

Piccolo Spoleto gets ready to jazz it up Festival officials announce tribute to Menotti to be part of lineup

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The Post and Courier

This year's lineup and highlights for the 2007 Piccolo Spoleto Festival were announced Tuesday, and a tribute to the memory of the late composer Gian Carlo Menotti will be a major component.

A concert version of the composer's children's opera "Amahl & the Night Visitors" will be performed by the Charleston Symphony Orchestra with singing groups from various schools. Performances will be held in four schools and at the Ridgeville Community Center.

The festival's mission is to provide access to the arts experience for everyone, regardless of age or economic status, Director Ellen Dressler Moryl said.

Charleston Mayor Joe Riley pointed out that Menotti, who founded the Spoleto Festival USA and who died Feb. 1, had suggested having a "Piccolo festival," meaning "small" in Italian. "Maestro Menotti wanted local performers to have the chance to show their talents, and to have the entire city bathed in the magic of Spoleto," Riley said.

The Piccolo Spoleto Festival is produced by the city of Charleston's Office of Cultural Affairs and directed by Moryl. With a \$1 million budget and presenting more than 700 events, the festival will be held from May 25 to June 10. Many of the events, which include theater, opera, dance classical music, jazz and the visual arts, are free; others are modestly priced. Piccolo opens with a free sunset concert by the CSO at 8 p.m. May 25 at the U.S. Customhouse.

A festival highlight will be "Sister City Jazz: A Tale of Two Cities" in which Piccolo joins forces with the Charleston Jazz Initiative and Fotos for Humanity in a tale of two cities' jazz traditions: Charleston and New Orleans. This free block party June 2 at the Customhouse will feature some of the finest musicians from both cities.

Offering 40 theatrical events in various venues, the festival has become more daring in its presentations with a version of the raucous musical comedy "Urinetown" along with slight nudity in the Tony Award-winning musical "The Full Monty."

The jazz and blues genre will include concerts at the rebuilt Bowen's Island restaurant; early bird blues at Cumberland's; music at the Tonik Club, and three jazz Harbor Cruises.

On the dance agenda are favorites: the Dance at Noon series and a performance under the Angel

Oak on Johns Island. There are also events for children that will be held at various sites, including the Children's Festival.

The Piccolo Spoleto Finale at Hampton Park will include "A Big Fat Eastern Wedding" celebration with a blending of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern culture including Klezmer music, Israeli jazz, Greek line dancing and Lebanese dancers.

Riley unveiled the festival's official poster, "Rembrandt's Favorite," by Charleston native Elaine Berlin. The painting will grace the covers of 50,000 Piccolo booklets, 70,000 ticket brochures and hundreds of T-shirts. Berlin's winning image is named for her golden retriever Rembrandt who likes to watch her paint late at night.

Other 2007 Piccolo posters unveiled were: Mary Walker's painting "Bird Song," which will be the cover of the Spotlight classical music series program, and Richard Hagerty's image "Dream Children" for the Children's Festival poster. The Piccolo Invitational at City Gallery at Waterfront Park will feature new figurative works by British artist Fletcher Crossman.

On the Web

For the 2007 Piccolo Spoleto schedule and tickets, go to www.piccolospoleto.com.

This article was printed via the web on 4/12/2007 4:43:19 PM . This article appeared in The Post and Courier and updated online at Charleston.net on Wednesday, April 11, 2007.