

### Upcoming VCU Music Events

**Guest Artist Recital: David Tayloe, tenor**

Thursday, March 30, 2017 at 7 p.m.

W. E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts

Free admission

**Rennolds Series: Joshua Roman, cello; Andrius Zlabys, piano**

Saturday, April 1, 2017 at 8 p.m.

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts

Tickets:

\$34 general admission, \$31 seniors/VCU Alumni Assoc. members

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VCU Music students free - e-mail [musictix@vcu.edu](mailto:musictix@vcu.edu) to reserve

**Piano Area Recital**

Monday, April 3, 2017 at 7 p.m.

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts

Free admission

**Women's Choir & Vocal Chamber Ensembles**

Tuesday, April 4, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.

W. E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts

Tickets: \$10 general admission, free with VCU ID

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## DEPARTMENT OF **MUSIC**

### FACULTY RECITAL

## **"The Contemporary Harp"**

***Colleen Potter Thorburn, harp***

**Wednesday, March 29, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.**

Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall

Virginia Commonwealth University

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts

922 Park Avenue | Richmond, VA

[arts.vcu.edu/music](http://arts.vcu.edu/music)

# **vcuarts**



## Program

Sonata for Harp (1939).....Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

Mässig schnell

Lebhaft

Lied: Sehr langsam

Colours Within (2009).....Rachel Brandwein (b. 1982)

Separate Souls (1993).....Antonio García

Around the Clock Suite (1948).....Pearl Chertok (1918-1981)

Ten Past Two

Beige Nocturne

Harpicide at Midnight

The Morning After

- INTERMISSION -

Raga, Op. 41 (2006).....Caroline Lizotte (b. 1969)

*with Jaclyn Wappel, harp*

Sequenza II (1963).....Luciano Berio (1925-2003)

Suite for Harp, Op. 83 (1969).....Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Overture

Toccata

Nocturne

Fugue

Hymn (St. Denio)

or to glissando, tremolos for both hands and both feet, smacking the strings, and loudly striking the soundboard immediately after plucking a string with the same finger (in imitation of the Bartók pizzicato). Each hand is often engaged in several of these techniques in rapid succession. It is in this central section that traditional harp technique, referenced in the opening section of the Sequenza, is gradually permeated, questioned, destroyed, and transformed by these more percussive, aggressive ways of playing the instrument. Berio's desire for the performer is not a virtuosity of traditional technique per se, but what he called a "virtuosity of the mind" as the performer engages dialogically with music of all earlier eras. The harp's traditional association with the sylphide melodies of nineteenth-century Romanticism (and the image of harpists as "blond wraiths" and "half-naked young women," as Berio memorably stated in an interview) is undermined for the audience, who watches the harpist's four limbs engaged in what at times appears to be a struggle against the harp.

The third and final section ceases many of the unusual techniques, but the perceived tempo is even more frenetic—due in part to the rapid juxtapositions of vertical chords, unbroken, played fortissimo and then pianissimo, high on the harp and then extremely low, and muffled immediately, running counter to the harp's natural principles of resonance. This texture comprises multiple layers of sound and events: amidst the violent fortissimo attacks are ringing, softer harmonics and single pitches that redirect the harmonic sequence from earlier in the Sequenza toward its closing pitch center.

### Benjamin Britten, Suite for Harp, Op. 83 (1969)

Britten's only composition for solo harp, the Suite for Harp was written at the request of Osian Ellis, the Welsh harpist for whom Britten also wrote the harp parts in A Midsummer Night's Dream and the War Requiem. In the Suite, Britten builds upon a foundation of traditional harp techniques such as glissandi and arpeggios, using particularly nuanced articulations to create contemplative and introverted sound worlds that are new to the harp. Despite the opening Overture's dissonant decorations of the tonic chord, the suite as a whole inhabits a calm C-diatonic world. It cycles from the opening C tonality (with some bitonal competition) through D major, an F-based minor mode, and B-flat major before returning to C major in the closing Hymn, which bases its opening motive on the tune "Immortal, Invisible." Scholar Philip Brett noted that the Suite for Harp stands as an oasis of sorts amidst Britten's more troubling compositions from 1969, among them the Children's Crusade and the song cycle Who are These Children? Rather than bemoaning the devastating effects of civilization and war upon modern youth, the Suite, performed by Ellis at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1969, instead provided Britten the opportunity to celebrate the harp and Welsh culture.

