

**SPOLETO FESTIVAL U.S.A.  
OPENING CEREMONY  
REMARKS BY MAYOR JOSEPH P. RILEY, JR.  
May 24, 2013**

Thank you very much Carlos Evans for your kind words and for your service as Chair. You have given the Festival great leadership and I wish to thank you for your service and generosity. I also want to thank all of the past Chairs of Spoleto Festival USA: Martha, Eric, Bill, Joel, Homer, Charlie and Ted. And Nigel Redden, the wonderful Charles Wadsworth, the fabulous staff, the hundreds of volunteers – all who have and do make this the world's most comprehensive arts festival possible.

I wish to thank my colleagues on City Council, County Council, state and national government who support it and have been critically important to our festival.

Also, I would like to give a special thanks to Linda O'Bryon, President and CEO of ETV and ETV Radio, and Dr. Brent Nelsen, ETV Commission Chairman, for being here today. ETV Radio has been a partner of Spoleto Festival USA for over 30 years, recording and sharing these performances with the rest of South Carolina, the United States and the world. Let's give them a great big round of applause.

I would like to briefly recognize the special contribution to this Festival by 3 people – 2 of whom are with us today, and one as you know is sadly not.

In 1977, the idea of a would-be, world class arts festival connected with an Italian town was met with caution or nervousness by many people in our community. Ted Stern was the only person in Charleston – the only one – who had the credibility and trust to lead this festival and who had the brilliant strategic vision to make it happen and to negotiate successfully through the early and many financial and other challenges. Without Ted Stern's amazing leadership, this festival would have never begun or survived. On the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of every May henceforth in this city at Noon, when these historic church bells chime and this festival begins, we will be giving thanks to that most amazing and wonderful man, Ted Stern, who made all of this possible.

I will never forget a few moments after 5:00 PM in the afternoon in late May of 1977, in St. Phillips, closing my eyes and hearing Joe Flummerfelt's Westminster Choir. It was a sound more beautiful than anything I had ever heard. His choir, the beautiful concerts, the fabulous operas, whose choruses Joe has conducted, the experiences like the one we will have at the performance of Verdi's Requiem on June 6 -- Don't miss it -- and the pleasure of the company of this fine and gentle man in our community for over a month every year, has been a special treasure.

In 1993 when Gian Carlos Menotti severed his relationship with our festival, he required many to choose between his festival in Italy and Charleston. For us to lose Joe Flummerfelt and all of his voices would have been a critical, if not a deadly blow. Joe chose our city and our festival and for that, Joe, this community will be forever grateful. Joe, thank you so much.

Gian Carlos Menotti's vision was that a true arts festival was not a collection of great performances in various auditoria but rather, it was something that involved the whole community. But until Ellen Dressler Moryl worked to create Piccolo Spoleto in 1978, what we achieved here had never really been achieved any place in the world. Piccolo Spoleto helped take the magic and wonder of this festival to our public parks, to churches and neighborhoods throughout our community. It takes the wonder of the festival to all the people of our community – our children and their great grandparents – in 700 performances, with 3000 performers. There is nothing like it anywhere else and Ellen Dressler Moryl's indefatigable energy and creativity made Piccolo Spoleto what it is. She is retired, but happily is the Artistic Director Emeritus of Piccolo Spoleto. I ask you to join me in thanking her for her great service to this festival and to our community -- in fact, to our state and country.

This Festival that you here and so many others make possible, and which the city so proudly gives to the world, brings so many benefits to Charleston -- obviously economic benefits and national and international recognition. We are the number 1 favorite tourist destination in the world. But the festival gives something even more important to our city. It exposes us to great beauty in the arts that we see and hear and the most extraordinary commitment to excellence that moves us greatly.

A city benefits so greatly from this – the confrontation and exposure to beauty and excellence. We can in the life of the city just try to get by – to do okay and feel that medium achievement is acceptable. But when we are exposed to the beauty and quest for excellence that this festival surrounds us with, we can't be comfortable with just getting by. Whether it's in the public spaces or buildings we create, whether it's about how we lead our life individually or civically, Spoleto Festival USA challenges us to excel. And that is so obvious in the change of the life and looks of this community in these 37 years and that is exactly what Spoleto Festival USA has done for us. It changed us as a people. It changed us as a city. It made us better.

As we begin our 37th year, I express my annual wish that Spoleto Festival U.S.A. will continue to exist in Charleston as long as our people search for truth and beauty and may that be forever.

And now I would like to add a few words to our friends from Italy. SALUTI AI NOSTRI AMICI ITALIANI. SPERIAMO CHE QUESTA CITTA E IL NOSTRO FESTIVALE SIANO VERAMENTE SIGNIFICATIVI E STIMOLANTI. OFFRO IL NOSTRO BENVENUTO A CHARLESTON, E BENVENUTO A SPOLETO U.S.A.

And now, Maestro, let the music begin, the dancers dance, the choirs sing, the children play and the banners fly! I hereby declare the 37th Spoleto Festival U.S.A. has begun!!