

SP LET O

FESTIVAL
USA

Est. 1977
Charleston, South Carolina

Spoleto Festival USA

AMERICA'S PREMIER PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL

For 17 days and nights each spring, Spoleto Festival USA fills Charleston, South Carolina, with performances in opera, theater, dance, and music—from orchestral and chamber to choral, jazz, and folk.



“The most comprehensive
festival of its kind on the
continent” — *Toronto Star*

HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP

In the 1970s, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Gian Carlo Menotti** sought an American counterpart to the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, which he had founded in 1958. Looking for a city with similar charms as well as a wealth of performance spaces, Menotti settled on Charleston, relishing its intimacy, enchantment, and, in his words, “unique beauty.” With invaluable support from a young Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. and College of Charleston’s then-president Theodore Stern, the Festival held its first season in 1977.

Since then, Spoleto has served as a catalyst for cultural change, aiding in Charleston’s flourishing as a top destination. Following Menotti’s departure in the early 1990s, **Nigel Redden**, who had previously served as General Manager from 1986 to 1991, took the helm as

General Director in 1995. Under his stewardship, Redden secured Spoleto’s preeminent foothold in the international performing arts landscape through artistic commissions and the staging of US and world premieres. Locally, with support from the city and generous donors, Redden and Spoleto spearheaded the renovations of numerous performance spaces: Festival Hall, Dock Street Theatre, College of Charleston Sottile Theatre, and the Charleston Gaillard Center.

In October 2021, **Mena Mark Hanna** succeeded Redden as General Director, promising to continue Spoleto’s legacy of presenting exemplary, innovative work that showcases and celebrates the breadth of artistic expression while maintaining a year-round commitment to the Charleston community.



MENA MARK HANNA
GENERAL DIRECTOR



JOHN KENNEDY
RESIDENT CONDUCTOR
AND DIRECTOR OF
ORCHESTRAL ACTIVITIES



GEOFF NUTTALL
THE CHARLES E. AND ANDREA L. VOLPE
DIRECTOR OF CHAMBER MUSIC



JOE MILLER
DIRECTOR OF CHORAL ACTIVITIES

“Spoleto Festival USA put Charleston on the map.”
— *The Post & Courier*

SPOLETO BY THE NUMBERS



- 1977 Inaugural season
- 17 days of the Festival, beginning Memorial Day weekend
- 65k audience members in attendance annually
- 50% attendees live outside of Charleston area
- 49 states represented in the audience
- 16 countries represented in the audience
- \$42.7M annual economic impact
- 500 full-time, part-time, and seasonal staffers
- 80 musicians in the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra
- 50 singers in the Spoleto Festival USA Chorus
- 60 apprentices in arts administration and production
- 450 seasonal volunteers
- 150 typical season performances
- 10+ Charleston venues used

“Spoleto’s lineup is always tantalizingly diverse and talent-packed.” — *Departures*

THE WORK AND THE ARTISTS

Spoletto Festival USA produces its own operas, specializing in rarely performed masterpieces, American premieres, and traditional works presented in new ways. Spoleto has produced and/or presented 20 opera, dance, and theater world premieres.

MAJOR WORKS INCLUDE:

Tennessee Williams's ***Creve Coeur***;
Arthur Miller's ***The American Clock***;
Urban Bush Women's ***Praise House***;
Philip Glass's ***Hydrogen Jukebox***;
Lee Breuer's ***Lulu Noire***;
Huang Ruo's ***Paradise Interrupted***;
Carrie Mae Weems's ***Grace Notes: Reflections for Now***;
Ayodele Casel's ***While I Have the Floor***.

Spoletto's newest commissioned opera, ***Omar***, with music by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels, received its world premiere in 2022.

The Festival provides a platform for young performers to work alongside established masters. Illustrious artists who performed at Spoleto early in their careers include, among others, pianist **Emanuel Ax**, violinist **Joshua Bell**, soprano **Renée Fleming**, cellist **Yo-Yo Ma**, actor and performance artist **Taylor Mac**, vocalist **Cécile McLorin Salvant**, soprano **Jennifer Rowley**, pianist **Jean-Yves Thibaudet**, and dancer **Jawole Willa Jo Zollar**.

