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SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA

2020

PRESS RELEASE

Spoletto at Home: Free Digital Programming Begins Friday, May 22

New and archival content May 22 to June 7, online at spoletousa.org

Featuring:

| Geoff Nuttall's favorite Bank of America Chamber Music programs on South Carolina Public Radio

| Digital *Omar* rehearsal with Rhiannon Giddens, Michael Abels, John Kennedy, and Jamez McCorkle

| Digital concerts: Pedja Muzijevic; Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra members in Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together*, and Linda May Han Oh and Fabian Almazan

| Jazz Talks: Conversation and more with Alicia Hall Moran and Jason Moran, Ben Jaffe of Preservation Hall Jazz Band, and Dr. Michael White

| Jazz workshop: Shannon Powell with students from the Charleston Jazz Academy

May 19, 2020 (Charleston, South Carolina) — Spoleto Festival USA announces 17 days of Spoleto at Home—free digital and radio broadcast programming for audiences to enjoy in lieu of the 2020 season. “When we initially announced the Festival’s cancellation, we received an outpouring of overwhelmingly encouraging, albeit saddened, messages from our audience,” says General Director Nigel Redden. “Artists were similarly disappointed—Spoleto is a highlight of their year. With Spoleto at Home, the Festival seeks to celebrate our community and honor the Festival process to the best of our ability. While gathering in person is not possible, I hope Spoleto at Home programming can bring a small amount of what makes the Festival so special into each of our living rooms, providing a little light in these dark moments.”

Since the Festival’s inception in 1977, the twice-daily chamber music concerts at Dock Street Theatre have been beloved cornerstones of each season, famous for their assemblage of leading musicians and eclectic programming. As such, Spoleto is partnering with South Carolina ETV to produce one of the most robust elements of Spoleto at Home: weekday radio broadcasts of 11 past Bank of America Chamber Music programs, curated by Festival Director of Chamber Music Geoff Nuttall. “There’s nothing like the energy and intimacy of being at the Dock Street Theatre during a chamber music concert at Spoleto,” says

Nuttall. “But these concert broadcasts will take you as close as possible to hearing the magic that happens live. While I absolutely wish we could all be there in person, choosing my top 11 programs of the last decade has been such a gift, and I am overjoyed to be able to relive these special musical moments with the Spoleto audience and South Carolina Public Radio listeners.” Nuttall’s chosen concerts will air Monday through Friday beginning at 11:00am EST on the South Carolina Public Radio program “Sonatas and Soundscapes.” Nuttall will join host Bradley Fuller to introduce each concert and conduct interviews with various performers on air. Those outside of South Carolina can stream the weekday show online at southcarolinapublicradio.org at 11:00am EST; all listeners must tune in at the scheduled time.

One of the most anticipated events of Spoleto’s 2020 season was the world premiere of *Omar*, a new opera commission from Grammy Award winner and MacArthur Fellow Rhiannon Giddens, with co-composer Michael Abels. Based on the 1831 autobiography of Muslim African scholar Omar Ibn Said, the opera traces his spiritual journey from his home in Western Africa through his capture and enslavement in the Carolinas. While the opera will now premiere during the 2021 Festival, Spoleto at Home will provide the public its first preview: on May 22, acclaimed tenor Jamez McCorkle—cast in the central role of Omar Ibn Said—will rehearse with Giddens, Abels, and Festival Resident Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities John Kennedy. This digital rehearsal, marking the first time McCorkle has worked with the opera’s artistic leaders, will be available for viewing on spoletousa.org beginning May 22 and remain online through June 7.

Each season, the Festival assembles an original orchestra that accompanies the opera selections and performs symphonic and chamber concerts throughout the 17-day season. The Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra is central to Festival operations, and it provides a valuable opportunity for young professional musicians to gain extensive performance experience, working alongside Resident Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities John Kennedy and guest conductors. In 2020, the orchestra was slated to engage more than 80 musicians. “It’s disappointing that this year’s ensemble didn’t have the opportunity to coalesce,” says Kennedy. “So in conceiving a virtual project appropriate for this moment, I chose Frederic Rzewski’s *Coming Together*, a work that functions a metaphor for confinement and conditional freedom. Its accompanying text is fragmented into parts, but when gathered and stitched together, it speaks to defiance and resolve.” A digital concert of Rzewski’s *Coming Together*, recorded remotely by members of the would-have-been 2020 Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra, will be available for viewing on spoletousa.org beginning May 30 and remain online through June 7.

