

For Immediate Release

Spoletto Festival USA Announces Paul Wiancko as new Director of Chamber Music



Paul Wiancko © Peter Frank Edwards

**Wiancko is a former Spoleto Festival USA Composer-in-Residence and will assume
the role of the Director of Chamber Music in 2024**

Spoletto Festival USA 2024 will run from May 24-June 9

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — Spoleto Festival USA announced that cellist and composer **Paul Wiancko** will become the next **Charles E. and Andrea L. Volpe Director of Chamber Music** and will debut in the role during the 2024 season (May 24 – June 9).

Wiancko's appointment marks the first time in the Festival's history that the standing director is both a performer and composer. Wiancko became a member of the internationally renowned Kronos Quartet in 2023. He is also a founding member of the viola and cello duo Ayane & Paul, as well the distinctive quarter, Owls. From 2009 to 2011, he was cellist of the Harlem Quartet, with whom he performed and taught extensively on a global scale. Wiancko has composed works for the St. Lawrence, Kronos, Aizuri, Parker, Calder, and Attacca Quartets, among numerous other prestigious ensembles.

Spoletto Festival General Director & CEO Mena Mark Hanna said: "Paul has an infectious passion for chamber music and an exceptional talent for intuitively communicating the most complex musical devices. He will be an engine of ingenuity for Spoleto, and by extension, the chamber music field, curating across period and genre, subverting our expectations of what is western and non-western, canonic and not canonic, new and old."

Wiancko said: "During my first visit to Spoleto as cellist and composer-in-residence, Geoff Nuttall revealed the generative power of the Festival—a 3-week long upward spiral of music, art, and thought, kept aloft by impassioned audiences and fueled by a preposterous amount of raw talent and artistry. Chamber music grows deeper, more inclusive, and more exciting every day. As director of chamber music at Spoleto, I will explore this treasure trove with our expanding family of fearless chamber artists and beloved audiences."

The multidisciplinary 17-day festival annually draws the world's most renowned classical musicians, including Alisa Weilerstein, Pedja Mužijević, Tara Helen O'Connor, Inon Barnatan, and many others to Charleston for its Bank of America Chamber Music series, a celebration of the chamber music

canon as well as exciting new works. As director, Wiancko will curate repertoire and host the intimate concerts at the historic Dock Street Theatre, a twice-daily offering that has made the series a beloved Festival cornerstone.

The modern festival is a testament to the legacy of the festival's first Director of Chamber Music, Charles Wadsworth, who was hand-picked by Spoleto Festival founder Gian Carlo Menotti to develop the Italian concert series in 1960, followed by its American counterpart in 1977. During his tenure as Director of Chamber Music, Wadsworth's programming included commissions of more than 65 new chamber music works from composers such as Boulez, Barber, and Leonard Bernstein and showcased a number of then-emerging artists such Yo-Yo Ma, Paula Robison, the Emerson Quartet and the St. Lawrence String Quartet, which became Spoleto's quartet-in-residence and led to the appointment of Geoff Nuttall as Spoleto's director of chamber music director in 2010.

Nuttall's leadership of the series was punctuated by his singular approach to musical commentary, which was equal parts academic lecture and affable banter. A voracious champion of new voices in chamber music, Nuttall welcomed a veritable roster of artists, including Anthony Roth Costanzo, Joshua Roman, Mark Applebaum, and many more to the stage in Charleston over his 12-year tenure. In 2019, Nuttall invited Wiancko to serve as the Festival's first composer-in-residence. Wiancko returned to perform as part of the Festival's chamber music ensemble in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Following Nuttall's untimely passing in the fall of 2022, Wiancko and several of his musical colleagues shared curatorial and emcee duties for the 2023 Festival.

Wiancko represents the second artistic appointment of Hanna's tenure as general director & CEO. Last month, the Festival announced conductor Timothy Myers as the new music director of the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra, joining Jazz Curator Larry Blumenfeld and Director of Choral Activities Joe Miller in the organization's artistic leadership. Said Hanna: "With Paul and Tim now on board, I expect the vibrant interplay between Spoleto's artistic disciplines to flourish."

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ABOUT PAUL WIANCKO

Paul Wiancko is an acclaimed composer and cellist. The Washington Post describes Wiancko as “a restless and multifaceted talent who plays well with others”—a reference to his substantial collaborations with artists like Max Richter, Chick Corea, Norah Jones, and Arcade Fire. “Even with this chronically collaborative spirit,” the Post continues, “Wiancko maintains a singular voice as a composer.”

As cellist of the internationally-celebrated Kronos Quartet, Wiancko regularly appears on the world’s foremost stages—including Carnegie Hall, the Barbican, and the Sydney Opera House. Wiancko first collaborated with the Kronos Quartet in 2018 when he was invited to compose a piece for 50 For The Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire, and soon after toured with the quartet as guest cellist. Upon officially joining the group in 2023, violinist and Kronos artistic director David Harrington stated, “We look forward to soaring into the future with the catalytic, super-charged vitality of Paul’s playing. It will be so much fun to explore the vast world of music together with Paul.”

A serial chamber musician, Wiancko is a founding member of the viola and cello duo Ayane & Paul, as well as Owls, a quartet-collective dubbed “dream group” by The New York Times. He has shared the stage with many of today’s most prominent artists, including Richard Goode, Mitsuko Uchida, Yo-Yo Ma, Terry Riley, Caroline Shaw, and the Takacs, St. Lawrence, Attacca, and JACK quartets. From 2009 to 2011, he was cellist of the Harlem Quartet, with whom he performed and taught extensively throughout the US, Europe, South America, and Africa.

Wiancko’s own music has been described as everything from “dazzling” and “compelling” (Star Tribune) to “joyous, riotous” and “delicate” (New York Times). NPR writes, “If Haydn were alive to write a string quartet today, it may sound something like Paul Wiancko’s “LIFT”—a work that “teems with understanding of and affection for the string-quartet tradition” (New York Times) and is featured on the Aizuri Quartet’s Grammy-nominated album, Blueprinting. Wiancko is a recipient of the S & R Foundation’s Washington Award for composition, and was named one of The Washington Post’s “22 for ‘22: Composers and Performers to Watch.” He has served as composer-in-residence at Spoleto Festival USA, Music from Angel Fire, Portland Chamber Music Festival, Caramoor, and the Banff Centre, and has composed works for the St. Lawrence,

Kronos, Aizuri, Parker, Calder, and Attacca Quartets, yMusic, Alisa Weilerstein, Alexi Kenney, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and many others.

In addition to a full performance and composition schedule, Wiancko is a dedicated teacher, mentor, and advocate for music education at all levels. He has taught at the St. Lawrence Chamber Music Seminar, Festival del Lago, and the Banff Centre, and is regularly invited to give masterclasses at institutions including Stanford, Peabody, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Wiancko's commitment to supporting future generations of performers and composers has led him to assist in the development of forward-thinking programs like Evolution Classical at the Banff Centre and the Green Lake Chamber Music Institute.

ABOUT SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA

Founded in 1977 by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Gian Carlo Menotti, 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 produces and presents work of the highest artistic caliber to diverse and adventurous audiences. Through innovation, education, and a commitment to community, Spoleto harnesses the power of the arts to foster a culture of belonging and deepen and engage the public appreciation for the arts in building a better world. Presenting more than 100 performances, the 2024 season takes place 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.

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