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## **Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Announces Barham, Spencer As Directors for New Children's Choir**

*Young Vocalists Must Register by Oct. 20 to Audition*

**LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (Oct. 15, 2025)** — The [Arkansas Symphony Orchestra](#) (ASO) on Wednesday announced the appointment of Shea Barham and Satia Spencer as co-directors of the new ASO Children's Choir, one of several new initiatives of the E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy made possible through a \$1 million grant from Susie and Charles Morgan to expand the orchestra's youth music education programs.

Intended for treble singers in grades 3-6 (ages 8-12), the ASO Children's Choir will give young voices across central Arkansas a new platform to learn, perform and grow together. The choir will make its mainstage debut in the spring as part of ASO's Masterworks production of "[Carmina Burana](#)" and will participate in other performances throughout the concert season.

Choir auditions are scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 25, with registration closing on Monday, Oct. 20. Participation is free during the inaugural year, and interested families can register at [arkansassymphony.org/childrens-choir](https://arkansassymphony.org/childrens-choir).

"I'm thrilled to have Shea and Satia, two of Little Rock's most respected and accomplished music educators, join our team," said Geoffrey Robson. "The ASO Children's Choir will fill what has been a void in the music education sphere in central Arkansas, and it also represents the most accessible entrance point into a lifetime of music-making and music appreciation that we have yet been able to establish here at the ASO's SBS Music Center."

Auditions for the Children's Choir come just a few weeks after ASO announced the Morgans' \$1 million gift to expand ASO music education programming for young people over the next five years. In addition to the Children's Choir, the grant is adding free introductory violin classes to help children discover their musical potential, expanding chamber music coaching, including brass, winds and jazz ensembles, and continuing violin instruction in Title I elementary schools at no cost to students.

### **About Shea Barham**

A multidisciplinary teaching artist with more than two decades of experience performing, guiding and creating with young artists, Barham is a certified PK-12 music teacher with a master's of music in opera performance from Oklahoma City University's Wanda L. Bass School of Music and a background in piano instruction.

Barham teaches at Pulaski Academy, where she will continue to work full-time. She directs the sixth-grade choir and serves as both middle school music teacher and upper school piano lab instructor. An active performer in local theater, she has appeared in productions at Wildwood Park for the Arts, Argenta Contemporary Theatre and Actors Theatre of Little Rock.

#### **About Satia Spencer**

With more than 20 years of teaching and leadership experience, Spencer is a multidisciplinary educator of the arts. She is a certified PreK-12 music specialist and holds a BA in Music Education from the University of Arkansas–Little Rock. She currently serves as an elementary music specialist at Forest Heights STEM Academy, where she founded the FHSA Treble Choir and Music Club and co-directed the LRSD Honor Choir, Voices Without Borders.

Spencer has held leadership roles with arts organizations, including Wildwood Academy of Music and the Arts, MT Stage, and the Arkansas Repertory Theater. A sought-after performer, Satia is recognized regionally and internationally for her versatility across opera, gospel, jazz, and musical theater, including performances with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

#### **About The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra**

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is the leading employer of professional performing artists in Arkansas and is celebrating its 60th season in 2025-2026. The ASO recently opened its first permanent home, the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center, in the East Village between Heifer International and the Clinton Presidential Library. The state's first music center is a radically welcoming hub of musical activity for all Arkansans, housing programs of the E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy, a broadcast studio, and the River Rhapsodies Chamber Music Series. ASO is the resident orchestra at Robinson Center and performs over 60 concerts yearly for more than 165,000 people through its Stella Boyle Smith Masterworks Series, First Orion Pops Series, River Rhapsodies Chamber Music Series, and numerous concerts throughout Arkansas. The E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy reaches over 30,000 Arkansans in over 200 schools from ages 4 to 104 through the string academy, youth ensembles, bucket band, community orchestra, the annual Children's Concert, and more. In 2020, over 1 million people in over 30 countries viewed the ASO musician-led Bedtime with Bach series. The ASO employs 14 full-time musicians, over 70 part-time musicians, and 16 administrative staff members with an annual operating budget of \$4.5 million. The ASO is a member of the League of American Orchestras and a partner orchestra of the National Alliance for Audition Support, an unprecedented national initiative to increase diversity in American orchestras. For more information about the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra call 501-666-1761 or visit [www.arkansassymphony.org](http://www.arkansassymphony.org).

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