Other digital concerts will feature Pedja Muzijevic and jazz duo Linda May Han Oh and Fabian Almazan. A regular during Spoleto’s Bank of America Chamber Music series, Muzijevic is a master pianist whose recent engagements include performances for the Orchestra of St. Luke’s Bach Festival in

New York, Lincoln Center's White Light Festival, and at New York's 92Y. His Spoleto at Home concert will feature three works played from his home in New York: J. S. Bach's Partita in C minor, BWV 826; Henry Cowell's Aeolian Harp; and C.P.E. Bach's Sonata in G minor, Wq. 65/17. Muzijevic will introduce each work. This concert will be available for viewing on spoletousa.org beginning May 24 and remain online through June 7.

Bassist Linda May Han Oh and pianist Fabian Almazan were scheduled to play four performances during this year's Wells Fargo Jazz series. In this recorded concert from their shared home, Oh (on acoustic bass) and Almazan (on the piano) will give listeners a taste of their creative work together as well as discuss their environmental advocacy within the music industry. The concert will be available for viewing on spoletousa.org June 3 – 7.

During a typical season, jazz critic and Spoleto's Wells Fargo Jazz advisor Larry Blumenfeld regularly interviews musicians for a series of free Jazz Talks. These discussions aim to illuminate the perspectives of various artists slated to perform. For Spoleto at Home, Blumenfeld will host three exciting Jazz Talks—featuring conversation and bits of musical performance. Blumenfeld will speak with Ben Jaffe, bandleader of Preservation Hall Jazz Band (available for viewing May 23 – June 7); pianist Jason Moran and singer Alicia Hall Moran, producers of the multidisciplinary work *Two Wings: The Music of Black America in Migration* (May 26 – June 7); and clarinet virtuoso Dr. Michael White, a leading expert of New Orleans jazz icon Danny Barker (May 29 – June 7).

In recent years, Spoleto has partnered with the Charleston Jazz Academy to facilitate master classes with Wells Fargo Jazz artists as part of Spoleto ETC (Engaging the Community)—the Festival's education and community outreach program that aims to build audiences and encourage artistic learning. This year, drummer Shannon Powell, who had been slated to perform with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and as part of the New Orleans Jazz Celebration, will lead a virtual workshop with academy students. The class will be available for Spoleto at Home viewing May 31 – June 7.

A full outline of Spoleto at Home programming follows. For a complete Bank of America Chamber Music concert schedule, visit spoletousa.org. All events are free and available for viewing without pre-registration.

Spoleto at Home program details, in chronological order

All events are free and available without pre-registration.

Bank of America Chamber Music Concerts on “Sonatas and Soundscapes”

South Carolina Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org

May 22, 25 – 29, June 1 – 5

11:00am – 1:00pm Monday through Thursday; 11:00am – 12:00pm Friday

Spoletto Festival USA has long partnered with SCETV and South Carolina Public Radio: the radio station records Spoletto’s full Bank of America Chamber Music series for statewide and national broadcast. During previous Festivals, the radio program “Sonatas and Soundscapes” recorded live episodes in Charleston, with host Bradley Fuller speaking to various Festival artists. Despite this year’s remote operations, Spoletto artists will still be featured on air, and Festival Director of Chamber Music Geoff Nuttall will serve as a “Sonatas and Soundscapes” co-host. Nuttall has selected 11 of his past favorite programs, and each will play, in its entirety, on air beginning at 11:00am, Monday through Friday. Nuttall will provide commentary, and he and Fuller will interview various Spoletto artists. A full schedule of programming can be found at spoletousa.org.

Additionally, the station will be reviving its popular podcast, *Spoletto Backstage*: 11 weekly episodes, beginning May 22, will feature extended interviews and behind-the-scenes perspectives with “longtime performers as well as Spoletto newcomers who were anticipating Festival debuts,” describes Fuller.

