

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 30, 2026

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Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra Names Jennifer Barbee President and Executive Director

Accomplished orchestra executive and longtime BPO leader will succeed
Daniel Hart following his retirement after 22 years of service



(Photo: Tony Dvorak)

BUFFALO, N.Y. - The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra today announced the appointment of Jennifer J. Barbee as its next President and Executive Director, effective September 1, 2026. Barbee, currently the BPO's Associate Executive Director and Vice President of Development, will succeed Daniel Hart, who is retiring following 22 years of leadership with the orchestra.

Barbee brings more than 25 years of experience in orchestra administration, fundraising, artistic planning, governance, marketing, and community and government relations. She has served the BPO since 2010 and was promoted to Associate Executive Director in 2017. In her current role, she works in partnership with Hart to lead the orchestra's senior management team and guide strategy and operations across the \$15 million organization.

"Jen combines strategic insight and sound judgment with a genuine ability to bring people together around a shared purpose. She understands the BPO's operations, culture, supporters, and community relationships, and she has demonstrated that she can translate ambitious goals into meaningful results. As important, she has earned the trust and respect of the people who make this organization successful. The Board has great confidence in her ability to lead the BPO forward," said Scott Stenclik, chair of the BPO Board of Trustees.

As the BPO's chief development officer, Barbee has led a broad advancement program encompassing annual, capital, planned, corporate, foundation, and government support. Her accomplishments include leading the \$35 million Crescendo Campaign, which helped grow the BPO's endowment to more than \$60 million; supporting the acquisition of the orchestra's administrative headquarters; establishing the \$10 million Next Generation Education Fund; and securing 51 planned gifts totaling more than \$10 million.

During her 15 years at the BPO, Barbee has helped raise \$75 million in annual and operating support and \$15 million in government funding. She also co-directed the \$16 million Keeping It Modern campaign benefiting Kleinhans Music Hall and has cultivated partnerships with cultural, medical, educational, corporate, philanthropic, and government organizations throughout Western New York.

For Barbee, the appointment represents both a professional milestone and an opportunity to serve an orchestra and community that have become her home.

"It is my greatest honor to be selected to lead the BPO because I love this orchestra and this community," Barbee said. "Buffalo is my home, and over the past 15 years, I have had the privilege of seeing firsthand what this orchestra means to our community and what our community means to this orchestra. That relationship is unique and special. The commitment of our musicians, Board, supporters, staff, volunteers, and audiences to creating and celebrating the power of music is extraordinary. Professionally, this is the responsibility of a lifetime, and one I accept with tremendous excitement and confidence in what we can accomplish together."

Beyond fundraising, Barbee has played a central role in institutional planning and governance. She managed the BPO's strategic planning process with trustees, staff, and musicians, culminating in a four-year strategic plan with a 10-year outlook. She works closely with the Board's Executive, Finance, Governance, Development, Artistic, Education, Marketing, and Concert Experience committees and has helped recruit more than 10 classes of BPO trustees.

Barbee also has participated in the organization's annual budgeting process, contributed to artistic planning across the BPO's Classics, Pops, Rock, and special-event programming, and served on the negotiating team for two orchestra collective bargaining agreements. She has overseen numerous artistic and fundraising initiatives, including the BPO's 2022 return to Carnegie Hall, JoAnn Falletta's 20th-anniversary celebration, *EnLIGHTen*, and *Bluebeard's Castle* featuring the artwork of Dale Chihuly. Hart expressed confidence that Barbee's broad experience and ability to build relationships throughout the organization have prepared her to lead the BPO's next chapter.

"After 23 years, I care deeply about the BPO and the people who have made its progress possible. Jen understands that leading an orchestra is ultimately about people: musicians, audiences, staff, trustees, donors, volunteers, and community partners. She has a remarkable ability to build meaningful relationships among them. She is thoughtful, strategic, determined, and deeply committed to the BPO's mission. I have watched her take on increasingly significant responsibilities with confidence and sound judgment, and I know she will lead this organization with both ambition and care."

As President and Executive Director, Barbee will work in partnership with Music Director JoAnn Falletta and the Board of Trustees to establish and carry out the orchestra's strategic vision. She will oversee the BPO's administrative operations, financial sustainability, fundraising, audience development, education and community engagement, labor relations, and the operation of Kleinhans Music Hall. She will also serve as one of the orchestra's principal representatives to donors, civic and government leaders, business partners, the media, and the Western New York community.

Falletta sees her partnership with Barbee as grounded in their shared commitment to artistic excellence and to the BPO's role in the community.

"The strongest partnership between a Music Director and Executive Director begins with a shared vision for what an orchestra can mean to its community. Jen and I share a belief that the BPO must continue to be artistically adventurous, welcoming, and deeply engaged with the people of Buffalo and Western New York. Together, we can support our musicians in reaching new artistic heights while creating more opportunities for people throughout our community to experience the power, beauty, and joy of this extraordinary orchestra."

Before joining the BPO, Barbee served for more than eight years with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, first as Assistant Director of Development and later as Director of Development. In that role, she directed fundraising efforts generating as much as \$5 million annually and led individual, corporate, foundation, and municipal campaigns. Her earlier experience includes positions with the Virginia Arts Festival, Time Life, and the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery.

A classically trained bassoonist, Barbee earned a Bachelor of Music in Bassoon Performance from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and pursued graduate studies in bassoon performance at the University of Colorado Boulder. She also attended Interlochen Arts Academy. Barbee is a fellow of the League of American Orchestras' Executive Leadership Program and completed a John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts management internship with the National Symphony Orchestra. She currently serves as a facilitator and member of the League of American Orchestras' Group 1 and 2 Vice Presidents of Advancement.

Barbee will assume leadership of the BPO from a position of artistic and institutional strength. Working alongside Falletta, the Board, musicians, staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners, she will lead efforts to expand the orchestra's reach and revenue, sustain its artistic distinction, welcome new audiences, and strengthen its role as one of Western New York's leading cultural institutions.

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About the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

Founded in 1935, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra is one of America's most distinguished orchestras and one of Western New York's leading cultural institutions. Under the artistic leadership of Music Director JoAnn Falletta since 1999, the BPO has achieved international recognition through acclaimed performances, touring, broadcasts, and an extensive recording legacy that includes multiple GRAMMY Awards.

The BPO performs at Kleinhans Music Hall, a National Historic Landmark renowned for its architecture and exceptional acoustics. Through its Classics, Pops, Rock, film, family, summer, and special-event programming, as well as a broad portfolio of education and community engagement initiatives, the orchestra brings the transformative power of music to audiences throughout Buffalo and Western New York.

For more information, visit bpo.org.