
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria (Understudy)	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2008
Verdi	<b>Un ballo in mascara</b>	Ulrica (understudy)	Des Moines Metro Opera	2008
Blitzstein	<b>Regina</b>	Addie (understudy)	Des Moines Metro Opera	2008
Wagner	<b>Das Rheingold</b>	Fricka	Des Moines Metro Opera	2008
Tchaikovsky	<b>Eugene Onegin</b>	Filippyevna	Des Moines Metro Opera	2008
Janacek	<b>Kata Kabanova</b>	Kabanicha	Des Moines Metro Opera	2008
Gershwin	<b>Porgy and Bess</b>	Maria	Tulsa Opera	2007
Weill	<b>Street Scene</b>	Negro Woman	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2001
Bolcom	<b>A View from a Bridge</b>	Old Woman Nurse	Lyric Opera of Chicago	
Mussorgsky	<b>Boris Godunov</b>	(understudy) Schwertleite	Lyric Opera of Chicago	
Wagner	<b>Die Walküre</b> <b>Amahl and the Night</b>	(understudy)	Lyric Opera of Chicago	
Menotti	<b>Visitors</b>	Mother	University of Memphis	
Menotti	<b>The Medium</b>	Madame Flora	University of Memphis	
Mascagni	<b>Cavalleria Rusticana</b>	Mamma Lucia	University of Memphis	

*\*New York Harlem Company 2010 Germany Tour*

## OTHER ROLES LEARNED

Giordano	<b>Andrea Chenier</b>	Madelon	Italian
Menotti	<b>The Consul</b>	Mother	English
Ponchieli	<b>La Gioconda</b>	La Cieca	Italian
Strauss	<b>Daphne</b>	Gaea	Italian
Wagner	<b>Das Rhengold</b>	Erda	German
Wagner	<b>Siegfried</b>	Erda	German
Wagner	<b>Gotterdamerung</b>	First Norn	German
Handel	<b>Guilio Ceaser</b>	Cornelia	Italian

## ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

**Four Spirituals** (Hale Smith), **Chicago Sinfonietta**, January, 2010  
**9<sup>th</sup> Symphony**, (Beethoven), **Chicago Sinfonietta**, January 2010  
**Concert Version - "Porgy and Bess" Role: Maria** (Gershwin), **Los Angeles Philharmonic**, July 2009  
**"Beyond the Score" (Demonstrator) Chicago Symphony Orchestra**, March 2009  
**Alexander Nevsky**, (Tchaikovsky), **Chicago Sinfonietta**, November 2006  
**Pops Concert** Memphis Symphony Orchestra

## Solo, Oratorio and Choral

**Messiah** **Monumental Baptist Church** (Chicago, IL), 2011, 2010  
**Choral Solo** **Lyric Opera of Chicago "Holy and Ivy Concert,"** 2008  
**Messiah** **Monumental Baptist Church** (Chicago, IL), 2006  
**Recital** **Opera Memphis (Negro Spiritual Scholarship Foundation - Memphis, TN)**, 2006  
**Recital** **Fisk University Arts Festival** (Nashville, TN), 2006  
**Concert** **Yachats Music Festival** (Yachats, Oregon), 2003—2006  
**Recital** **Four Seasons Concerts Distinguished Artists Series**, 2006  
**Recital** **Dillard University** (New Orleans, LA), 2005  
**Concert** **W. Hazaiah Memorial Concert with Four Seasons Concerts** (San Francisco, CA), 2004  
**Concert** **Negro Spiritual Scholarship Foundation** (Orlando, FL), 2004  
**Messiah** **St. Mark Methodist Church** (Chicago), 2004  
**Messiah** **Dillard University**, 2002 – 2004  
**Recital** **Dillard University**, 2004

## EDUCATION

**Fisk University** (Nashville, TN) - Bachelors of Musical Arts  
**University of Memphis**, (Memphis, TN) - Master of Music, Vocal Performance (incomplete)  
**Ryan Opera Center Young Artist Program**  
**Des Moines Metro Opera James Collier Apprentice Artist Program**

### ***Voice Instruction***

Tracey Watson (current)

Juddith Haddon, Ruth Falcon, Brian Montgomery, Nicholas DiVirgilio, Margaret Harshaw, Pamela Gaston, Valija Bumbulis