Britten's own description of the Suite is reprinted below:

1. A classical 'Overture,' with dotted rhythms and trumpet chords.
2. 'Toccata,' a rondo busy with quavers and semiquavers, with much crossing of parts.
3. 'Nocturne,' a clear tune with increasing ornamentation over a low, chordal ground.
4. 'Fugue,' a brief scherzo, in three voices.
5. 'Hymn' (St. Denio), a Welsh tune, a compliment to the dedicatee, with five variants.



tingle with delight. Then you walk again – taking in the displays made just for you.

2. Beige Nocturne: Evening. You are at your vanity – choosing your perfume from the array of bottles – There is a faint suggestion of a waltz but only for a fleeting instant. The beige melody brings you back to the fragrance of the evening mood.

3. Harpicide at Midnight: The dance begins and the rhythm grows more and more insistent. The melody is lost and finally there is only the pulse of dancing feet.

4. The Morning After: The alarm clock. You stretch and wish it could be ignored. Then you see the sun striking through the windows and the day begins in clear melody.

#### Caroline Lizotte, *Raga, Op. 41* (2006)

Internationally-renowned Canadian harpist and composer Caroline Lizotte's works for harp are celebrated and performed around the world. Ms. Lizotte has led a prominent career as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician over the last 25 years. She has performed, recorded and toured with several ensembles and orchestras of Eastern Canada, and she often figures in the credits for classical and popular recordings and movie soundtracks. An Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Center, she has more than fifty opuses in her catalog of works, not counting original transcriptions and arrangements for various ensembles.

*Raga, Op. 41*, was commissioned by Radio-Canada for harpists Judy Loman and Jennifer Swartz. As the title suggests, the piece conjures the meditative atmosphere of an Indian classical "raga." It begins with a sparse set of pitches, alternating with extended techniques, and as the piece progresses, successive layers of repetitive rhythmic figures, texture, and colors evolve from this opening set of pitches. The raga grows in sound and texture until it reaches its final rapturous climax. Both harpists employ extended techniques, using standard percussion equipment like a cymbal and ankle bells in addition to more harp-specific tools, including a "super ball stick" crafted by Lizotte especially for this piece.

#### Luciano Berio, *Sequenza II* (1963)

Luciano Berio's fourteen *Sequenzas* for solo instruments are to the modern instrumental repertoire what J.S. Bach's unaccompanied suites and partitas for violin and cello were to earlier centuries. While Berio defined a "sequenza" as a "sequence of harmonic fields" explored throughout a solo piece, the term is now equally associated with a solo work that makes unusually virtuosic and unconventional demands on the performer. *Sequenza II*, composed in 1963 for the French harpist Francis Pierre, follows on the heels of *Sequenza I* for flute (1958) and can be seen as a culmination of the unusual techniques and effects that Berio had previously explored in his harp writing for *Différences* (1959) and *Circles* (1960).

*Sequenza II* can be understood in three broad sections. The first section can be executed rather gracefully, in reference to "classical" harp technique: it is mostly calm and melodic, with a few faster arpeggiations. The middle section, however, features a growing cacophony of vertical elements and makes increasing use of unusual techniques: striking the soundboard, using the fingernail to pluck

