

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Today, Zane Mallett is playing second harp.

## ZANE MALLETT *harp*

The journey to becoming a professional harpist isn't an obvious or simple one, but it's one that Zane Mallett has embarked upon with no plans of slowing down. Already performing with orchestras across the U.S. and Canada, Mallett just wrapped up his Artist Diploma at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and plans to move to San Francisco to freelance full time after his summer in Aspen.

How did Mallett pick up the harp? "It's a question everyone asks," he jokes. His musical journey began at a young age taking violin lessons using the Suzuki method alongside his four siblings. It was during a rehearsal for *The Nutcracker* in high school, during which he was seated in the violin section directly next to the harp, that Mallett was immediately drawn to the unique and elegant instrument. "There's a bed of resonance that no other instrument has," he explains.

Under the Christmas tree that year was a miniature harp, and Mallett immediately dove in, practicing every day. "It's good for a beginner, but you outgrow it quickly," says Mallett of the fun-sized harp. "Thankfully I had a teacher who advocated for me," he says, and he decided to commit to the instrument, taking extra violin gigs around Dallas to save up for his own full-sized harp. Just two years later, Mallett headed to Southern Methodist University for his undergraduate performance degree, then to Rice for his master's.

"It takes a certain personality [to play the harp]," says Mallett, referencing the fact of the matter: not many people are willing to deal with all of the annoyances that come along with playing the bulky instrument. He has to drive to all of his performances and auditions rather than flying, not to mention wheeling it around on a dolly to get to a gig. Mallett is in it for the long (and heavy) haul, and, in a way, it's actually part of the fun for him: "It's a rare bird, you never see them," says Mallett, who draws large, interested crowds when he sets up his harp to busk in town. (He even squeezed his harp into the gondola to perform at the top of Aspen Mountain for a dazzled audience.)

In Aspen, Mallett enjoys studying with the three harp artist-faculty members, all from top orchestras across the country. "It's very special [to study with three teachers]. No other festival offers that, especially for harp," he says. The orchestral experience performing alongside his teachers is also unmatched. "You can see how thoughtful they are with how they make a phrase, approach the instrument—it's easy to get complacent with how you sound so to have an example of [professional musicians] who are in the field being extremely thoughtful and prepared, even in rehearsal, is very inspirational."

Hear Mallett today in Holst's "The Planets," in which the harp plays an integral role in creating the ethereal soundscape of the timeless work.

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