

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Event: Riders on the Orphan Train

Place:

Time:

Contact:

FREE and Open to the Public – for General Audiences of all ages

Between 1854 and 1929 over 250,000 orphans and unwanted children were taken out of New York City and given away at train stations across America. The last train came to Sulphur Springs, Texas in 1929. This “placing out” system was originally organized by Congregationalist minister Charles Loring Brace and the Children’s Aid Society of New York. His mission was to rid the streets and overcrowded orphanages of homeless children and provide them with an opportunity to find new homes in the developing Midwest. Many of the children were not orphans but “surrendered” by parents too impoverished to keep them. This nearly eighty year experiment in child migration is filled with the entire spectrum of human emotion and reveals a great deal about the successes and failures of the American Dream. Through literature, music, archival photographs, film interviews, informal lecture and audience discussion this virtually untold chapter in American history comes alive. The one-hour multi media program including music, video and a dramatic reading of a novel in progress by award-winning author Alison Moore. Although the program is *about* children it is designed to engage audiences of *all* ages.

Alison Moore, *Humanities Scholar*

Alison Moore, MFA, is a former Assistant Professor of English/Creative Writing in the MFA Creative Writing Program at the University of Arizona and a current Humanities Scholar in Texas. She lives in Austin and is completing a novel on the Orphan Trains with a grant from the Texas Institute of Letters and the Dobie/Paisano Foundation of the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of three books, a new collection of short stories entitled *The Middle of Elsewhere* (Phoenix International/University of Arkansas Press 2006), *Small Spaces between Emergencies* (Mercury House, 1992) one of the Notable Books of 1993 chosen by The American Library Association, and a novel, *Synonym for Love* (Mercury House 1995). In 2004 she received the Katherine Ann Porter Prize for Fiction.

Phil Lancaster, *Presenter/Audio-Visual Technician*

Arkansas Arts on Tour musician Phil Lancaster (Professor Strings) was born in Texarkana and studied art and music at L’Ecole De Beaux Arts in Angers, France. He became a member of a bluegrass band that traveled and played throughout France and produced an album entitled “Bluegrass Oldies Ltd./Traveling Show.” He also worked as a stage theatre technician for La Course Theatre Nationale in La Rochelle, France. After returning to the U.S. he met three Arkansas musicians and the acoustic quartet “Still on the Hill” was formed in Fayetteville. They released their first CD in 1997, the second in 2000. The group performed at national and international festivals. He currently lives in Austin and is a co-presenter of *Riders on the Orphan Train*. In 2007 he received an Arkansas Arts Council fellowship for Music Composition.

“...the program far exceeded any expectations I may have had, as did the community’s response...this was by far the most well-attended program the library has ever offered....everyone who attended was moved, educated and entertained...your program truly made an impact on our community.

--Cecilia Hurt Barham, Decatur Public Library, Decatur, TX