#### About the Artists

Harpist COLLEEN POTTER THORBURN's playing, acclaimed as "full of spirit and sensitivity" (Greenwich Citizen), "engrossing," and "winning" (The New London Day), has earned her national recognition as a winner of the American Harp Society's Anne Adams competition. She performs as Principal Harp with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra in New London, CT, with whom she recently performed Ginastera's harp concerto as a soloist; performs as a harp substitute with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Richmond Symphony Orchestra; and performs regularly with the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra and the Richmond Symphony. She has presented solo and chamber music concerts throughout the state of Virginia as a Touring Artist with the Virginia Commission for the Arts. Previously, she held the principal harp position with Symphony Nova (formerly the Neponset Valley Philharmonic Orchestra) in Boston, MA, with whom she has also appeared as a concerto soloist. Festival credits include the Aspen Music Festival (CO), the International Festival-Institute at Round Top (TX), and the Atlantic Music Festival in Waterville (ME).

In addition to her orchestral engagements, Colleen is a dedicated chamber musician who is particularly devoted to new music 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 November 2013. The duo has presented concerts in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Richmond, and Fort Lauderdale, and at regional and national conferences, including Mid-Atlantic Harp Day in Philadelphia, the Northeast Horn Workshop at Pennsylvania State University, the American Harp Society's 11th National Summer Institute at Utah State University, and the International Horn Symposium at Ithaca College. Apple Orange Pair was recently featured as an ensemble-in-residence for the first season of Connecticut Summerfest at the Hartt School and will be returning for Summerfest's 2017 summer season. They are currently completing an ensemble residency at Central Connecticut State University, where they presented workshops on composing for horn and harp and presented premieres of three new student and two new faculty works.

Colleen teaches on the music faculties of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, and in the summer, she teaches as founding harp faculty at Coda Mountain Academy in Fayetteville, West Virginia. She teaches both harp and musicianship courses at the college level. An active proponent of regional harp activities in southern Appalachia and throughout Virginia, Colleen served as president of the new Southwest Virginia chapter of the American Harp Society from 2014 to 2016. She has presented workshops and master classes for harp students at local and regional American Harp Society events, in addition to the Virginia Harp Center's RVA Harp Day and the American Youth Harp Ensemble's Summer Music Institute in Richmond. She previously taught harp and piano through Bluefield College's Fine Arts Community School in southwest Virginia.

Colleen lives in Petersburg, Virginia, with her husband, bass-baritone Benjamin Thorburn, who is the Director of Choral Activities at Chowan University in North Carolina. The Thorburn Duo frequently collaborates in concerts and has been featured on several concert series throughout Virginia and the mid-Atlantic region. They will be presenting a recital at the American Harp



Society's 12th National Summer Institute at St. Olaf College in Minnesota.

Colleen is the first harpist to have earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Yale School of Music. She also holds both Master of Musical Arts and Master of Music 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. Additional teachers and mentors include Nancy Allen, Deborah Hoffman, Lisa Wellbaum, Faye Seeman and Paula Page.

DR. JACLYN WAPPEL is the Instructor of Harp at James Madison University. She is an experienced harp performer, instructor, and scholar with national and international performance experience in numerous orchestral, opera, chamber, and solo performance settings. Jaclyn's awards include First Prize in the Top Division of the Midwest Solo Harp Competition in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a full scholarship from the Tusciana Opera Festival to perform Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Harp in Rome and Viterbo, Italy, and a performance in Carnegie Hall with the Purdue University Wind Ensemble. She has held the position of Principal Harp for numerous ensembles, including: the Muncie Symphony Orchestra, Anderson Symphony Orchestra, Manchester Symphony, Austin Summer Pops Orchestra, Austin Civic Orchestra, and more. Dr. Wappel graduated in 2009 with her Bachelor of Music degree in Harp Performance from the University Texas at Austin and her Master of Music degree in Harp Performance from Ball State University in 2012. She holds a Doctor of Arts degree, also from Ball State University, with a primary emphasis in Harp Performance and secondary emphasis in Musical Historical Ethnography.

