

## 85. Michael J. Colburn

*(Burlington, VT, August 21, 1964)*

### **President 2023**



The son of Verne Colburn, a high school band director and commander of the 40<sup>th</sup> Army National Guard Band, and Elizabeth Colburn, an elementary school educator, Michael J. Colburn's first musical love was the euphonium, which he began to play at age ten. He began his post-secondary studies as a music education major at the Crane School of Music in Potsdam, NY, but his strong desire to perform professionally led him to transfer to Arizona State University to study music performance. In 1987 he won a position with "The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band and in 1990 was appointed principal euphonium by Col. John Bourgeois. In 1993 he recorded "The Golden Age of Brass, Vol. 3," a highly acclaimed recording of virtuoso euphonium solos written around the turn of the twentieth century.

While serving in the Marine Band, Colburn earned a master's degree in conducting at George Mason University. In 1996 he was commissioned a first lieutenant and appointed as assistant director of the Marine Band. In this position he worked closely with Col. Timothy Foley and Capt. Frank Byrne in revamping the organization's performance evaluation, promotion process, and educational outreach. He also served as the officer in charge of overseeing the design and construction of the state-of-the-art John Philip Sousa Band Hall at the Marine Band Annex, which was completed in 2004. It was during this time that he established contact with John Williams, beginning a long and fruitful relationship between the Marine Band and the legendary film composer.

In 2004, Colburn was appointed the 27th Director of the Marine Band and was promoted to colonel by President George W. Bush in a private Oval Office ceremony. As director, Colburn served as the music advisor to the White House and regularly conducted the Marine Band and Chamber Orchestra at the Executive Mansion and at the Presidential Inaugurations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama. During his tenure, he led the band for national concert tours, high visibility events, national music conferences, and several highly regarded recordings. He expanded the educational outreach of the organization, implemented a national concerto competition for high school students, started a conductor training program for Marine Band members, and strengthened the relationship between "The President's Own" and Marine Bands throughout the fleet. Shortly before his retirement in 2014 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal by Gen. James Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Medal of Honor by the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic Board of Directors.

Upon his retirement from the Marine Band, Colburn was appointed director of bands at Butler University, a position he held from 2014 until 2022. His duties there included conducting the Butler University Wind Ensemble as well as instructing students in conducting, euphonium, and the history and literature of the wind band. Under Colburn's leadership the program experienced significant growth and the wind ensemble drew strong praise for its ambitious programming and high level of performance.

Committed to the promotion of new music, he has served as the chair of the Sousa-ABA-Ostwald Award and as an adjudicator for the Sudler Award, the Barlow Endowment, Music for All, and the Col. George S. Howard Award for Excellence in Military Bands. Colburn has been a board member of the National Band Association, and currently serves as the vice president for Project Enhancement for the John Philip Sousa Foundation. He is also a member of Washington D.C.'s prestigious Gridiron and Alfalfa Clubs.

In 2022, after a career of pursuing professional opportunities wherever they took him, Colburn and his wife Nancy, also a native of Vermont, decided it was time to go home. They had started dating while in high school band and shared a lifelong desire to return to the beauty of their native state. They now have a home in the Lake Champlain islands which offers not only a view of sun rises over the Green Mountains, but also of their shared hometown of St. Albans. In addition to his work as a freelance guest conductor and clinician, Colburn serves as music director and conductor of The Orchestra of Northern New York, based in Potsdam, and the Me2 Orchestra of Burlington, VT. He also serves as an Affiliate Artist at the University of Vermont and is a member of the Educational Consultant team at the Conn Selmer Division of Education.