

Paula Page, principal harp

Birthplace: Odessa, Texas

Education: Cleveland Institute of Music: Bachelor of Music in Harp Performance

Joined the Houston Symphony: 1984

Beginnings: I was 15 when I started taking harp lessons at the Philadelphia High School for Girls. Since I was already taking piano and voice lessons, my parents were happy that the school had a harp and lessons were free! I was intrigued by the harp when it was demonstrated at a school assembly, and I wanted to find out what it was like to play an orchestral instrument.

Earliest musical memory: I remember watching my father lead the singing at church.

All in the family:

My father, Robert Page, is the Paul Mellon University Professor of Music at Carnegie-Mellon University. He has won two Grammy awards and the Grand Prix du Disque for his work as director of choruses for The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. My mother, Glynn Page, is Professor of Drama Emerita at Carnegie-Mellon. My sister, Carolann Page, is a singer, actress and teacher in New York City and my nephew, Alexander Gemignani, performs on Broadway.

Discovering my vocation: I grew up surrounded by music and experienced the joy my parents got from going to work in that field. So it felt natural for me to become a musician.

Best thing about being a musician: Working with colleagues who are intelligent, interesting and funny, and who share a love of classical music.

The daily grind: The harp is difficult because we have seven pedals to deal with, in addition to playing with our hands. However, the aspect I find the most challenging is the coordination involved in looking up from the music to the conductor and then to the strings. Since we cannot play by touch (as do all other instruments except percussion), we need to develop and maintain quick hand-eye coordination.

Pastime and good company: When I'm not playing the harp or teaching my students, I like to spend time exercising, reading, quilting, cooking or working in my garden. However, life will change dramatically in December when my first grandchild will be born. I expect much of my leisure time will be spent with her.



PHOTOS BY SANDY LANKFORD