Digital Rehearsal: *Omar*

Rhiannon Giddens, librettist, co-composer

Michael Abels, co-composer

John Kennedy, conductor

Jamez McCorkle, tenor

spoletousa.org

Available beginning May 22 at 5:00pm

In the first public preview of *Omar*, acclaimed tenor Jamez McCorkle rehearses music from the forthcoming opera, in which he will sing as the central role of Omar Ibn Said. This workshop marks the first time he will work with many of the opera’s artistic leaders, including Rhiannon Giddens, Michael Abels, and Festival Resident Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities John Kennedy. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and a member of the prestigious International Opera Studio in Zürich, McCorkle made his Spoletto Festival USA debut in 2017, when he sang the role of Lensky in *Eugene*

Onegin. During the rehearsal, McCorkle will sing selections from the opera and receive feedback from the team.

Co-commissioned and co-produced by Spoleto Festival USA and Carolina Performing Arts at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Omar* will premiere during the 2021 season of Spoleto Festival USA. Based on the 1831 autobiography of Omar Ibn Said, an enslaved Muslim African scholar, the opera's narrative traces Ibn Said's spiritual journey from his life in West Africa to his enslavement in the Carolinas. In 1807, at age 37, he was transported to Charleston—where more than 100,000 West Africans were brought to America before the importation of slaves was banned in 1808. Upon arrival in the United States, Ibn Said was sold to a Charlestonian, but escaped and fled to North Carolina, where he was recaptured, sent to jail, and then resold to James Owen, the brother of one of the state's governors. Ibn Said penned his autobiography in Arabic in 1831. It is considered the only surviving, unedited autobiography of an enslaved Muslim written in Arabic in the United States.

The Festival first tapped Grammy Award winner and Rhiannon Giddens to compose the opera and write the libretto in 2017. American composer Michael Abels is working closely with Giddens to develop the score, which incorporates West-African traditions with conventional Western opera instrumentation. Festival Resident Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities John Kennedy is conducting *Omar*, and Charlotte Brathwaite is directing. The opera will premiere during the 2021 season at the College of Charleston Sottile Theatre.

Jazz Talk: Preservation Hall Jazz Band

Larry Blumenfeld, host

Ben Jaffe, bass, tuba, percussion

spoletousa.org

Available beginning May 23 at 5:00pm

In this conversation-meets-performance, Larry Blumenfeld speaks with Ben Jaffe of Preservation Hall Jazz Band, a group which had been slated to open Spoleto Festival USA's Wells Fargo Jazz series during the 2020 season. The conversation will touch on the band's legacy, as the group has kept the torch of New Orleans music aloft for more than 50 years. Jaffe is the band's leader, as well as the son of the Preservation Hall's founders Allan and Sandra Jaffe. Established in 1961, Preservation Hall Jazz Band broke racial boundaries to present the legends of New Orleans music, living links to the origins of jazz. Today, with an ensemble whose ages range nearly 60 years, the septet's mission remains the same: to pass on the traditions while continually revitalizing it with fresh ideas.

Digital Concert: Pedja Muzijevic

Pedja Muzijevic, piano

spoletousa.org

Available beginning May 24 at 7:00pm

In this concert, self-recorded in Pedja Muzijevic's New York City living room, the master pianist plays J. S. Bach's Partita in C minor, BWV 826; Henry Cowell's Aeolian Harp; and C.P.E. Bach's Sonata in G minor, Wq. 65/17. Muzijevic will introduce each work. A Festival favorite during Bank of America Chamber Music series since 2001 and will appear in several programs broadcast on South Carolina Public Radio's "Sonatas and Soundscapes" (see schedule at spoletousa.org).

Defining his career with creative programming, unusual combinations of new and old music, and lasting collaborations with artists and ensembles, Muzijevic's recent performance highlights include the world premiere of *Framing Time*, a collaboration with dancer/choreographer Cesc Gelabert and lighting designer Burke Brown on music of Morton Feldman for Lincoln Center's White Light Festival in New York, as well as the world premiere of Jonathan Berger's chamber opera *Leonardo* at New York's 92Y. Muzijevic's solo recordings include *Haydn Dialogues*—four Haydn sonatas interspersed with works by Jonathan Berger, John Cage and Morton Feldman—and *Sonatas and Other Interludes*, juxtaposing Sonatas and Interludes by John Cage with composers ranging from Bach and Scarlatti to Liszt and Schumann. Muzijevic is also the artistic administrator at Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York, artistic advisor to Tippet Rise Arts Center in Montana, and directs a residency at the Banff Centre in Canada called "Concert in 21stCentury."

