

# SPOLETO — FESTIVAL USA

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## Spoletto Festival USA Announces 2024 Festival Season

Groundbreaking world premiere opera *Ruinous Gods* debuts opening weekend

Illustrious cellist and globetrotting humanitarian Yo-Yo Ma returns in a never-seen program

Jason Isbell closes the 17-day event with two intimate concerts in the Cistern Yard

**January 26, 2024 (Charleston, SC)** — [Spoletto Festival USA](#), the country's premier performing arts festival, has announced a star-studded lineup for 2024 including more than one hundred performances across the Holy City for 17 days and nights, May 24-June 9, 2024. Charleston's historic theaters, churches, and outdoor spaces will be enlivened by performances from celebrated artists at the forefront of their craft. Tickets are available for purchase beginning Jan. 26 at 10:00am EST, with prices starting as low as \$25, at [spoletousa.org](#) or by calling 843.579.3100.

Spoletto Festival USA's ambitious 2024 program includes the world premiere of a commissioned original opera *Ruinous Gods*, the return of cellist Yo-Yo Ma to the Festival in a new program conceived by the iconic musician, the world premiere of the original play *The Song of Rome* by Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson (co-authors of 2023's *An Iliad*), Benjamin Millepied and L.A. Dance Project's inventive multimedia interpretation of Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo & Juliet* performed for the first time with live orchestra, and performances by nationally touring acts: Jason Isbell, Old Crow Medicine Show, Sasha Velour, plus much more.

"Art is the connective tissue of our society," says Spoletto Festival USA's General Director and CEO, Mena Mark Hanna. "By coming together to experience the 48th Spoletto, we have a rich opportunity to

explore our shared humanity as we contemplate challenges to our very social framework, including immigration, democracy, and basic human rights.”

The Festival will commence with the world premiere of Spoleto’s full-length original chamber opera, **Ruinous Gods**. Composed by Layale Chaker with a libretto by Lisa Schlesinger, *Ruinous Gods* examines the traumatic impact of displacement on refugees. The groundbreaking opera pushes the boundaries of form and structure with sung and spoken-word sections and a genre-defying score that weaves Arabic Maqam and Western classical music traditions with diverse Middle Eastern influences, jazz, and improvisation. Four performances (May 24, 27, 29, June 1) will take place in the College of Charleston’s Sottile Theatre.

The Festival’s opening weekend also features two performances by **Old Crow Medicine Show** (May 24 & 25), the Grammy Award-winning six-piece American roots revival band who celebrated their 25th anniversary in 2023. This performance under the stars, in the College of Charleston’s Cistern Yard, will kick off the Festival’s **Front Row Series** which also includes multi-instrumentalist **Trombone Shorty** (May 27), gold-certified artist **Amos Lee** (May 28), and Billboard chart-topping duo **Watchhouse** (June 5). Also on the series: **Aoife O’Donovan** (member of the folk-roots trio I’m With Her) performs a solo show of selections from her upcoming album *All My Friends*, in the Sottile Theatre on June 7 accompanied by the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra, and four-time Grammy Award-winner and rock and roll icon **Jason Isbell** (June 8 & 9) will wrap up the Festival in two nights of intimate acoustic performances.

One of the best-known cellists of his generation, **Yo-Yo Ma** returns to Spoleto for his sixth Festival appearance, and first since 1986. Performing works inspired by a five-year, six-continent journey, paired with stimulating conversation, Ma will take the stage at the Charleston Gaillard Center May 30 with a performance that asks audience members to consider the great questions of life and art: What has brought us here? And where will we choose to go next?

The Festival will premiere two theater productions, **Dark Noon** and **The Song of Rome**. The breakaway hit of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe making its U.S debut, *Dark Noon* is an outsider’s perspective on American history performed by seven South African actors in a fictional film production. Four

performances (May 31, June 1 & June 2) will take place in Festival Hall. The world premiere of *The Song of Rome*, a new work co-written and co-directed by prolific actor Denis O'Hare (*Take Me Out*, *True Blood*) with his writing partner Lisa Peterson, explores the fall of the democratic republic in ancient Rome. A companion piece to the acclaimed play *An Iliad* presented at last year's Festival, *The Song of Rome* will be performed six times (May 25, 26, 27, 31, June 1, 2) in The Dock Street Theatre.

A production of **Romeo and Juliet** by the L.A. Dance Project, choreographed by Benjamin Millepied (*Black Swan*, *Dune*), combining cinema, dance, and theater, will be presented at four performances over two days (May 25 & 26) at the Charleston Gaillard Center. Prokofiev's score will be performed live by the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra under the direction of Timothy Myers, the first-time this production will be experienced with live music.

