

Dr. Colleen Potter Thorburn

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D.M.A., M.M.A., M.M. Yale School of Music; B.M. University of Illinois

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Harpist Colleen Potter Thorburn's playing has been acclaimed as "full of spirit and sensitivity" (Greenwich Citizen), "engrossing," and "winning" (The New London Day). As an orchestral harpist, Colleen currently performs as tenured Principal Harp with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra (CT), with whom she recently performed the Ginastera harp concerto as a soloist. She performs regularly with the Richmond Symphony Orchestra, Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra, and Roanoke Symphony Orchestra, in addition to having served as a substitute harpist for the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Virginia Symphony. Previously, she held the principal harp position with Symphony Nova (formerly the Neponset Valley Philharmonic Orchestra) in Boston, with whom she performed the Gliere harp concerto as a soloist.

Alongside her orchestral engagements, Colleen devotes time to chamber music and new music ventures involving the harp. Her horn-and-harp duo Apple Orange Pair, founded in 2010 with horn player Emily Boyer, focuses on reviving, transcribing, performing, and commissioning new repertoire for French horn and harp. Apple Orange Pair released their first full-length recorded album, "Seeds," in 2013, and the duo has since presented concerts in several major U.S. cities, including Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Richmond, Fort Lauderdale, and Hartford. They have given recitals and performances at the International Horn Symposium in Ithaca, the Northeast Horn Workshop at Pennsylvania State University, and the American Harp Society's National Summer Institute in Logan, Utah. Apple Orange Pair regularly serves as an ensemble-in-residence at new music festivals and for university composition departments, including Connecticut Summerfest and Central Connecticut State University.

Colleen teaches harp and musicianship courses at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and maintains a private studio in the greater Richmond area. She has previously taught harp on the faculties of Liberty University (VA), Bluefield College (VA), Fairfield University (CT), and Naugatuck Valley Community College (CT), where she also taught music appreciation and history courses. In the summers, she teaches as founding harp faculty at Coda Mountain Academy (WV). Colleen has presented educational workshops and master classes for youth at several regional harp events, including the Virginia Harp Center's RVA Harp Day, the Philadelphia harp chapter's Mid-Atlantic Harp Day, the American Youth Harp Ensemble's Summer Music Institute in Richmond, James Madison University in Harrisonburg, and VCU Harp Day, an event she personally cultivates and manages.

A past winner of the American Harp Society's Anne Adams awards, Colleen has performed as a recitalist at the American Harp Society's National Summer Institutes in Logan (UT) and in Northfield (MN), in addition to performing as a featured recitalist at Camac Harps' U.S. festival in Washington, D.C. She served for two years as president of the Southwest Virginia chapter of the American Harp Society, which she helped to re-establish, and she has performed throughout the state of Virginia as a Touring Artist for the Virginia Commission for the Arts from 2014 to 2017.

Her music festival credits include the Aspen Music Festival (CO) as a harp fellow, the International Festival-Institute at Round Top (TX) as a young artist, and the Atlantic Music Festival in Waterville (ME) as an orchestral fellow. Additional teachers and mentors through summer studies include harpists Nancy Allen, Deborah Hoffman, Lisa Wellbaum, Faye Seeman, and Paula Page.

Colleen is the first harpist to have earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Yale School of Music. She holds additional Master of Music and Master of Musical Arts degrees from Yale, where she studied with June Han, and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Illinois in Champaign, where she studied with Ann Yeung. She began her harp studies in St. Louis with Laura Hearne.

Colleen lives in Petersburg, Virginia, where she enjoys spending time with her husband, bass-baritone Benjamin Thorburn, and their two cats, Esso and Maggie.