

SPOLETO — FESTIVAL USA

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Spoletto Festival USA Receives \$1 Million Memorial Gift to Fund Three Major Initiatives

Donation made in honor of late supporter Dr. Suzan D. Boyd

December 3, 2024 (Charleston, SC) — Spoleto Festival USA today announced a significant \$1 million gift from M. Edward Sellers, chair emeritus member of Spoleto’s board of directors. Sellers made the generous donation in memory of his late wife Dr. Suzan D. Boyd, a cherished Spoleto friend with a deep devotion to the arts, who passed away in December 2023. The donation will fund three organizational initiatives including the expansion of education and community engagement programs led by a new Manager of Learning and Engagement, advancing the Composer-in-Residence position for the Festival’s Chamber Music series, and the development of a new website.

"We are deeply thankful to Ed, who is unwavering in his support for Spoleto. This gift is a testament to his and Suzan’s incredible generosity and will add to their lasting legacy on the Festival," says Mena Mark Hanna, General Director and CEO of Spoleto Festival USA. "Ed is a person of vision and integrity; through his philanthropy, we can expand our artistic programming, engage with a wider audience, and build public value through arts and education."

Sellers says "Spoleto Festival USA is a cultural treasure for Charleston and the entire region. This gift is an investment in the arts, education, and the future of the Festival. I am proud to support this world-class organization and its missions so that it will continue to enrich our lives, the lives of our children, our grandchildren, and serve our community for generations to come."

This donation enables Spoleto to expand its educational offerings through the creation of a new position, Manager of Learning and Engagement. The Festival’s education programs are designed to foster creativity, critical thinking, and a lifelong appreciation for the arts. Through a variety of initiatives—including in-person and virtual classroom residencies, professional development workshops for teachers, artists in schools, master classes, workshops, and student performances—the Festival provides unique opportunities for students of all ages to engage with world-class artists and explore the diverse world of the arts.

Mr. Ed Sellers, board chair from 2015 to 2018, and Dr. Suzan Boyd have been longtime Spoleto supporters whose love for the Festival deepened over the years after first discovering the Chamber Music series, then led by Charles Wadsworth. A devoted attendee of the series at the Dock Street Theatre, Suzan often welcomed its musicians and leaders to her home for a meal or to stay in the 'Little Yellow House.' Part of their generous gift will fund the series' Composer-in-Residence position, to be named The Suzan D. Boyd Composer-in-Residence, which allows composers to produce innovative new works with some of the leading chamber artists in the country.

Spoletto will also be developing a new website with improved features to offer a more impactful, engaging and user-friendly experience. It is expected to launch ahead of the 50th Festival in 2026.

For more information about Spoleto Festival USA, visit 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 2025 season takes place from May 23 to June 8 in various locations throughout Charleston. Spoleto Festival USA is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization.