

Note: Images are available in the [online media gallery](#).

SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA

2020

PRESS RELEASE

Nigel Redden to Retire as General Director of Spoleto Festival USA

September 24, 2020 (Charleston, South Carolina) — Nigel Redden announced that in October 2021, he will step down as General Director of Spoleto Festival USA. “The cancellation of the 2020 Festival and the enforced isolation of the last several months have made me realize that, after nearly 35 years since I first joined Spoleto Festival USA, it is time for me to retire. The Festival continues to mean an enormous amount to me—my first real job was working as a *studente assistente* at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, starting in 1969. I have no doubt the Festival will continue to thrive, and I will be excited to see how the organization evolves under new leadership.”

He further commented, “It has been an exciting adventure with many, many highlights. The exploration of Charleston in the exhibition Places with a Past was a revealing and provocative way to view this fascinating city, and Charleston continues to offer an unparalleled festival setting given its beauty and history. Hearing Renee Fleming, Joshua Bell, Alisa Weilerstein, and so many other artists at the beginnings of their careers was thrilling. Watching audiences dedicate their time to *The Peony Pavilion*—an 18½-hour-long opera sung in Chinese—was a testament to the wonderful public that the Festival attracts. It was a privilege to see productions from the Gate Theatre, Druid, Complicite, Shakespeare’s Globe, Kneehigh, and the Royal Shakespeare Company in the intimacy of Dock Street Theatre. I am especially looking forward to seeing *Omar*, our commissioned opera from Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels that was supposed to premiere this year and will now open our 2021 season.”

Spoleto Festival USA was founded in 1977 as an American counterpart to the annual Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto Italy. Redden first joined the Festival in 1986 as General Manager. He resigned in 1991, leaving the organization with assets of approximately \$1.5 million, and returned in 1995 after the Festival had suffered significant deficits. During his tenure, the Festival built endowments; was involved in the renovations of Festival Hall (formerly Memminger Auditorium), Dock Street Theatre, Charleston Gaillard Center, and College of Charleston’s Sottile Theatre; commissioned numerous artists; and staged many world and US premieres. Contemporary composers whose operas were given American or world premieres include Guo Wenjing, Huang Ruo, Philip Glass, Wolfgang Rihm, Kaija Saariaho, Liza Lim, Toshio Hosakawa, Pascal Dusapin, Luca Francesconi, Helmut Lachenmann, and Michael Nyman.

Revivals of operas by Ottorino Respighi, Walter Braunfels, Christoph Willibald Gluck, and Antonio Vivaldi, among others, were also given US premieres. Works by Carrie Mae Weems, Edmund Thornton Jenkins, Amos Gitai, Suzanne Andrade, and Ayodele Casel, among others, received world premieres.

Bill Medich, Chairman of the Board of Spoleto Festival USA, thanked Redden for his long years of service to the organization. “Nigel Redden has been an inspirational leader for the Festival,” he said. “Under his leadership, Spoleto has become known as America’s premier performing arts festival, fulfilling its mission each year to present the best possible program while contributing to the development of young artists and proving a commitment to all forms of the performing arts. He has demonstrated an incredible talent for bringing together important stakeholders, including artists, arts administrators, volunteers, donors, the City of Charleston, and the College of Charleston—all necessary to annually produce the Festival. In 1995, Spoleto was burdened by an accumulated deficit of \$3.5 million. Nigel returned to lead the organization out of that crisis and into its current solid financial condition with various endowments of over \$16 million and real estate holdings that include the Festival headquarters, a theater, and scene shop. This stable financial status was produced while presenting ambitious, challenging, and far-reaching performances and exhibitions.”

Festival Resident Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities John Kennedy, who has worked with Redden since 1990 and will be conducting *Omar*, lauds Redden’s unwavering support of artists. “Nigel has brought to the Festival a perspective rooted in a love for Charleston and a love for the arts,” he says. “In addition to his broad and generous view of what the arts can be, he possesses a deep knowledge of history and global culture, which has had an enduring impact on Spoleto’s programming and ethos. He is an unfailing ally of artists, encouraging us to take chances and placing faith in our dreams.”

Redden’s notice provides the Festival more than a year to identify a successor, and the Festival will begin a search immediately. Adds Medich: “Nigel’s successful tenure, along with the Festival’s sterling reputation and organizational and financial strength, puts Spoleto Festival USA in a position to attract the highest caliber candidates.”

Nigel Redden

Nigel Redden is the general director of Spoleto Festival USA. He rejoined the Festival in October 1995 after having previously served as the Festival’s general manager from 1986 to 1991. Redden also served as director of the Lincoln Center Festival from 1998 to September 2017. Between 1991 and 1995, he served as executive director of the Santa Fe Opera.

As general director, Redden is responsible for all aspects of the Festival, including programming, fund-raising, financial administration, marketing, union negotiations, artists' contracts, board development, and community relations. He has also served as artistic consultant to Philadelphia's American Music Theater Festival (1992-1994) and consultant to the chairperson of the New York International Festival of the Arts (1991-1992). He was director of the National Endowment for the Arts' Dance Program from 1981 to 1986 and has served on various NEA panels over the years.

Redden is president of the Spaulding-Paolozzi Foundation and serves on the board of Druid Theatre. He was awarded the Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters in 2001.

The son of an American diplomat, Redden was born in Nicosia, Cyprus. He graduated from Yale University in 1972 with a degree in Art History. He is married to Arlene Shuler and they have two adult children.

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.

Download the [Spoletto Festival USA press kit](#).

Images

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

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