

OVERVIEW: Spoleto Festival USA has established itself as one of the world's major performing arts festivals.

For 17 days and nights beginning the Friday of Memorial Day weekend, Spoleto Festival USA fills Charleston, South Carolina's historic theaters, churches, and outdoor spaces with performances by renowned artists and emerging performers in disciplines including opera, theater, dance, and symphonic, choral, jazz, and chamber music.

AUDIENCE: Attendance numbers between 70,000 and 80,000 each year.

MISSION: Spoleto Festival USA presents programs of the highest artistic caliber while maintaining a dedication to young artists, a commitment to all forms of the performing arts, a passion for contemporary innovation, and an enthusiasm for providing unusual opportunities for established artists. The Festival produces and presents events featuring a mix of distinguished artists and emerging talent.

One of the Festival's tenets is to provide young performers the opportunity to work with veteran directors, designers, and performers. Artists who performed early in their careers at Spoleto Festival USA include Renée Fleming, Emanuel Ax, Joshua Bell, Yo-Yo Ma, the Emerson String Quartet, and Jean-Yves Thibaudet.

HISTORY: Spoleto Festival USA was founded in 1977 by Gian Carlo Menotti, Christopher Keene, and others as the American counterpart to the annual Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy. A Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, Menotti began the Italian festival in 1958 as a forum for young American artists in Europe. When the organizers of the Festival of Two Worlds planned an American festival, they searched for a city that would offer the charm of Spoleto, Italy, as well as its wealth of theaters, churches, and other performance spaces. Charleston was the ideal location.

PROGRAM: Spoleto Festival USA produces its own operas, specializing in rarely performed masterpieces by well-known composers, American premieres, and traditional works presented in new ways. The Festival also presents theater, dance, and music of all kinds. Nationwide auditions are held for the Festival's resident ensemble, the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra. Permanent fixtures include the Bank of America Chamber Music series, the contemporary Music in Time series, the Wells Fargo Jazz series, the American Express Woolfe Street series, and the First Citizens Bank Front Row series.

LEADERSHIP: Four talented directors are charged with the artistic leadership of Spoleto Festival USA: Resident Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities John Kennedy; Director for Chamber Music Geoff Nuttall; Director of Choral Activities Joe Miller; and General Director Nigel Redden.

PICCOLO: Piccolo Spoleto, the official companion festival to Spoleto Festival USA, is operated by the City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs. Whereas Spoleto Festival USA features artists and performers of national and international acclaim, Piccolo Spoleto highlights outstanding local and regional artists with more than 700 performances scattered throughout the city.

The 2020 season of Spoleto Festival USA takes place May 22 – June 7. For additional information, please visit spoletousa.org.

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