

SPOLETO — FESTIVAL USA

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For immediate release

America's premier performing arts festival announces full 47th season program

More than 100 events showcase innovative, emerging artists alongside distinguished luminaries

May 26–June 11 in Charleston, South Carolina

Tickets on sale today, beginning at 10:00am EST; spoletousa.org or 843.579.3100

SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

- A **memorial concert** and benefit in honor of Spoleto's late Director of Chamber Music **Geoff Nuttall** (1965–2022)
- **Samuel Barber and Gian Carlo Menotti's** psychological opera **Vanessa** returns to Spoleto after 45 years, directed by **Rodula Gaitanou** and starring **Nicole Heaston**
- Tony Award winner **Denis O'Hare** performs a one-man tour de force in **An Iliad**, based on Homer's epic poem
- Three-concert Orchestra showcase features **guest conductors Mei-Ann Chen and Jonathon Heyward**, and the **US premiere of Philip Glass's Symphony No. 14**, under the baton of **John Kennedy**
- Distinguished jazz icons **Henry Threadgill** and **Abdullah Ibrahim** as well as next-generation talent **Immanuel Wilkins** and **Courtney Bryan**, in five-concert residencies
- Charleston's **Quentin Baxter** takes centerstage with his quintet, plus artistic homecomings for conductor Jonathon Heyward and **pianist Micah McLaurin**
- Grammy-winning bluegrass trio **Nickel Creek—Chris Thile, Sara Watkins, and Sean Watkins—**perform two nights
- **US premieres** of *Out of Chaos* from Australian physical theater troupe **Gravity & Other Myths** and *The Book of Life*, a theater production by **Odile Gakire Katese with Ignoma Nshya**, the first female drumming ensemble of Rwanda
- Tap choreographer **Ayodele Casel** as well as the **Scottish Ballet** offer riveting new works, plus South African choreographer **Dada Masilo's The Sacrifice**
- The Wells Fargo Festival Finale at Firefly Distillery, featuring **Tank and the Bangas**

January 27, 2023 (Charleston, SC) — Spoleto Festival USA General Director and CEO Mena Mark Hanna today announced programming for the 47th season of America's premier performing arts festival, taking place May 26

to June 11, 2023, in Charleston, South Carolina. This 17-day celebration of international arts and culture features more than 100 events in venues throughout the city. **Tickets, starting at \$25, are available for purchase today, January 27, at 10:00am EST**, online at spoletousa.org or by calling 843.579.3100.

Marking Hanna's sophomore Festival, the 2023 season underscores the unique essence of Spoleto Festival USA: an innovative, multidisciplinary performing arts festival. "Spoleto has a rich legacy of drawing multihyphenates—artists who are boundless inventors, eager to explore new expressions through collaboration and experimentation," says **Hanna**. "This season exemplifies reinvention. As the Festival hones its singular position in the arts and culture landscape, the works produced and presented here electrify the status quo, defying both convention and classification."

Each spring, Spoleto transforms Charleston into a global epicenter for the performing arts, this season drawing artists and companies from more than 10 countries. "Charleston is a port city—a collision of different cultures," continues Hanna. "Spoleto epitomizes this idea, yet also adds to it a dynamism of artistic endeavors that are at once timely and universal. Works reinvent age-old stories for this time and place—from a South African choreographer's redux of *The Rite of Spring* to an American actor's vivid adaptation of Homer's *Iliad*."

The season opens with a **concert celebrating the life and indelible impact of Spoleto's late Director of Chamber Music, Geoff Nuttall**, who embodied Spoleto's creative ethos. A founder of St. Lawrence String Quartet, Nuttall championed musical discovery and ingenuity—promoting the works of today's emerging composers alongside giants of the canon. The gala concert features the **Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra** as well as a guest roster of Nuttall's close musical colleagues, including **conductor Robert Spano, countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo, tenor Paul Groves, cellist Alisa Weilerstein**, and **pianist Stephen Prutsman**, among others. Following the performance on May 26, Spoleto will host a special benefit for the Geoff Nuttall Legacy Fund, established to honor and advance Nuttall's vision of radicalizing the classical canon. Interested parties should contact 843.720.1114 to reserve benefit tickets.

