



Marvis Martin

Soprano

Marvis Martin is an American soprano whose career has encompassed opera, orchestral and solo recital appearances. Known for the expressive quality of her voice and special ability to communicate with audiences, Marvis Martin emerged in the 1980s and 90s as one of the foremost American sopranos of her generation.

In addition to performances with the Metropolitan Opera, she has performed as a soloist with virtually every major orchestra in the United States and on many prominent recital series.

Life and Career

Early Years & Musical Education

Marvis Martin was born in Tallahassee on April 7, 1954 to a single mother, Mahala Martin, and moved to Miami at age 4. She began her performing career at the of age 5, singing hymns from the Gospel Pearls hymnal at Sunday afternoon teas in the living room of her neighbor, Mrs. Gibson. Miss Martin sang in church choirs since the age of 5. She was introduced to opera listening to Beverly Sills on the Ed Sullivan Show. When she was in the 11th grade, she was captivated hearing Leontyne Price for the first time, inspiring her to pursue a classical music career.

Musical Education

- University of Miami (Bachelor of Music)
- Manhattan School of Music (Master of Music)
- Metropolitan Opera Young Artist Development Program (Premiere Year)
- Mozarteum (Salzburg, Austria; coaching with Elizabeth Schwarzkopf)

Competitions & Awards

- Civic Opera of the Palm Beaches Vocal Competition (1977)
- Young Patrons of the Opera Vocal Competition (1978; Greater Miami Opera Assn.)
- Helena Rubenstein Foundation Grant (1980)
- Concours International de Chant de Paris (1981)
Premier Prix of the Competition
Melodie Française - Premier Prix
Prix Mozart
- WGN Radio Chicago Illinois Opera Guild Auditions of the Air Gold Medal Prize (1981)
- National Opera Institute Competition
Gold Medal (1981)
- Young Concert Artists
Michaels Award (1982)
- Astral Foundation Career Grant (1986)

Career Highlights

Notable Collaborations

- James Levine, pianist & conductor
- Sir Yehudi Menuhin, violinist
- Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, vocal coach
Jessye Norman, soprano
- Alice Tully, philanthropist
- Susan Wadsworth, impresario
- Judith Drucker, impresario
- Maureen Forrester, contralto
- Gian Carlo Menotti, composer
- Jean-Yves Thibaudet, pianist
- Janine Reiss, French vocal coach
- Walter Taussig, German vocal coach
- Bobby McFerrin, conductor
- Wyclef Jean, composer & vocalist
- Carmen Lundy, jazz vocalist
- Victoria Clark, actress & musical theatre singer

Major Performances (Orchestral)

- **Sir Georg Solti / Chicago Symphony Orchestra**
Mozart: Mass in C Minor
- **James Levine / Chicago Symphony Orchestra**
Mozart: Mass in C Minor / Ravinia Festival
Mahler: Symphony No. 8 / Ravinia Festival (Mater Gloriosa)
(June, 1984 & July, 1987)
- **Zubin Mehta / Chicago Symphony Orchestra**
Mahler: Symphony No. 2 in C Minor (Resurrection)
with Maureen Forrester, contralto and the Chicago Symphony Chorus
Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 / Ravinia Festival
Barber: Knoxville, Summer of 1915 / Ravinia Festival
- **Zubin Mehta / New York Philharmonic**
Brahms: Ein deutsches Requiem (Debut)
Barber: Knoxville, Summer of 1915
Beethoven: Symphony No. 9
- **Zubin Mehta / Israel Philharmonic**
Mahler: Symphony No. 2
Gershwin: Porgy and Bess (Concert Version)
- **Charles Dutoit / Boston Symphony Orchestra**
Beethoven: Mass in C Major
- **Charles Dutoit / The Philadelphia Orchestra**
Gershwin: Porgy and Bess (Concert Version)
- **Christoph Eschenbach / Chicago Symphony Orchestra**
Mahler: Symphony No. 8 in C Minor (Mater Gloriosa)
- **Kurt Masur / The Philadelphia Orchestra**
Brahms: Ein deutsches Requiem
- **Michael Tilson Thomas / The Philadelphia Orchestra**
Mahler Symphony No. 2 in C Minor
- **Michael Tilson Thomas / Edinburgh Festival**
Mozart Arias

