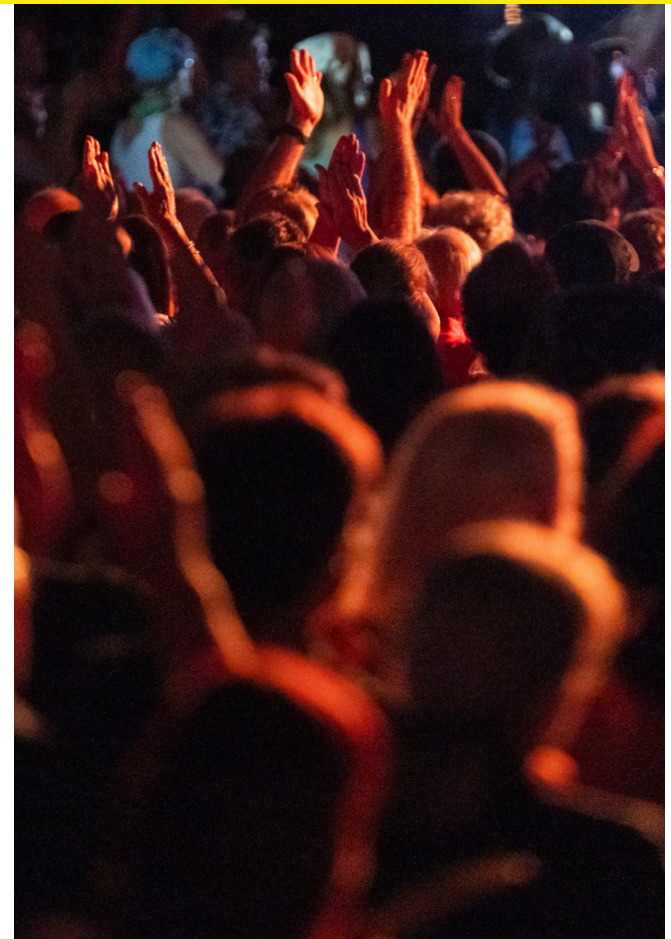




**America's premier
performing arts festival.**



Spoletto Brought the World Together in Shared Experience.



MENA MARK HANNA
GENERAL DIRECTOR & CEO
SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA

Dear Friends and Supporters,

For 17 incredible days, Spoleto Festival became a gathering place for artists, audiences, and ideas from around the country and world.

The 2026 Festival brought together 445 artists for 116 performances across 12 venues. Eight premieres invited audiences to experience new work, and students and community members encountered the Festival through education partnerships, donated tickets, free public programs, and simulcasts. Together, we also achieved our strongest ticket sales results since 2016.

These numbers tell a remarkable story, but the Festival's deepest impact lives in the moments between them: an artist taking a creative risk, a young person entering a theater for the first time, strangers engaging in an unforgettable performance, and an entire city coming together in shared experience.

This Season in Review celebrates what became possible because artists, audiences, donors, board members, sponsors, partners, volunteers, and staff believed in the power of the arts to expand our understanding of one another and of what is possible.

Thank you for being part of the magic.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mena".



Watch a recap of our 2026 Season
[instagram.com/spoletofestivalusa/](https://www.instagram.com/spoletofestivalusa/)



The Festival at a Glance.

- **17** days of artistic discovery
- **445** artists representing **40** states, **21** nationalities, and **26** artistic genres
- **116** performances across **12** Charleston venues
- **6** World Premiere works and **2** U.S. Premiere works
- Strongest ticket sales revenue since 2016



▲ 2026 FESTIVAL POSTER REVEAL AT THE GIBBES MUSEUM OF ART

CELEBRATING AMERICA AT 250

The 250th Anniversary of the United States was honored by examining the creativity, contradictions, histories, and freedoms that continue to shape the nation.

In partnership with SC250 Charleston, Spoleto commemorated this moment with the idea of “freedom of expression”, with performances, artist conversations, free simulcasts, public programs, and citywide activations. Jasper Johns’ *Three Flags*, selected as the official Festival poster, connected an iconic work of American art with a season devoted to considering the nation’s past and imagining its future. The poster was unveiled at the Gibbes Museum of Art, followed by a conversation between Mena Mark Hanna and Gibbes Museum President and CEO Alex Rich on the inspiration behind the design.

Across the Festival, artists invited audiences not simply to commemorate a milestone, but to ask what America has been, what it is becoming, and what role creativity can play in shaping what comes next.

▼ MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY



▲ DENIS O'HARE IN *GEORGE + GEORGE*

▼ AN EVENING WITH KEN BURNS, PRESENTED BY BANK OF AMERICA



“Freedom of expression is not what free societies produce. It is what makes free societies possible.”

