

NEWS RELEASE



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Inaugural Wynton M. Blount Patrons of the Arts Award Recipients Announced *Laura and Barrie Harmon receive recognition for supporting arts in Alabama*

MONTGOMERY, Ala., (June 21, 2019) — Alabama Shakespeare Festival is honored to recognize Laura and Barrie Harmon as the inaugural recipients of the Wynton M. Blount Patrons of the Arts Award. The Harmons are leading supporters of the arts and other not-for-profit organizations in the River Region. Barrie has been a longtime member of ASF's Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, and he and Laura have sponsored plays on ASF's stages for decades.

Alabama Shakespeare Festival was founded in Anniston as a summer repertory theatre in 1972 and was proclaimed the State Theatre of Alabama in 1977. In the early 1980s, businessman and philanthropist Wynton M. "Red" Blount began to discuss the pressing need for a longer performance season if ASF were to survive. His proposition involved moving ASF to Montgomery. The Board of Directors agreed to his proposal, and in 1985, ASF moved into a 100,000-square-foot, \$21.5 million complex christened the Carolyn Blount Theatre. At the time, it was the largest single gift in the history of American theatre. With the continued support of patrons like the Harmons, ASF has grown into the largest regional theatre in the Southeast.

"We are gratified but humbled to be the initial recipient of the Wynton M. Blount Patrons of the Arts Award. We both share the same passion for the arts, which has had a tremendous impact on our lives," said the Harmons. "Montgomery is very fortunate to have a diverse and viable art community, and we are certainly proud to be a part of it. Wynton M. Blount, because of his vision and accomplishments, was the standard bearer for all of us to follow. In some aspects of our everyday lives, we are directly or indirectly influenced by art. We are passionate and obligated to continue the legacy established by the Blount family."

Laura and Barrie Harmon will receive the award at Alabama Shakespeare Festival's End o' Summer Night's Gala on August 17.

About Alabama Shakespeare Festival

Alabama Shakespeare Festival is a not-for-profit organization under the direction of Artistic Director Rick Dildine and Executive Director Todd Schmidt. As a beloved Alabama arts institution, ASF broadens the cultural identity of the South by producing Shakespeare, contemporary plays, musicals, and exciting new works that focus on the Southern experience. A leader in education and outreach, ASF serves more than 40,000 students annually with artistic programming. ASF is supported by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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