“It will not be like most festivals... but a unique and fertile ground for the young, and a dignified home for the masters.” — *Gian Carlo Menotti*



PARADISE INTERRUPTED, 2015

CARRIE MAE WEEMS'S *GRACE NOTES: REFLECTIONS FOR NOW*, 2016



SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA ORCHESTRA

One of the country's most prestigious ensembles for young professional musicians, the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra serves as the Festival's orchestra in residence. It accompanies Spoleto's opera selections and symphonic concerts, and smaller ensembles are selected to participate in choral, chamber, and contemporary performances.

Assembled anew each year through nationwide auditions, the Festival's Orchestra takes on a dynamic new identity with the participation of both returning and new musicians. Each musician is selected for his or her skill, artistry, and versatility, and the resulting group of talented and diverse young professionals is consistently lauded in the press.

LEADERSHIP

Festival Resident Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities **John Kennedy**

MEMBERS

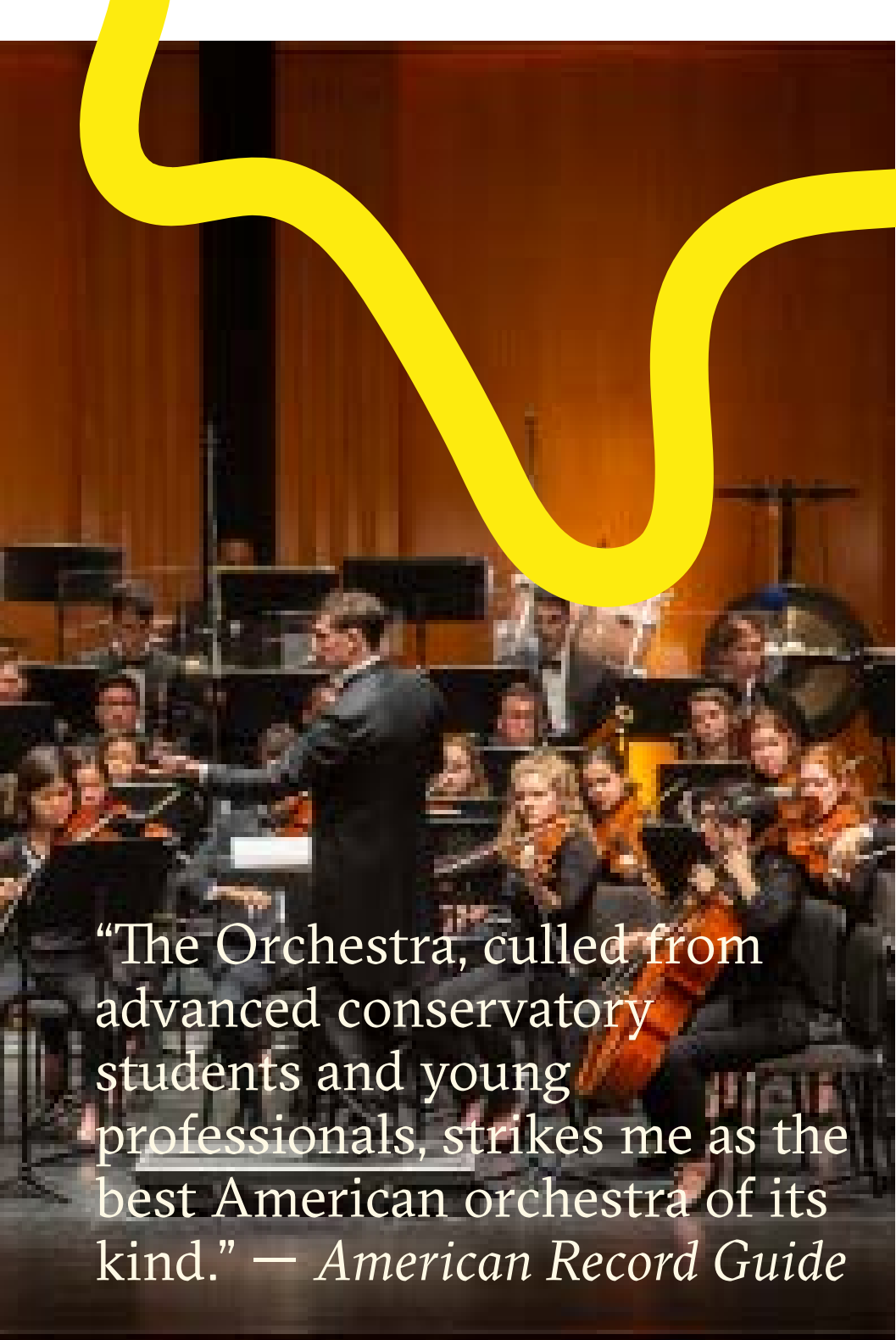
80 – 90, depending on the season

PERFORMANCES

Members work with Kennedy and guest conductors and composers. In recent seasons: Steven Sloane, Michael Gordon, Evan Rogister, Liza Lim, Stefan Asbury, Helmut Lachenmann, Anne Manson, Duane Davis, Huang Ruo, William Eddins, Michael Nyman, Joseph Young, and Aik Khai Pung.

CAREERS

Many alumni play in leading ensembles across the country including the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and The Philadelphia Orchestra.



“The Orchestra, culled from advanced conservatory students and young professionals, strikes me as the best American orchestra of its kind.” — *American Record Guide*

SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA CHORUS

Led by Joe Miller, Spoleto's Director of Choral Activities, the Festival Chorus was established in 2021, building upon a long tradition of choral excellence at the Festival. For many years, students of the Westminster Choir served as Spoleto's choir in residence; vocal fellows now stem from students and recent graduates of conservatories, colleges, and choral programs across the country.

Each of the vocal fellows is selected by Miller through nationwide auditions. The professional chorus comprises roughly 50 singers, though the number fluctuates depending on the season's repertory and needs. The singers have the opportunity to perform in major choral works, as well as in the chorus and in small roles (and as covers for large roles) of Spoleto's mainstage operas. Select choristers perform in smaller chamber choral concerts and take part in special projects, such as Music in Time concerts.

