



# City of Charleston

JOHN J. TECKLENBURG  
MAYOR

*The following address was prepared for delivery by Mayor John J. Tecklenburg on May 26, 2017, at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Opening Ceremonies.*

Chairman Sellers, President Medich, distinguished guests and friends:

Good afternoon and benvenuti. Welcome.

It is a very great honor to be with you here today, as we gather to kick off the forty-first season of Spoleto Festival USA. And with the festival now officially moving into its fifth decade with a schedule of events and performances every bit as bold and exciting as any in its storied history, I think we safely say of Spoleto, like Shakespeare's Cleopatra, that age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety.

Of course, that ageless, timeless vigor is no accident. It's the product of almost unimaginable dedication and hard work. And I'd like to take a moment here to thank all the people who make this extraordinary event possible -- and to tell you how much their efforts mean to our city and its people.

First, to Ed Sellers, Bill Medich, Nigel Redden, board members, and the entire Spoleto family: thank you. Your commitment to this great festival, and the city it proudly calls home, is the stuff of legend, and we sincerely salute you for your service.

Next, I'd like to thank my colleagues on City Council, as well as Spoleto's friends at the federal, state, county and city levels -- including and especially our own Piccolo Spoleto team, led by our director of cultural affairs, Scott Watson. Thanks to their efforts, this year's Spoleto Festival will once again be joined by its companion festival, Piccolo Spoleto, with more than 500 free or low cost events and exhibits, featuring classical music, jazz, dance, theater, poetry readings and more.

Finally, I'd like to thank someone whose name you may not know, but whose hard work and sacrifice have helped make this festival possible throughout so much of its long history. Are you out there, Mattie? Please stand.

Not long ago, Marion "Mattie" Pyatt retired from the City of Charleston Parks Department after more than thirty years of dedicated service. Mattie was one of the people who did all of the things that Spoleto and Piccolo Spoleto could not do without. He put out chairs for concerts. He

built stages. He made sure that the park was ready for the upcoming performance. And then he helped make sure it was cleaned up for the next one.

In short, Mattie Pyatt was and is a Spoleto man in full. And I'd like to ask you to join me now in thanking him, and in thanking all the men and women who've worked alongside him over the years in rain and shine to make this festival the tremendous success it is. Thank you, Mattie. It is our honor to salute you today for your service, and for your commitment to excellence in all that you've done for our city and its citizens down through the years.

And there's that phrase again. Commitment to excellence. It's an idea that seems to come up every year at this time, and for good reason. For Spoleto is not just an arts festival; it's also a great call to excellence for our whole city, as the world's finest artists and performers show us once again of the true meaning of that word -- and of our own capacity to achieve it.

Of course, some of us -- well, at least one of us, anyway -- are sometimes given the opportunity to stand on a Spoleto stage not because of our own excellence, but because of another's. And that will be my very great privilege this year, as Charleston Jazz Initiative co-founder Karen Chandler and I discuss the life and legacy of my great uncle, Joseph "Fud" Livingston, with with music critic Larry Blumenfeld at the Simmons Center Recital Hall this Sunday night.

Born here in Charleston just after the turn of the last century, Uncle Fud was a clarinetist and jazz pioneer who played alongside such all time greats as Red Nichols, Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller and Jimmy Dorsey. Even more, he was the composer several popular songs of his day, including Feelin' No Pain, Imagination and Harlem Twist -- and of the great jazz standard, I'm Thru With Love.

Uncle Fud has been both a fascination and an inspiration to me throughout my life. And I'm genuinely thrilled to be able to bring him, and his work, back to his hometown on the greatest stage our city has to offer.

It was one of Uncle Fud's contemporaries, the poet-laureate of twentieth-century crime fiction, Raymond Chandler, who said, "Without creativity, there is no art. Without art, there is no idealism. Without idealism, there is no integrity. Without integrity, there is nothing but production."

Creativity. Art. Idealism. Integrity. These are the qualities that every great Spoleto artist shares -- and the values that this great festival brings to our city each and every year.

And so, Maestro, once again, the clock strikes twelve, the song begins, and for the next 17 days, the play is the thing.

Thank you, and welcome one and all.

The forty-first Spoleto Festival USA has begun!