

Colleen Potter Thorburn, harp
Long biography, v.2013.2

Colleen Potter Thorburn has been featured as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral harpist with ensembles across the United States. She currently plays Principal Harp with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra in New London CT, and substitute Principal Harp with the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra in Roanoke VA. Previously, she held the Principal Harp position with Symphony Nova (formerly the Neponset Valley Philharmonic Orchestra) of Boston MA, with whom she has also performed as a concerto soloist.

In addition to these principal positions, Colleen has performed frequently as Principal Harp with the Nutmeg Symphony Orchestra in Avon, the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra, and as substitute and second harpist with the orchestras of Waterbury and Bridgeport CT. She has performed as Principal Harp in several ballet and opera productions, most recently with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony's production of the Nutcracker and with the Albano Ballet Company. She has also performed with the New Haven Ballet, Orchestra New England, and Opera Illinois in Peoria IL. Colleen has additional experience performing in musicals and off-Broadway musical productions, including a month-long run of the Fantasticks with Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven.

Colleen's playing, described by the Greenwich Citizen as "full of spirit and sensitivity," has earned her national recognition as a winner of the American Harp Society's Anne Adams competition. She was awarded a harp fellowship for two seasons with the Aspen Music School and Festival, with whom she performed in faculty chamber music concerts and as principal harpist with the Aspen Chamber Symphony, while studying with harpists Nancy Allen, Deborah Hoffman, Stacy Shames, and Lisa Wellbaum. As a young artist and harp fellow at Aspen, the International Festival-Institute in Round Top TX, and the Atlantic Music Festival in Waterville ME, she has been privileged to collaborate with numerous celebrated artists, among them Joshua Bell, David Zinman, Leonard Slatkin, James Conlon, and Marin Alsop. Outside of the "art" music scene, Colleen has collaborated as a back-up musician for Kanye West's shows in the Chicago area and played harp for the 3Penny Chorus and Orchestra's performances on America's Got Talent in 2013 in New York.

In addition to her orchestral engagements, Colleen is a dedicated chamber musician who is particularly devoted to new music involving the harp. She has been a featured performer on chamber music series at the Atlantic Music Festival, Round Top, the Yale School of Music's Vista series, and Credo Chamber Music in Oberlin OH. Colleen has also been featured as a guest artist at the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven; in both New Haven and New York as a performer of new music on the Uncertainty Music series; and she has presented numerous world premieres of pieces by both young and established composers at the Atlantic Music Festival, the Aspen Music Festival, as a member of New Music New Haven at Yale, and as a member of the University of Illinois New Music Ensemble in Champaign IL. She is a featured performer of compositions by Los Angeles-based composer Michael Winter, and she can be heard on a full-length album of

his music (release date 2013).

Colleen's ongoing chamber music work focuses on reviving, transcribing, performing, and commissioning repertoire for French horn and harp. Toward this end, she co-founded the duo Apple Orange Pair with hornist Emily Boyer in 2010. Currently in their fourth year collaborating together, they have programmed and performed several unique concert programs featuring rare 19th- and 20th-century original compositions, personal transcriptions of music from the 16th to 21st centuries, and new works commissioned specifically by the duo. Apple Orange Pair has been honored as a Yale alumniVentures grant recipient, as artists-in-residence at the Atlantic Music Festival in Waterville ME, and in 2012 they led a successful Kickstarter campaign to fund recording their debut album in 2013. To date, they have commissioned and performed new works by composers Russell Nadel, Naftali Schindler, Michael Weinstein-Reiman, S. Beth May, and Aaron Price.

Outside of performing, Colleen enjoys a successful dual career as a music educator. Colleen has taught at several Connecticut colleges and universities as an adjunct classroom instructor: She has taught Hearing at the Yale School of Music for graduate music students; Music History and Appreciation at Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) as a fine-arts elective; and harp lessons at Fairfield University as well as NVCC, where she recruited beginning lever harp students and was the first harpist to offer lessons through a Connecticut community college. Colleen was recognized for her excellence in teaching and her devotion to community college students as a 2012 recipient of NVCC's Adjunct Award. Colleen currently teaches private harp and piano lessons to students in Tazewell County VA and Mercer County WV, both privately and through Bluefield College's Fine Arts Community program. Prior to teaching in Virginia, Colleen maintained a small, selective piano studio in New Haven for beginning and intermediate young piano students, who received weekly private instruction in comprehensive musicianship skills as well as keyboard technique.

Colleen is an active professional member of the American Federation of Musicians, the Music Teachers' National Association, the Virginia Music Teachers' Association, the American Harp Society, and the Historical Harp Society. She encourages her students to participate in assessments and competitions through these networks, as well as in Carnegie Hall/The Royal Conservatory's graded Achievement Program.

Colleen is the first harpist to graduate from the Yale School of Music's Master of Musical Arts program, studying under June Han. Colleen also has a Master of Music degree (Yale) and a Bachelor of Music degree and minors in both French and World Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she studied harp with Ann Yeung. Colleen grew up in St. Louis MO, where she played principal harp with the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra as a high school student and concurrently studied harp with Laura Hearne and piano with Marlita Weiss.

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