For seven performances (including a pre-Festival date on May 25), American actor and **Tony Award winner Denis O'Hare** presents **An Iliad**, a work of "pure theater" (*Time Out New York*) at the Dock Street Theatre. In this one-man performance, O'Hare, familiar from television's *The Good Wife* and *American Horror Story*, shapeshifts into characters from Homer's epic for a sweeping account of mankind's addiction to chaos and destruction. Spoleto's theater program is augmented by two US premieres: **Out of Chaos**, from Australian physical theater troupe **Gravity & Other Myths** (June 7–11), and **The Book of Life** (June 1–4), written and performed by aural storyteller **Odile Gakire Katese** and based, in part, on letters penned by survivors and perpetrators of Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

Beginning May 27 and running four performances at the Charleston Gaillard Center, Samuel Barber's Pulitzer Prize-winning opera ***Vanessa*** receives a modern reimagining by **director Rodula Gaitanou** and **designer Cordelia Chisholm**. With a libretto by Spoleto founder Gian Carlo Menotti, the dramatic opera first appeared in Charleston in 1978—this stylized production marks the work's first return to the Festival after 45 years. Austin Opera's **Timothy Myers**, who "relishes [*Vanessa's*] magnificence and brings out its intriguing detail" (*The Telegraph*) conducts the Festival Orchestra, Festival Chorus, and a stellar cast featuring a star-ascendant: American **soprano Nicole Heaston**.

With a longstanding mission to promote the work of emerging talent, Spoleto has catalyzed countless breakthroughs for the world's most promising artists. Countertenor **Anthony Roth Costanzo**, for instance, first appeared at Spoleto in *Dido and Aeneas* in 2001, and today headlines productions with The Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and English National Opera, among other major houses. At the 2023 Festival, he and trans cabaret star **Justin Vivian Bond** bring their acclaimed ***Only an Octave Apart*** (June 7–11), a brilliant pop-meets-opera-meets-cabaret hybrid—a hilarious yet moving celebration of contrasts.

The "miraculous" (Opera News) **tenor Jamez McCorkle**, too, was thrust into the international spotlight following Spoleto performances: first as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* (2017) and in the title role of the 2022 world premiere opera *Omar*. This season, McCorkle performs ***A Poet's Love*** (May 26–30), a Festival-commissioned staged adaptation of Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, in which he accompanies himself through the German romantic song cycle, surrounded by whimsical projections designed by Los Angeles-based **artist Miwa Matreyek**. Similarly, **tap dancer and choreographer Ayodele Casel's** breakout work, *While I Have the Floor*—a 2017 Spoleto commission—propelled her choreographic career to critically acclaimed creations for New York City Center and, recently, the revival of *Funny Girl* on Broadway. Over opening weekend in 2023, Casel presents ***Chasing Magic*** (May 27–29), a work for six tap dancers that incorporates live musicians, including jazz pianist Arturo O'Farrill.

Dance programming, sponsored by BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, also includes the **Scottish Ballet's** arresting reinvention of ***The Crucible*** (June 2–4), choreographed by **Helen Pickett** to an original score by **Peter Salem**, performed by the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra, as well as **Dada Masilo's *The Sacrifice*** (June 1–4). Inspired by Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, award-winning South African choreographer Masilo explores ritual and sacrifice through a contemporary lens that speaks to Black identity and feminism.

Drawing a cross-genre connection between dance and classical music, **Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*** opens a riveting **three-concert showcase of the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra**—considered one of the world's top

young-professional orchestras. **John Kennedy**, Festival Resident Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities, leads the program on June 5, which also includes the **US premiere of Philip Glass's Symphony No. 14**. For the program on June 7, **Mei-Ann Chen**, Music Director of the Chicago Sinfonietta, conducts **Antonín Dvořák's New World Symphony** alongside works by American composers **Florence Price** and **Michael Abels**. On June 9, the Festival Orchestra performs **Hector Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique** under the baton of **Jonathon Heyward**, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Music Director Designate and a graduate of Charleston County School of the Arts. Heyward's program also includes **Edvard Grieg's piano concerto**, featuring rising-star **soloist Micah McLaurin**—another Charlestonian who performs internationally.

Cornerstones of the Festival's musical offerings return this year: twice daily **Bank of America Chamber Music** concerts and three performances showcasing the **Spoletto Festival USA Chorus**. Led by Festival Director of Choral Activities Joe Miller, the Festival Chorus performs dynamic works by composers ranging from **Thomas Tallis** and **George Frideric Handel** to **Caroline Shaw**. In 11 programs both informed and inspired by the late Geoff Nuttall, the Bank of America Chamber Music series features a roster of classical music luminaries, with Nuttall's musical colleagues sharing curatorial and hosting duties.

