

# Spoletto Festival USA

## Fact Sheet

**OVERVIEW:** Spoleto Festival USA has firmly established itself as one of the world's major arts festivals since its inception in 1977.

For 17 days and nights each spring beginning the Friday of Memorial Day weekend, Spoleto Festival USA fills Charleston, South Carolina's historic theaters, churches and outdoor spaces with over 100 performances by renowned artists as well as emerging performers in disciplines ranging from opera, theater, music theater, dance, and chamber, symphonic, choral, and jazz music, as well as the visual arts.

**AUDIENCE:** Our audience is between 70,000 and 80,000 each year.

**MISSION:** The mission of Spoleto Festival USA is to create a comprehensive and innovative arts festival in Charleston, South Carolina. The festival produces and presents events featuring an international mix of distinguished artists and emerging talent.

One of the festival's tenets is to provide young performers the opportunity to work with veteran directors, designers and performers. World-renowned artists who performed early in their careers at Spoleto Festival USA include Renée Fleming, Emanuel Ax, Joshua Bell, Yo-Yo Ma, the Emerson String Quartet and Jean-Yves Thibaudet.

**HISTORY:** Spoleto Festival USA was founded in 1977 by Gian Carlo Menotti, Christopher Keene and others involved in the Festival of Two Worlds as the American counterpart to that festival held annually in Spoleto, Italy. A Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, Menotti began the Italian festival in 1958 as a forum for young American artists in Europe. When the organizers of the Festival of Two Worlds planned an American festival, they searched for an American city that would offer the charm of Spoleto, Italy, and also its wealth of theaters, churches and other performance spaces. Charleston, South Carolina was the perfect counterpart.

**PROGRAM:** Spoleto Festival USA produces its own operas, which are often rarely performed masterpieces by well-known composers, as well as traditional works presented in new ways. The festival also presents theater, dance and music with a strong emphasis on music ranging from chamber and jazz. The festival conducts nationwide auditions for its resident ensemble, the Spoleto Festival Orchestra. Permanent festival fixtures include distinguished the Bank of America Chamber Music Series, the Music In Time Series and the Wachovia Jazz Series.

**LEADERSHIP:** Four talented directors are charged with the artistic leadership of Spoleto Festival USA. They are: Joseph Flummerfelt, Artistic Director for Choral Activities; Emmanuel Villaume, Music Director for Opera & Orchestra; Charles Wadsworth, Artistic Director for Chamber Music; and Nigel Redden, General Director.

**PICCOLO:** Piccolo Spoleto, the official companion festival to Spoleto Festival USA, is operated by the City of Charleston's Office of Cultural Affairs. Whereas Spoleto Festival USA features artists and performers of national and international acclaim, Piccolo Spoleto highlights outstanding local and regional artists with over 800 performances scattered throughout the city.

The 2008 Spoleto Festival USA will take place May 23 – June 8, 2008. For additional information please visit [www.spoletousa.org](http://www.spoletousa.org).

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