



Barbara Ann Hendricks

Barbara Hendricks was born on November 20, 1948, in Stephens (Ouachita County), the daughter of Malvin Hendricks, a minister in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, and Della Mae Hendricks, a teacher. She has three siblings. The family was living in Pine Bluff (Jefferson County), where her mother was teaching. In the summer of 1957 Hendricks relocated to North Little Rock (Pulaski County), as her father was preaching at a church there.

Following her father's preaching career, she lived in Chattanooga and Memphis, Tennessee, before coming back to Little Rock (Pulaski County), where Hendricks graduated from Horace Mann High School, where she sang in a choir led by Art Porter Sr. and was crowned homecoming queen in 1964. She enrolled at Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee, in 1965 and transferred to Nebraska Wesleyan University as a chemistry major. She graduated

in 1969 with a BS in mathematics and chemistry.

Barbara Hendricks is an internationally recognized leading lyric soprano. Whether performing light soprano roles in traditional operatic repertory, demanding premieres of twentieth-century vocal music, song recitals, or jazz, Hendricks has been recognized as a leading artist since the mid-1970s. In addition, she is recognized internationally for her work for human rights and world peace.

Her musical activities to that point were in church and civic choirs. She was encouraged to attend the Aspen Music Festival and School in the summer of 1969 and there met the celebrated vocalist and teacher Jennie Tourel, who invited her to study at the Juilliard School in New York City after college. She moved to New York, winning several vocal competitions in the early 1970s and completed a degree in voice from Juilliard in 1973.

Hendricks lived in France and then in Switzerland with her husband, Martin Engstrom, a Swedish pianist and opera house director whom she married in 1978 and with whom she had two children; they divorced in the 1990s. Hendricks performed at an inauguration gala for President Bill Clinton's 1993 inauguration. She received an Honorary Doctor of Music from Juilliard in 2000 and was later inaugurated into the Arkansas Entertainers Hall of Fame.

As she recounted in a 2021 interview with the *Arkansas Times*, witnessing the violence surrounding the desegregation of Central High School changed her life's trajectory.