**—Mena Mark Hanna,
General Director & CEO**

Where the Extraordinary Comes to Life.

A great festival does more than present celebrated artists. It creates the conditions for something rare, unexpected, and unrepeatable. The 2026 season brought together artistic voices across opera, theater, dance, orchestral and chamber music, jazz, film, and multidisciplinary performance. Audiences experienced the world premiere of **Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson's *George + George***, the genre-crossing brilliance of **Renée Fleming and Béla Fleck**, the breathtaking physicality of **Circa's *Humans 2.0***, and **Brandi Carlile** performing beneath the live oaks of the Cistern Yard.

Terence Blanchard and The E-Collective channeled Miles Davis and John Coltrane, two musicians who didn't work within American music so much as remake what it was allowed to say. **The Pedrito Martínez Group** brought that same fearlessness to Afro-Cuban rhythm, filling the Cistern with it.

An Evening with Ken Burns, Presented by Bank of America brought history, storytelling, and America's unfinished story into conversation. Performances by artists including **Emmylou Harris** and **Indigo Girls** further demonstrated the breadth, ambition, and singular energy of the season. These were not merely performances, they were encounters that could not be streamed or repeated; they had to be experienced!



▲ CIRCA'S *DIDO AND AENEAS* WITH THE FESTIVAL CHORUS

WHERE NEW WORK BEGINS

Spoletto audiences experienced eight premiere performances and productions: six World Premieres and two U.S. Premieres.

These included new works created for the Festival, a world premiere live performance, a Spoleto production, and landmark productions presented in the U.S. for the first time.

These productions reflect the Festival's longstanding role as a place where artists can take risks, test ideas, and bring important new work into being.

World Premieres

- *George + George* by Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson
- *Rhapsody on "Omar"* by Michael Abels
- *Children's Songs* by Allison Loggins-Hull
- Tell Your Story
- Spoleto Festival USA's world premiere production of *Old Maid and the Thief*
- Renée Fleming and Béla Fleck's world premiere live performance of *The Fiddle and the Drum*

U.S. Premieres

- Scottish Ballet's *Mary, Queen of Scots*
- Circa's *Dido and Aeneas*

▼ RENÉE FLEMING AND BÉLA FLECK



"As artists, it's incredible to have an institution which not only supports us but inspires us to create."

**—Denis O'Hare,
Artist and Board Member**



▲ SCOTTISH BALLETS *MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS*

The Artists of Today. The Art of Tomorrow.

FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

The Festival Orchestra brought together emerging and professional musicians under the direction of **Timothy Myers, Music Director of the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra**.



▲ ZUILL BAILEY AND THE FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

Moving fluidly between large-scale symphonic concerts, opera, dance, film, choral music, and intimate ensemble performances, programs included Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5*, Mahler's *Symphony No. 1*, and *Appalachian Spring* and *American Classics* at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church.

The Orchestra also appeared in *An Evening with Ken Burns, Presented by Bank of America*; *Mozart's Mass in C minor*; *The Old Maid and the Thief*; Circa's *Dido and Aeneas*; and Scottish Ballet's *Mary, Queen of Scots*. Its range and responsiveness made many of the season's most ambitious productions possible.



▲ FESTIVAL CHORUS IN *STORYTELLING THROUGH AMERICAN COMPOSERS*

FESTIVAL CHORUS

In her inaugural season as **Director of the Festival Chorus, Dr. Amanda Quist** brought together one of the nation's only professional choruses through a national audition tour, demonstrating the ensemble's power, precision, and collaborative spirit. The Festival Chorus appeared in *Mozart's Mass in C minor*, Circa's *Dido and Aeneas*, and two performances of *Storytelling Through American Composers* at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church.

FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

- Orchestra Fellows: **103**
- Applicants: **700+**

FESTIVAL CHORUS

- Chorus Fellows: **43**
- Applicants: **400+**

CHAMBER MUSIC

- Chamber Music Musicians: **24**
- Programs: **11**
- Performances: **33**

CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

The Bank of America Chamber Music Series remained one of the Festival's most beloved and distinctive offerings. Under the direction of **Paul Wiancko, Charles E. and Andrea L. Volpe Director of Chamber Music**, the performances were defined by technical brilliance, intimacy, and joyful collaboration. Repertoire crossed centuries of musical history while creating space for contemporary voices, including **2026 Suzan D. Boyd Composer-in-Residence Allison Loggins-Hull**.



▲ CHAMBER MUSIC ARTISTS

“Charleston is the only place in the world that does something like this, that brings in everyone from all over the world.”

—Shane T., Chorus Fellow

Access That Opens Doors to a Larger World.