### ***Coaches***

Donald Nally, Eric Weimer, Michael Kirker, Tim Shaintlin, Rick Cordova, Earl Buys, Phillip Morehead, Robert Larsen, Tedrin Lindsey, David Neely

### ***Conductors***

John DeMain, John Maucheri, Zubin Mehta, Bruno Bartoletti, Richard Buckley, Dennis Russell Davis, Phillip Morehead, Robert Larsen, Carol Crawford

## **AWARDS**

**Altamura/Caruso International Voice Competition Study Grants** (2008) - Finalist

**National Opera Association** - Third Prize, Artists Division, 2006

**Classical Singer Magazine** - Third Prize, Emerging Artists Division, 2005

**New York Oratorio Society**, Semi Finalist, 2005, 2001

**Metropolitan Opera Auditions** - Regional Finalist (Chicago)

**Metropolitan Opera Auditions** - Regional Finalist (Memphis)

## **REVIEWS**

### **Seattle Opera – Seattle Washington**

#### **Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**August, 2011**

"As Maria, the town busybody, meanwhile, Gwendolyn Brown steals the show – a no-nonsense mama whose flips from rich alto to deep Southern back talk have both stage and audience in thrall."

*Rosemary Ponnekanti, The News Tribune, Tacoma, Washington*

### **Seattle Opera – Seattle Washington**

#### **Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**August, 2011**

"With her attitude, comic timing, and imposing alto, Gwendolyn Brown nearly steals the show as Maria, Catfish Row's matriarchal cook."

*Thomas May, Seattle Crosscut.com*

### **Seattle Opera – Seattle Washington**

#### **Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**August, 2011**

"Brown tends to steal every scene she's in with her grand, take no prisoners attitude."

*Jay Irwin, Broadway World, Seattle Edition*

### **Seattle Opera – Seattle Washington**

#### **Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**August, 2011**

"Contralto Gwendolyn Brown held the stage whenever she came to the fore, as Maria."

*Philippa Kiraly, The Sun Break, Seattle, WA*

### **New Orleans Opera - New Orleans, Louisiana, USA**

#### **Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**October 2010**

"Contralto Gwendolyn Brown's Maria proved to be the steely spine of Catfish Row"

*Theodore P. Mahne, Times-Picayune*

### **New Orleans Opera - New Orleans, Louisiana, USA**

#### **Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**October 2010**

"Gwendolyn Brown (clearly an audience favorite) was the spirited Maria."

*George Dansker, Opera News*

**75th Anniversary Tour - Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**Charlotte Opera, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA**

**PAB Theater, Michael Capasso, Producer**

**May 2010**

Playing Maria, who tells off Sportin' Life in one of the opera's sure-fire numbers, Gwendolyn Brown was gutsiness personified.

*Steven Brown, Charlotte Observer*

**75th Anniversary Tour - Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**PAB Theater, Michael Capasso, Producer**

**April 2010**

Other fine work is provided by Gwendolyn Brown's Maria . . . whose stirring, solo voice can rise above the crowd and harness audience attention.

*Andrew Beck, Hartford Arts Examiner*

**Grand Rapids Opera – Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA**

**Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**April 2010**

(Sportin' Life) meets his comic match in Maria (Gwendolyn Brown), who puts him in his place with the patter song, "I Hates Yo' Struttin' Style."

*Sue Merrell, Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press*

**Washington National Opera – Washington, DC, USA**

**Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**March 2010**

Gwendolyn Brown was a Maria with an ample voice to match her vivid personality.

*Tim Smith, Opera News*

**Washington National Opera – Washington, DC, US**

**Gershwin's Porgy and Bess**

**March 2010**

Contralto Gwendolyn Brown as Maria sang with one of the richest voices I have ever heard, in some instances singing comfortably in what would be considered the tenor range. She brought the forceful, maternal element to the cast, keeping everyone in line and being the voice of reason. The audience was brought to laughter several times by her 'frank' dialogue, as it related to her dislike for both Sportin'-Life and Bess.