Vladimir Ashkenazy / Cleveland Orchestra

Barber: Knoxville, Summer of 1915

Robert Shaw / Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

Brahms: Ein deutsches Requiem

Leonard Slatkin / Minnesota Orchestra

Beethoven: Fidelio (Marzelline; Concert Performance)

Jahja Ling / Cleveland Orchestra

Mendelssohn: Elijah

Pinchas Zuckerman / Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

Baroque Arias

Mozart Arias

Bobby McFerrin / New York Philharmonic

Gershwin: Porgy and Bess (Bess)

Sir Andrew Davis / Mostly Mozart / Avery Fisher Hall (July 6-9, 1988)

Sir Charles Mackerras / Orchestra of St. Luke's / Carnegie Hall

Handel: Orlando (Dorinda)

Jean-Jaques Kantorow / Orchestre National d'Auvergne

Canteloube: Chants d'Auvergne

Robert Shaw / [Swedish Orchestra ?]

Brahms: Ein deutsches Requiem / (Sweden) [what orchestra?]

Charles Dutoit / [Orchestra?]

Mendelssohn: Elijah

St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (Other Repertoire?)

Major Performances / Collaborations (Solo Recitals)

"Une Heure Avec" Series / Aix-en-Provence Festival

Ambassador College Concert Series

Van Cliburn Concert Series

Young Concert Artists International (New York Debut Recital)

Community Concerts, Columbia Artists Management

Major Performances / Collaborations (Chamber Music)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Menotti: Nocturne (1982; Premiere Performance)

Commissioned by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and dedicated to Miss Alice Tully

Music from Marlboro

Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival

Brooklyn Academy of Music

Broadcasts (add links)

"In Performance at the White House" (PBS, year?)

"Summertime Soprano" The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour (PBS, year?)

"The Metropolitan Opera Presents" (PBS, 1983)

"The Marvelous Marvis Martin" (*Black Opera Live*, February, 2021)

"Vibe" (MTV, 1998; guest performer, with Wyclef Jean)

"Instruments of Change" (Documentary Film, 2013)

Repertoire

Operatic Repertoire

Beethoven	<i>Fidelio</i>	Marzelline
Donizetti	<i>Maria de Rudenz</i>	Matilde di Wolf
Gershwin	<i>Porgy and Bess</i>	Bess, Clara
Gluck	<i>Orfeo ed Euridice</i>	Euridice
Joplin	<i>Treemonisha</i>	Treemonisha
Handel	<i>Orlando</i>	Dorinda
Handel	<i>Rinaldo</i>	Almirena
Mozart	<i>Così fan tutte</i>	Fiordiligi
Mozart	<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	Pamina
Mozart	<i>Idomeneo</i>	Ilia
Mozart	<i>Mitridate, Re di Ponto</i>	Ismene
Mussorgsky	<i>Boris Godonov</i>	Xenia
Puccini	<i>La Bohème</i>	Musetta
Puccini	<i>Turandot</i>	Liu
Ravel	<i>L'Enfant et les Sortilèges</i>	La Princesse
Strauss, R.	<i>Ariadne auf Naxos</i>	Echo
Tchaikovsky	<i>Joan of Arc</i>	Anges Sorel
Verdi	<i>Don Carlo</i>	Celestial Voice

Orchestral Repertoire

J.S. Bach	Magnificat in D
	St. John Passion
	St. Matthew Passion
	Cantatas Nos. 36, 44, 86, 98
Barber	Knoxville, Summer of 1915

Beethoven	Mass in C Major
	Missa Solemnis
	Symphony No. 9 in D minor
Berlioz	Nuits d'été
Brahms	Ein Deutsches Requiem
Bruckner	Te Deum
Canteloube	Chants d'Auvergne (Recording on Denon label)
Copland	Emily Dickenson Songs
Dvorak	Te Deum
Debussy	Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien
Faure	Requiem
Górecki	Symphony No. 3 (Symphony of Sorrowful Songs, Op. 36)
Grieg	Peer Gynt Solveig
Handel	Messiah
	Israel in Egypt
	Orlando
	Solomon
	Cantata: Crudel Tiranno Amor
	Motet: Silete Venti
	Diverse Arias
Haydn	The Creation
	Mass No. 9 in D minor (Lord Nelson Mass)
	Mass No. 12 in D flat Major (Harmonie Messe)
Mahler	Rückert Lieder
	Symphony No. 2
	Symphony No. 4
	Symphony No. 8 (Soprano II, Una Poenitentium, Soprano III-Mater Gloriosa)
Mendelssohn	Elijah
Mozart	Exsultate Jubilate
	Mass in C Major, K. 317 (Coronation Mass)
	Mass in C Minor, K. 427 ("Great Mass")
	Mass in C, K. 257 (Credo Mass)
	Requiem
	Vesperae Solennes de Confessore, K. 339
	Vesperae Solennes de Dominica, K. 321
	Concert Arias: Chi sa qual sia, K. 582