IMPACT

A ticket can be more than admission to a performance. It can be an invitation into a larger world. Through the Open Stage Door program, school partnerships, artist-led learning, and free public programming, the Festival creates opportunities for people across our community to experience, explore, and feel like a part of the art. These efforts help remove barriers, welcome new audiences, and ensure that extraordinary cultural experiences remain accessible to all.

FREE PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Thirteen free programs helped broaden our audience in the 2026 season, featuring a sold-out documentary preview exploring the complex history of *Porgy and Bess*, *DAVÔNE TINES & THE TRUTH: REVIVAL* at Mother Emanuel AME Church, and simulcasts of *An Evening with Ken Burns* and *George + George. Conversations With, Jazz Talks*, and *Tell Your Story* offered free access to some of the Festival’s most compelling artists, and a collaboration with IAAM brought *Homegoing*, pairing filmmaker Julie Dash with Davône Tines, to audiences.



A sensory-friendly preview prior to *Dead as a Dodo* performances and a post-show sustainability workshop for *Alvin Sputnik: Deep Sea Explorer* made room for audiences of every age and ability.

◀ TALKBACK WITH DAVÔNE TINES AFTER SCREENING OF *HOMEGOING* AT IAAM

COMMUNITY IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- **1,275** students reached
- **507** donated tickets distributed
- **27** community organizations served
- **13** educational and institutional partners
- **13** free public programs
- **37** learning professionals engaged
- **16** participating artists involved in education programs



▲ STUDENTS AT A CHAMBER MUSIC PERFORMANCE



ARTISTS IN SCHOOLS

As the Lowcountry Affiliate of Wolf Trap, Spoleto’s teaching artists led 21 residencies across three partner schools, reaching 301 students ages three to seven. In addition, Chamber musicians introduced live classical music to over 800 students at Ashley River Creative Arts, Memminger Elementary, and a special performance at the Dock Street Theatre. Through our partnership with Charleston Jazz, student musicians celebrated the Festival at Opening Ceremony and learned directly from guitarist Chico Pinheiro and percussionist Pedrito Martinez in two free masterclasses.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS & TEACHER TRAINING

Four spring workshop sessions extended a hands-on approach beyond the classroom, bringing the Festival’s arts-integration tools directly to educators and the families they serve.

▼ STUDENT AFTER WORKSHOP WITH *ALVIN SPUTNIK: DEEP SEA EXPLORER*



OPEN STAGE DOOR

Spoleto donated 507 free tickets to 27 partner organizations this year. Partners included Metanoia, Wings for Kids, the Preservation Society of Charleston, and the Lowcountry Food Bank, all helping to extend the Festival’s reach across the community.

“Spoleto fills my soul.”

— Cissie S., longtime attendee

Built by a Community That Believes in the Arts.

Every performance begins long before the curtain rises. It is made possible by donors who invest in artistic ambition, community and business partners who extend the Festival’s reach, board members who offer leadership, and the staff, apprentices, ushers, and volunteers who transform thousands of details into an unforgettable season.

Together, this community brings extraordinary work to Charleston year after year!



THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE FESTIVAL

- 445 artists
- 27 full-time staff members
- 153 seasonal staff members
- 47 apprentices, gaining real-world experience
- 233 volunteer ushers
- 49 board members
- 1,295 donor households, up 23% from 2025

“Being in the audience for first-class performances of all types; seeing things I have never seen before and hearing favorite pieces with new interpretations; being thrilled, tickled, astounded, amused, informed, challenged, comforted, nourished.”

— Natalie F., attendee



“It is an annual sacred experience with no match!”

— Judith G., 7+ year attendee

AUDIENCE REACH

- Tickets issued increased **16.9%** from 2025
- Audience members traveled from **48** states

EXTRAORDINARY VISIBILITY AND REACH

- Approximately **170** media placements
- An estimated **1.2 billion** potential readers reached
- Coverage across **34** national, regional, and local publications
- **413,776** unique website visitors
- **7.7 million** combined Facebook and Instagram views
- **54,098** active email subscribers





The Next Extraordinary Season Starts Here.

THANK YOU!

To our artists: your courage gave us something new. **To our audiences:** your curiosity turned performances into shared experiences.
To our donors, sponsors, and board members: your investment made artistic ambition and creative risk possible.
To our volunteers, staff, and community partners: your care transformed a vision into a Festival.

Spoleto is not just a record of what has happened, it's a promise of what we can make possible next.

JOIN US IN 2027!

ATTEND

Save the Dates: May 28– June 13, 2027

CONNECT

Read our Blog, Subscribe to us on YouTube, and Follow us on Instagram, and Facebook @SPOLETOFESTIVALUSA

GIVE

Give Online at spoletousa.org/donate

SHARE THE STORY

Share the 2026 Season in Review with friends and family!