

Gretchen Zirbel



City of Residence: Wauwatosa

Instrument: cello

How long have you played with Concord? Since January 2011

What is your earliest musical memory? Listening (many times) to a record of Tubby the Tuba, an introduction of all the orchestral instruments for children.

What is your musical background? I am from a family of seven kids, and my parents made us all play piano, plus another instrument, and practice first half an hour then an hour per instrument to learn discipline. We didn't have much musical outlet in Janesville but Wisconsin Youth Symphony was founded in Madison and my two older brothers were founding members. We all tramped to Madison every Saturday for years for lessons and WYSO. We all went to UW-Madison and all played in the orchestra. My brother is principal horn and my sister and sister-in-law are oboists in Montreal Symphony, a cousin is principal cellist in LA Philharmonic. A sister plays violin in an Evanston community orchestra and another sister sings in a community choir in Boston.

Why do you perform with Concord? As my daughter left for college, and I had a little more time, I was brought to CCO by Beth Getman. I have been very privileged to play in such a quality group and look forward to practices and especially performances, pulling everything together to make great music.

What has been the high point of your involvement with Concord? The Brahms Serenade in D has been one of my favorite works so far but I also loved Morton Gould's American Symphonette, Sibelius Rakastava, the opera aria concert (Lakme's Flower Duet). I have loved playing with such great woodwinds and brass and great direction.

What do you do for a living? Dermatologist

Tell us about your family. My son is a 25-year-old full-time musician who lives in Denver playing and teaching. He plays guitar, pedal steel and lap steel guitar, and plays bluegrass, folk/country, jazz. My daughter attends UW-Madison and played jazz piano through high school.

What are your hobbies besides practicing and playing? I love Italian opera and get to Lyric Opera 2-3 times a year. I play piano and Celtic harp, although less now that I am playing much more cello. I enjoy doing arrangements of American folk songs and old hymns and sacred songs from the 1800s and early 1900s. On piano, I like to play popular music from the 20s and 30s like Cole Porter and Ivor Novello.

What is your favorite recording (any genre): Symphonie fantastique, Berlioz, London Philharmonic

Who is your favorite composer? Giacomo Puccini

What is one thing most people don't know about you? I can't tell left from right.

What is your advice for kids who are interested in music? Practice everyday with a metronome.