Grammy Award-winning percussionist **Quentin Baxter** opens the 2023 **Wells Fargo Jazz** series on May 27, leading a quintet through compositions that infuse modern jazz with the Gullah traditions of his roots. The following week, "powerhouse pianist" (*The New York Times*) **Kris Davis** assembles an all-star group including three-time Grammy winner and NEA Jazz Master **Terri Lyne Carrington**, turntablist **Val Jeanty**, bassist **Trevor Dunn**, and guitarist **Julian Lage**.

Sponsored by Wells Fargo, Spoleto's 2023 jazz programming delivers Menotti's founding vision for the Festival: "a unique and fertile ground for the young and a dignified home for the masters." On June 6, Pulitzer Prize winner **Henry Threadgill** brings his **Zooid** quintet to the College of Charleston Sottile Theatre. Likewise, distinguished South African pianist **Abdullah Ibrahim**, a NEA Jazz Master, makes a rare stop in the United States June 8, the same week improvisational wunderkind **Immanuel Wilkins** plays a five-concert residency at the Queen Street Playhouse. One of the most promising jazz artists of his generation, Wilkins received critical praise for his release, *The 7th Hand*— named among the best albums of 2022 by *The New York Times* and NPR.

Queen Street Playhouse also sets the stage for **Courtney Bryan**, a pianist and composer who straddles the jazz and classical spheres. During her "Jazz at the Playhouse" residency (June 1-3), Bryan performs in both solo and quartet configurations, presenting **Songs of Laughing, Smiling, and Crying**, as well as music from her current project, **Sounds of Freedom**. Bryan's compositions also feature during the **Music in Time** series (May 28 and 31), in which members of the Festival Orchestra perform Bryan's **Sanctum**, in a brand-new arrangement for

chamber orchestra. Highlighting the experimental and cutting edge, the Music in Time series—directed and hosted by John Kennedy—also features **Éliane Radigue’s Occam 17b**, as well as works by **Sarah Hennies, intifiggis-vizueta**, and **Liza Lim**.

Seeking to expand Spoleto’s popular-music series “Front Row,” opening night, May 26, introduces British futurist artist **Ebony Bones**, whose high-fashion concepts set the tone for a genre-defying performance spanning Afrobeat, punk, disco, funk, and hip hop, backed by a 14-piece orchestra. Indie favorite **Kishi Bashi** performs under the live oaks of the College of Charleston Cistern Yard on June 3, as does 2022 NPR Tiny Desk Contest winner **Alisa Amador** (June 7) and the platinum selling, Grammy Award-winning bluegrass/“newgrass” trio **Nickel Creek** (May 31, June 1), featuring celebrated mandolinist **Chris Thile**, guitarist **Sean Watkins**, and fiddler **Sara Watkins**.

The New Orleans-based, Grammy-nominated **Tank and the Bangas** caps the 2023 season at the **Wells Fargo Festival Finale**, June 11. Held at **Firefly Distillery in North Charleston** for the second year, the evening event invites guests to pack picnic baskets, blankets, and chairs for a rollicking night blending funk, jazz, and hip-hop—followed by a stunning display of fireworks to culminate the Festival.

[More information about each performance can be found here.](#)

SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA

Spoletto Festival USA was founded in 1977 by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Gian Carlo Menotti, who sought to create an American counterpart to the annual Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, that he had founded in 1958. Now in its 47th year, Spoleto Festival USA is internationally recognized as America’s premier performing arts festival. For 17 days and nights each spring, Spoleto Festival USA fills Charleston’s historic theaters, churches, and outdoor spaces with performances in opera; theater; dance; and chamber, symphonic, choral, and jazz music. Spoleto’s mission is to present 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 unique performance opportunities for established artists. Beyond its role as a launching pad for young talent, Spoleto also serves as a catalyst for cultural change and has aided in Charleston’s rise as a global arts and culture destination. With General Director & CEO Mena Mark Hanna at its helm, the 2023 season takes place May 26 to June 11 in various locations on the downtown peninsula. Spoleto Festival USA is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization.

SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA FUNDING

Spoletto Festival USA is generously supported by Bank of America; BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina; Wells Fargo; SouthState Bank; Bloomberg Philanthropies; BMW Manufacturing Co.; First Citizens Bank; Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation; United Bank; Explore Charleston; The Charleston Place; Samuel Freeman Charitable Trust; Sherman Financial Group; Charleston GI; Tito's Handmade Vodka; and Enterprise Holdings Foundation. Spoleto also acknowledges funding from the City of Charleston; National Endowment for the Arts (NEA); the South Carolina Arts Commission, which receives support from the NEA; and the County of Charleston.

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