Jazz Talk: The Morans

Larry Blumenfeld, host

Alicia Hall Moran, mezzo soprano

Jason Moran, piano

Julie Dash, special guest

spoletousa.org

Available beginning May 26 at 5:00pm

In this conversation-meets-performance, Larry Blumenfeld speaks with Jason Moran and Alicia Hall Moran. The pair had been slated to present *Two Wings: The Music of Black America in Migration* during

Spoletto's 2020 season. Joining them will be filmmaker Julie Dash, who had been scheduled to appear in the Charleston edition of *Two Wings*. This multidisciplinary program, which premiered at Carnegie Hall in March 2019, explores the Great Migration, the 60-year era marking the passage of six million African Americans from the rural South to northern cities and beyond. For the work, the Morans draw on their own family lore and pair stories from the historic moment with music from rhythm and blues to gospel, classical to Broadway, work songs to rock, and more.

Mezzo-soprano and composer Alicia Hall Moran is a trained vocalist who made her Broadway debut in the Tony-winning revival of *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* before starring as Bess in the celebrated 20-city American tour. She has been commissioned by such institutions as MoMA, The Kitchen, and Art Public / Art Basel Miami; collaborators include Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, guitarist Bill Frisell, the band Harriet Tubman, and visual artist Carrie Mae Weems—with whom she performed at Spoleto Festival USA in 2016.

Jazz pianist, composer, and visual artist Jason Moran has been awarded fellowships from the MacArthur Foundation, United States Artists, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and Ford Foundation. Moran has produced 15 albums and composed scores for Ava DuVernay's films *Selma* and *13th* as well as Ta-Nehisi Coates's stage version of *Between the World and Me*. His historical piece about Fats Waller, *Fats Waller Dance Party*, was performed at Spoleto Festival USA in 2016. Moran is currently the artistic director of Jazz at the Kennedy Center, programs concerts for Park Avenue Armory, and teaches at New England Conservatory.

Jazz Talk: New Orleans Jazz with Dr. Michael White

Larry Blumenfeld, host

Michael White, clarinet

spoletousa.org

Available beginning May 29 at 5:00pm

In this conversation-meets-performance, Larry Blumenfeld speaks with Dr. Michael White, eminent clarinetist who had been scheduled to lead the New Orleans Jazz Celebration as part of the 2020 season of Spoleto Festival USA. The evening concert was organized in tribute to New Orleans jazz icon Danny Barker, a performer and educator who was largely responsible for a resurgence in the New Orleans brass band tradition in the 1970s.

A clarinet virtuoso, White is an expert in the field of traditional New Orleans jazz. He also regularly tours with his group Original Liberty Jazz Band, and has performed with such artists as Wynton

Marsalis, Lionel Hampton, and Marcus Roberts. He received a National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment of the Arts in 2008.

Digital Concert: *Coming Together*

Conducted by John Kennedy

Spoletto Festival USA Orchestra

spoletousa.org

Available beginning May 30 at 5:00pm

Under the remote baton of Festival Resident Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities John Kennedy, members of the Spoletto Festival USA Orchestra perform Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together*. Composed in the wake of the 1971 Attica prison riots, the minimalist work is inspired by a letter written by Sam Melville during his time behind bars before he was killed in the riots. The work, says Kennedy, "functions a metaphor for confinement and conditional freedom. Its text is fragmented in parts, but when gathered and stitched together, it speaks to defiance and resolve." This concert features 11 musicians recorded over Zoom: Chava Appiah (cello); Omri Barak (trumpet); Nico Chona (clarinet); Joey Guidry (bassoon); Abigail Hong (violin); Sidney Hopson (percussion); Austin Lewellen (double bass); Alfonso Noriega (viola); Shannon Vandzura (flute); Ye Young Yoon (percussion); Renate Rohlfing (piano).