LEADERSHIP

Festival Director of Choral Activities **Joe Miller**

MEMBERS

50, depending on the season

PERFORMANCES

Vocal fellows have worked with Miller and guest conductors and composers. In recent seasons: Vinroy Brown, Jr., Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels, and Kensho Watanabe, among others.



SPOLETO ETC (ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY)

Spoletto Festival USA's founding purpose to provide a fertile ground of experimentation, exploration, and artistic learning extends far beyond its stages. Vital to the Festival's endurance are its endeavors to engage audiences across a broad spectrum. With programming that includes sending artists into schools, holding public discussions, and organizing workshops for budding artists, the Festival aims to spark connections and leave lasting impressions. Spoleto ETC comprises three avenues:

Tailored education programs to instill artistic curiosity and inspire audiences of the future.

This includes artists visiting area schools as well as students visiting Festival venues. Spoleto artists also work with independent student-focused organizations, such as the Charleston Jazz Academy and the College of Charleston's arts management program.

Community engagement programs to encourage participation and remove barriers.

This includes free discussions before the Festival (like the Salon Series and Exploring Omar) and Artist Talks during the Festival (Conversations With and Jazz Talks). Each season, Spoleto also provides more than 800 free tickets to local nonprofits through Open Stage Door and offers Azure Concerts designed for individuals with autism spectrum disorder or similar challenges.

Programs for the professional advancement of young artists and arts administrators.

This includes the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra; the Spoleto Festival USA Chorus; and Spoleto's Apprentice Program, a short-term internship opportunity for college-age students.



PICCOLO SPOLETO

A companion to Spoleto Festival USA, this regional celebration of the arts and local community features hundreds of free and modestly priced events with a focus on accessibility and participation in the arts. Piccolo Spoleto is operated by the City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs.

Visit piccolospoleto.com.