Vado, ma dove?, K. 582

L'amero, saro costante, from *Il Re Pastore*

Diverse Arias

Poulenc Gloria

Schubert Mass in C Major, D. 452

Mass in G Major, D. 167

Schumann Das Paradies und die Peri

Strauss Diverse Orchestral Lieder

Four Last Songs

Vaughan Williams A Sea Symphony

Dona Nobis Pacem

Villa Lobos Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5

Vivaldi Gloria in D

Chamber Music Repertoire

Chausson *Chanson perpetuelle* (piano and strings)

Handel *Nine German Arias* (harpsichord, violin or flute and cello)

Schubert *Auf dem Strom*, Op. 119 (with French horn and piano)
Der Hirt auf dem Felsen, Op. 129 (with piano and clarinet)

Villa Lobos *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5*
(with eight cellos, or piano and cello solo)

Solo Recital Repertoire

German: Johann Sebastian Bach, Johannes Brahms, Georg Frederic Handel,
Franz Joseph Haydn, Gustav Mahler, Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, Richard
Strauss, Hugo Wolf

French: Georges Bizet, Andre Campra, Joseph Canteloube, Ernest Chausson, Henri
Duparc, Gabriel Faure, Charles Gounod, Jean-Baptiste Lully, Eric Satie

Italian: Franz Liszt, Giancarlo Menotti, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Gioacchino Rossini,

English: Dominick Argento, Samuel Barber, Margaret Bonds, Benjamin Britten,
H.T. Burleigh, Aaron Copland, Gerald Ginsberg, Lee Hoiby, Hall Johnson, Ned Rorem

Critical Acclaim

"Ms. Martin possesses a voice that, like the old and much loved spiritual 'This Little Light of Mine' sheds a warm glow wherever it is heard. She doesn't just sing a song; she illuminates it. The light comes from deep within her and radiates out, enfolding all of us in its beauty and expressiveness. Above all, she is the mistress of legato and can spin and shape a musical

line into a diaphanous vocal fabric.”

John Ardoin, [Source?]

“The amplitude and security of Martin’s soprano was a joy. The ecstatic, splintering beauty of Strauss’ music [Four Last Songs] came pouring out in a suddenly flooding opulence of tone reminiscent in quality, if in smaller scale, of the cushiony dark velvet sound of Leontyne Price. It was nostalgic music in more ways than one.”

James Roos, *Miami Herald*

Review of Mozart’s “L’amero saro costante” & “Non temer amato bene”

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1986-09-07-8603060736-story.html>

Awards and Honors

The New York Times Florida Prize (1988, The New York Times Company)

University of Miami Outstanding Alumni Award (Year?)

Kathleen Ferrier Award (1981, Young Concert Artists)

Dannenberg Artist In Residence Chair Oberlin Conservatory of Music (Year?)

Forum 2000

Recordings

Spirituals of William L. Dawson / St. Olaf Choir / St. Olaf Records

Marvis Martin, soprano; St. Olaf Choir, Anton Armstrong, conductor

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Behold the Star

There Is a Balm in Gilead

Mary Had a Baby

Live from the Spoleto Festival, 1987 / Musical Heritage Society

Canteloube: Chants d'Auvergne / Denon Records

Orchestre National d'Auvergne / Jean-Jaques Kantorow, conductor

Gershwin: Porgy and Bess: "Bess, You Is My Woman Now"

"For You, For Me" Songs of Copland, Gershwin, Sondheim, Berlin, Kern, Bernstein (EMI)

Bruce Hubbard, baritone; Marvis Martin, soprano

Orchestra of St. Luke's; Dennis Russell Davies, conductor