*Patrick McCoy, Kennedy Center Examiner*

## **The Chicago Sinfonietta – Chicago, Illinois**

### ***“A Dream Unfolds - Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King”***

**January 2010**

[The] Four Negro Spirituals by African-American composer and arranger Hale Smith which was sung alternately by soprano Jonita Lattimore and contralto Gwendolyn Brown, each milking gorgeous sound.

*Dennis Polkow, Chicago Classical Review*

## **The Chicago Sinfonietta – Chicago, Illinois, USA**

### ***“A Dream Unfolds - Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King”***

**January 2010**

Such incredible talent performing such earthy, simple-folk tunes . . . Brown's soulful and sassy rendition of "Witness" was a highlight of the performance.

*Jonathan Rayfield, Chicago Splash Magazine, Spash Magazines Worldwide*

## **The Chicago Sinfonietta**

### ***“A Dream Unfolds - Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King”***

**January 2010**

It was Brown that blew me away during her solos in “Jesus Lay Your Head in the Window” and “Witness.” Brown has a voice that makes you get goose bumps. It is buttery, smooth and strong, and she might be the best singer/storyteller I have ever heard. In “Witness” she had the crowd laughing as she changed her voice to imitate characters in the song and had a few people muttering “Amen!” under their breath as she infused some spunky attitude into soulful verses. I was smitten!

*Devin Kidner, Making Chicago Home*

## **The Chicago Sinfonietta**

### ***“A Dream Unfolds - Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King”***

**January 2010**

Gwendolyn Brown brought a spiritual depth to “Jesus Lay Your Head in the Window” and a bit of sassy humor to “Witness.” She added some needed levity that drew the audience closer to her.

*Dwight Casimere, National Food and Entertainment Writer and Reviewer*

## **Hollywood Bowl**

### ***“Porgy and Bess”***

**July 2009**

Gwendolyn Brown was a fabulously vivacious Maria.

*Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times*

## **Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

### **“Beyond The Score” - Dvorak’s “New World Symphony,”**

**June 2009**

Sunday also marked a wonderful breakthrough for Chicago contralto Gwendolyn Brown, an alumna of Lyric Opera of Chicago's training program and a regular at Lyric as a cover and in small roles. Her interpretations of Negro spirituals, with ever-dependable pianist Elizabeth Buccheri, were deeply moving, even stirring. She also absolutely captured the harmonic, narrative and dramatic qualities of this music that spoke so directly to Dvorak. Stunning.

*Andrew Patner, Chicago Sun Times*

## **Lyric Opera of Chicago**

### **Holy and Ivy Holiday Concert**

**December 2008**

Soloists were fine, with the standout being mezzo Gwendolyn Brown, haunting in Leo Nestor's 1998 arrangement of the 1933 John Jacob Niles Appalachian-inspired standard "I Wonder as I Wander."

*Andrew Patner, Chicago Sun Times*

## **Altamura-Caruso International Vocal Competition**

### **Encounter with the Masters**

**August 2008**

Speaking of voices that will haunt you through Metropolitan Opera performances anywhere featuring a mezzo-contralto for years to come, to hear Gwendolyn Brown is to experience that primal thrill which comes in the presence of a singer whose fusion of soul with a vast, resonant instrument is total.

*Kitty Montgomery, Saugerties Post Star*

## **Tulsa Opera**

### **Porgy and Bess, Gershwin**

**April 2007**

“Gwendolyn Brown brings a large helping of sass to the role of Maria; her face-off with Sportin’ Life is one of the comic highlights of the opera.”

*James D. Watts, Jr., Tulsa World*

## **Chicago Sinfonietta, Chicago, Illinois**

### **Alexander Nevsky, Tchaikovsky**

**November 2006**

“Gwendolyn Brown brought a rich contralto voice to the lament of the Russian girl as she searched for her lover's body among the battlefield dead.”

*John von Rhein, Chicago Tribune*

### **Yachats Music Festival, Yachats, Oregon, 2006**

"Once again Saturday night there were astonishments, particularly Gwendolyn Brown, a contralto who silenced our breathing with the celebrated "Samson et Dalila" aria "*Mon coeur s'ouvre a ta voix*" ("My heart opens at your voice"). Brown slowed the phrases down . . . her dusky voice inhabited the music so completely, we were spellbound."