#### Notes on the Program

##### Hindemith, *Sonata for Harp* (1939)

Among Paul Hindemith's compositions are at least twenty-six sonatas—one for nearly every orchestral instrument. He composed the harp sonata in 1939 in Switzerland in collaboration with the Italian harpist Clelia Gatti-Aldrovandi. Hindemith lived in Switzerland from 1938 to 1940, seeking refuge from his native Germany, where in 1936 the Nazi party had denounced his music. He completed the harp sonata in October 1939, only weeks after Germany's invasion of Poland.

Like Hindemith's sonatas for horn and for trumpet, composed the same year, the harp sonata is often seen as a nostalgic work that exploits the harp's idiomatic resources as well as its associations with an ancient past to conjure images of old Germany. The influential harpist-composer Marcel Grandjany described the first movement as evoking the grand chords of an organist practicing in a great cathedral, and the second movement as depicting children playing in the square outside the cathedral with strains of the organ occasionally heard in the background. At the start of the third movement, Hindemith included in the score a funeral poem by Höltz, which begins: "My friends, when I am dead, hang the little harp behind the altar..." The structure of this final movement can be interpreted as closely following the stanzas of this poem.

##### Rachel Brandwein, *Colours Within* (2009)

Dr. Rachel Brandwein is the winner of the 2014 Mu Phi Epsilon International Solo Competition; as Concert Artist, she concertized and gave outreach classes

around the United States from 2014 to 2016. She teaches harp at Luther College and College of Saint Benedict & Saint John's University, and has received top prizes in regional and national competitions sponsored by the American Harp Society, American String Teachers Association, and Mu Phi Epsilon. Rachel has performed with the Minnesota Orchestra, VocalEssence, and the National Lutheran Choir. An avid composer, her works have been performed throughout the United States and are published on her website, [rachelbrandwein.com](http://rachelbrandwein.com). Brandwein earned degrees from the University of Michigan, the Juilliard School, and Stony Brook University. At the Stony Brook Music Department's doctoral commencement ceremony, she received the prestigious Ackerman Award for Excellence in Graduate Studies for high accomplishment in performance and pedagogy.

Colours Within is dedicated to Brandwein's teacher and mentor Nancy Allen, principal harpist with the New York Philharmonic and the harp professor at Juilliard. The "colours" the title alludes to can be understood on multiple levels. Brandwein's writing uses colorful harmonies reminiscent of French impressionism, paying homage to the technique and style cultivated by French harpists of the 1920s like Marcel Tournier. On another level, "colours" can also be taken literally, as Brandwein's writing draws upon her synesthesia, that is, her ability to visualize distinct colors and hues that correspond with different harmonies and sounds.

##### Antonio Garcia, *Separate Souls* (1993)

I was commissioned to write this piece over 20 years ago by Carrol McLaughlin, a wonderful harpist who teaches at Arizona State University. At the time, I was preparing to host the Jazz & Pop International HarpFest at my university, and she was the artistic director. I composed some sight-readable pieces for their harp competition, unrelated to this more challenging piece for Carrol.

The title comes from the fact that it's a bitonal piece: The left and right hands play in different keys. And even though that feels dissonant at times, my own feeling is that as you spend more and more time with dissonance, it seems more and more consonant. The title also reflects that at the time I was writing the piece, a couple that I knew was going through a divorce, which is also a dissonant matter that one hopes, eventually, will become more consonant—hence the dual meaning of the title.

— Antonio Garcia, Director, VCU Jazz Studies

##### Pearl Chertok, *Around the Clock* (1948)

A student of Carlos Salzedo and Marjorie Tyre at the Curtis Institute, Pearl Chertok made her career in New York City in the mid-20th century as a staff harpist for the CBS television orchestra. She also taught harp at several New York colleges, composed and arranged music for solo harp, and served in leadership roles within the American Harp Society. Her "Around the Clock" suite employs a jazzy style, adapting it well to the harp's pedaled chromatic capabilities. Chertok describes each movement as follows:

1. Ten Past Two: Early afternoon and you walk along the avenue. You look in the shop windows and are fascinated by the glitter and the new styles. You stop at one window and a gown – shimmering with sequins – makes you