

Dr. Alison Attar

LONG BIO (600 words)

August 2015

Concert harpist Dr. Alison Attar specializes in contemporary and Baroque music. A champion of new music, Attar performs regularly with numerous new music groups, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNOW, Fulcrum Point and Contempo (formerly Contemporary Chamber Players). One of Attar's greatest joys is working and collaborating with living composers, including George Crumb, Osvaldo Golijov, Sofia Gubaidulina, Marta Ptasznska, Bernard Rands, Laura Schwendinger, Augusta Reed Thomas and Param Vir, among others.

Attar's interest in historical harps, specifically multi-row instruments, has led to performances with Boston Baroque, Boston's Handel & Haydn Society (including a US tour and performances at the 1996 Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, the late Christopher Hogwood conducting, Mark Morris choreography), Chicago Opera Theater, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago's Music of the Baroque and Canada's premiere Baroque orchestra, Tafelmusik. Attar has also performed and recorded with San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Opera Lafayette in Washington D.C.

Additional highlights of Attar's career include the Chicago Symphony's 2014 Beyond the Score project "A Pierre Dream," and two full cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago. She has also performed with the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, Green Bay Symphony Orchestra, Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Ballet, Skylight Music Theatre, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Midsummer's Music Festival (WI) and the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra (FL). Attar toured Taiwan with Chicago's Symphonic Pops Orchestra and served as Principal Harpist for Arnold Roth's Chicagoland Pops Orchestra, where she performed with a myriad of popular singers.

Attar was a founding member of the new music quartet Pinotage. This ground breaking ensemble of mezzo-soprano, flute, viola and harp performed at the Festival of New American Music in California, "Outside the Box" Music Festival in southern Illinois, Sonic Impact at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, as well as for new music festivals at DePaul University, Northern Illinois University and Northwestern University. Pinotage performed on concert series sponsored by American Women Composers, Chicago Composers Consortium, the Jewel Box Series, Mostly Music and Music in Small Places. The quartet recorded the works of Lawrence Axelrod, Kathleen Ginther, Eric Gross, Elizabeth Start and the late Arnold Rosner. Attar was also a founding member of the Marinos Trio, which featured virtuoso mandolinist Dimitris Marinos and guitarist Paul Bowman. The Marinos Trio recorded works by Robert Lombardo and the late William Karlins and debuted at Carnegie's Weil Hall in 1994 with a program of contemporary music. At the onset of her career, Attar founded the popular folk harp duo Iris with colleague Lynelle Kirkwood. Iris, an innovative Celtic harp duo, received rave reviews from audience members: "a duo of extraordinary harpists... Their musical storytelling will send your imagination soaring" boasted one venue. Together as Iris, Attar and Kirkwood performed at the Venetian Festival, Michigan; Irish Fest, Wisconsin; Fox Valley Folk Festival, Illinois; Gebbhard Woods, Illinois and many other venues. They were regular performers and

workshop leaders at regional and national folk harp conferences, and they appeared on several Midwestern radio shows. Their CD *Off the Path* is currently available.

Attar is highly regarded by her colleagues for her professionalism, leadership, versatility, vibrant and expressive sound and her uncanny rhythm. Dr. Alison Attar holds a B.M., M.M., and D.M. in harp performance and a B.A. in Italian culture, all from Northwestern University. Her primary teachers include Elizabeth Cifani, retired Principal Harpist of the Lyric Opera, and Elizabeth Borsodi-Wolkstein of Madison, Wisconsin. She can be heard on over a dozen recordings under the Albany, Cedille, Hungaraton and Mayapple labels, among others and has appeared variously on WFMT and WBEZ radio. Attar resides in a unique conservation community outside of Chicago with her husband, their two children and a menagerie of rescued pets.