*David Stabler, The Oregonian*

### **Yachats Music Festival, Yachats, Oregon, 2004**

"This is her second year at the festival, and she's making an impression with her poise and deep contralto voice. She sings Ulrica's great anger aria from Verdi's "*Un Ballo in Maschera*" ("A Masked Ball"), the aria that Marian Anderson sang in her debut as the first African American in a leading role at the Metropolitan Opera in 1955. Brown recalls Anderson's muscular sound: low notes that are dark, almost earthen."

*David Stabler, The Oregonian*

### **Yachats Music Festival, Yachats, Oregon, 2004**

". . . positively chilled the warm night air with the gypsy's fortune teller's aria from Verdi's **Un ballo in Maschera.**"

*South Lincoln County News (Oregon)*

### **Yachats Music Festival, Yachats Oregon, 2004**

"Verdi never saw the Pacific Ocean. But, hearing a young singer before the rest of the world discovers her during a Yachats sunset matches one of life's greatest moments."

*David Stabler, The Oregonian.*

### **Memphis Vocal Arts Ensemble**

#### **Rossini - Messe Solennelle**

"There were many powerful moments for soloists - mezzo soprano Gwendolyn Brown's expressiveness and middle-register authority in the powerfully affecting Agnus Dei."

*Memphis Commercial Appeal*



**GWENDOLYN BROWN**  
Contralto

For the 75th Anniversary of the Gershwin's PORGY AND BESS, contralto Gwendolyn Brown performed her highly acclaimed signature role Maria in the Francesca Zambello production for Washington National Opera, Grand Rapids Opera (Michigan) and with PAB Productions (Michael Capasso, Producer). Her recent performances with the Seattle Opera and Boston Symphony at Tanglewood in 2011 have received much critical acclaim. Gwendolyn Brown "was a Maria with an ample voice to match her vivid personality" (Tim Smith, Opera News). As Maria, "Gwendolyn Brown was gutsiness personified" (Steven Brown, Charlotte Observer). In the 2010 season Ms. Brown performed the role with BB Productions (New York Harlem) in Germany (July-August 2010) and with the New Orleans Opera in October 2010. Ms. Brown has also performed the role in Amsterdam and Brussels. Gwendolyn Brown "brings a large helping of sass to the role of Maria" says the Tulsa World of her premier of the role with Tulsa Opera in 2007. Gwendolyn Brown was a "fabulously vivacious Maria," says LA Times of her recent performance at the Hollywood Bowl.

In the 2012 season, engagements for Ms. Brown include the Lyric Opera of Chicago for the production of Show Boat, and The Industry (Los Angeles, CA) performing as the lead character of Marie LaVeau in "Crescent City," an opera written by Anne LaBaron.

Ms. Brown has also received critical acclaim for her work in opera, concert and symphonic works. *To hear Gwendolyn Brown "is to experience that primal thrill which comes in the presence of a singer whose fusion of soul with a vast, resonant instrument is total"* (Saugerties Post Star). *"Her dusky voice inhabited the music so completely, we were spellbound"* (The Oregonian). *Her "stirring, solo voice can rise above the crowd and harness audience attention"* (Andrew Beck, Hartford Arts Examiner). As one critic states, her singing is simply *"Stunning"* (Andrew Patner, Chicago Sun Times). Other performed work in her operatic repertoire includes the roles of Baba THE MEDIUM, The Mother AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS, Fricka DAS RHEINGOLD, Kabanicha KATYA KABANOVA and Filippyevna EUGENE ONEGIN.

Originally from Memphis, Tennessee, Gwendolyn Brown obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Music at Fisk University, Nashville, TN, and pursued the Master's degree in Vocal Performance at the University of Memphis. Her young artist development included the Des Moines Metro Opera Young Artist Program and The Ryan Center for American Artists of Lyric Opera of Chicago. Ms. Brown currently resides in Chicago, Illinois, and has performed for many of the top opera companies and symphonies in the United States and overseas in Germany, Italy, Spain, Amsterdam and Brussels.

Ms. Brown's awards include Regional Winner with the Metropolitan Opera Council in Memphis; Finalist with the Metropolitan Opera Council for the Central Region in Chicago; finalist for the Altamura/Caruso International Voice Competition Study Grants, semi-finalist for the New York Oratorio Society Solo Auditions and the National Opera Association.