About the Spoletto Festival USA Orchestra: Assembled anew each year through nationwide auditions, the Festival's resident ensemble accompanies each season's opera selections and symphonic concerts. Smaller ensembles participate in choral, chamber, and contemporary music performances. The Spoletto Festival USA Orchestra works closely with Resident Conductor and Director Orchestral Activities John Kennedy as well as guest conductors and composers. Learn more [here](#).

Digital Concert: Linda May Han Oh and Fabian Almazan

Linda May Han Oh, acoustic bass

Fabian Almazan, piano

spoletousa.org

Available beginning June 3 at 5:00pm

Recording from their home in New York, bassist Linda May Han Oh and pianist Fabian Almazan will give a short concert as well as discuss their environmental advocacy within the music industry. They had been slated to perform four concerts during Spoletto's 2020 season, exploring the sonic possibilities with Oh on

both electric and acoustic bass (and vocals) and Almazan at the acoustic piano, utilizing a variety of electro-acoustic techniques to sculpt the instrument's sound.

Cuban American pianist Fabian Almazan and Australian bassist Linda May Han Oh first met in 2006 while pursuing master's degrees at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City. Soon thereafter, Oh joined the bands of Dave Douglas, Joe Lovano, and Pat Metheny, among others, while Almazan played with the likes of Terence Blanchard, Mark Guiliana, and Ambrose Akinmusire. In 2019, the Jazz Journalists Association named Oh the Up-and-Coming Artist of the Year; she was also the recipient of Chamber Music America's New Jazz Works Grant. The founder and director of Biophilia Records, Almazan works to ensure a continued awareness concerning the music industry and environmental justice. Almazan and Oh have recorded seven albums of each other's music and together have toured internationally.

Spoletto at Home: Schedule

Friday, May 22

11:00am – 12:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

7:00pm: Digital Omar Rehearsal | *Viewing link will be available at 7:00pm on Friday, May 22, and remain available through June 7.*

Saturday, May 23

5:00pm: Jazz Talk: Ben Jaffe of Preservation Hall Jazz Band | *Viewing link will be available at 5:00pm on Saturday, May 23, and remain available through June 7.*

Sunday, May 24

7:00pm: Digital Concert: Pedja Muzijevic | *Viewing link will be available at 7:00pm on Sunday, May 24, and remain available through June 7.*

Monday, May 25

11:00am – 1:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

Tuesday, May 26

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11:00am – 1:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

5:00pm: Jazz Talk: The Morans | *Viewing link will be available at 5:00pm on Tuesday, May 26, and remain available through June 7.*

Wednesday, May 27

11:00am – 1:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

Thursday, May 28

11:00am – 1:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

Friday, May 29

11:00am – 12:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

5:00pm: Jazz Talk: New Orleans Jazz with Dr. Michael White | *Viewing link will be available at 5:00pm on Friday, May 29, and remain available through June 7.*

Saturday, May 30

5:00pm: Digital Concert: Coming Together | *Viewing link will be available at 5:00pm on Saturday, May 30, and remain available through June 7.*

Sunday, May 31

5:00pm: Jazz Workshop with Shannon Powell | *Viewing link will be available at 5:00pm on Sunday, May 31, and remain available through June 7.*

Monday, June 1

11:00am – 1:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

Tuesday, June 2

11:00am – 1:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

Wednesday, June 3

11:00am – 1:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

5:00pm: Digital Concert: Linda May Han Oh and Fabian Almazan | *Viewing link will be available at 5:00pm on Wednesday, June 3, and remain available through June 7.*

Thursday, June 4

11:00am – 1:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

Friday, June 5

11:00am – 12:00pm: Chamber Music on SC Public Radio | *Listen LIVE at 11:00am EST on SC Public Radio or southcarolinapublicradio.org.*

Saturday, June 6

All digital content available for viewing through June 7.

Sunday, June 7

All digital content available for viewing through June 7.

Spoletto Festival USA

Founded in 1977, Spoleto Festival USA is an annual 17-day performing arts festival in Charleston, SC, that presents leading artists in classical and popular music, opera, jazz, dance, and theater. The 2021 season takes place May 28 to June 13 in various locations on the downtown peninsula. Spoleto Festival USA is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization.

Images

A selection of high resolution images can be found in Spoleto Festival USA's [online gallery](#).

For more information, visit the [press room](#).