Australia-based contemporary circus company Casus Creations will perform the North American premiere of **Apricity**, a mesmerizing stage show with aerial apparatuses, acrobatics, music, and humor for five performances (June 6, 7, 8, 9) at Festival Hall. Contemplating the transformative power of human connection, *Apricity* is inspired by the image of the winter sun breaking through the cold.

Music, song, dance, and drama will collide at two separate performances during the Festival. Winner of the ninth season of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, **Sasha Velour** will present *The Big Reveal Live Show!*, an immersive experience composed of classic drag, intimate storytelling, live art, and video experimentation at the Charleston Gaillard Center on June 6. Plus, Tony Award-winner John Cameron Mitchell (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*) and cabaret star Amber Martin will present **Cassette Roulette**, an interactive evening of songs, stories, and characters, all chosen by the hand of fate and the audience-spun roulette wheel on May 25 & 26 at Festival Hall.

Acclaimed composer and cellist, **Paul Wiancko** will debut as Charles L. and Andrea E. Director of Chamber Music at the 2024 Festival. Wiancko will host 33 performances of the beloved **Bank of America Chamber Music** series at the historic Dock Street Theatre consisting of music ranging from 12th-century composer saint Hildegard von Bingen and tragic/romantic icon Franz Schubert to modern-day musical rebel Tomeka Reid and Grammy-nominated composer and steel drum player Andy

Akiho. Paul will also welcome composer-in-residence Reena Esmail to present a selection of her work including the world premiere of her new string quartet.

Conductor Timothy Myers steps into his first year as Music Director for the **Spoletto Festival USA Orchestra**, one of the most prestigious ensembles for early-career professional musicians. The orchestra's two-concert showcase will commence with **Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 5** (June 1) which also features the world premiere of Grammy-nominee Nathalie Joachim's cello concerto with guest soloist Seth Parker Woods. The Festival Orchestra's June 5 program of **Beethoven's Symphony No. 3** also features Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1, performed by Inon Barnatan, and this year's chamber music composer-in-residence, Reena Esmail's *Testament*.

**The Spoletto Festival USA Chorus** will present two highly anticipated performances (June 6 & 7) at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, spanning classical and contemporary and featuring music by Spoletto chamber music composer-in-residence, Reena Esmail, Russian masterworks, and Ugis Praulins' epic *Laudibus in Sanctis*. The Chorus, composed of gifted vocal fellows from across the nation, will also join the Spoletto Festival USA Orchestra for a performance of Joseph Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* at the Charleston Gaillard Center on June 3 under the Director of Choral Activities Joe Miller.

The Festival's **Jazz Series**, sponsored by Wells Fargo, will feature performances by local and national touring artists. **Layale Chaker** and her ensemble **Sarafand** will take the stage at College of Charleston's Emmett Robinson Theatre for four performances (May 27 & 28) of two different programs blending classical contemporary music, jazz, Arabic maqam scales, and improvisation. On June 7 in the Cistern Yard, Grammy Award-nominated conguero and batá drum master **Pedrito Martinez** will perform with an expanded band, vocalists, and dancers. Renowned drummer **Terri Lyne Carrington** and vocalist **Dianne Reeves** will unite for a performance on May 26 in the Cistern Yard, featuring works by female jazz composers from Carrington's lauded New Standards. The **Charles Lloyd Sky Quartet** will return to the Sottile Theatre (May 31) with an all-star ensemble including pianist and Kennedy Center Artistic Director for Jazz Jason Moran. **Lowcountry: South Carolina Music in the Gullah Tradition** (June 2) combines revered South Carolinian jazz musicians including Ranky Tanky drummer and Festival favorite Quentin Baxter, trumpeter Matt White, and saxophonist Chris Potter with three Gullah elders and a narrator for a musical fusion of praise house melodies, modern jazz, and Gullah culture in the Cistern

Yard. Saxophonist and MacArthur Fellow Miguel Zenón and acclaimed pianist Luis Perdomo will perform works from their critically acclaimed album **El Arte Del Bolero** (June 6, 7, 8) at the Emmett Robinson Theatre.

America's Got Talent semifinalists Lightwire Theater will perform Hans Christian Andersen's timeless tale **The Ugly Duckling** featuring handmade electroluminescent costumes and poignant choreography, set to music ranging from classical to pop. Six family-friendly performances will take place on June 1 and June 2 at the College of Charleston's Emmet Robinson Theatre.

More information about these performances and Spoleto Festival USA can be found at <https://spoletousa.org/>.

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#### 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, which he had founded in 1958. Now in its 48th 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 flourishing as a top arts and culture destination. With General Director & CEO Mena Mark Hanna at its helm, the 2024 season takes place from May 24 to June 9 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 the online gallery.

**MORE:** Visit the [virtual press room](#).