

Spoletto Festival USA

Live from Spoleto 2025: Chamber Music

By Eva Chien

Chamber music at Spoleto Festival USA is not a genre — it is a way of listening. Across the two albums that comprise *Live from Spoleto 2025: Chamber Music*, music unfolds as conversation: between performers, between centuries, and between traditions that might otherwise never meet. Recorded live during the Festival’s famously concentrated 17-day span in Charleston, South Carolina, these performances capture what makes Spoleto singular — not polish alone, but presence, risk, and human connection.

For Dr. Mena Mark Hanna, General Director and CEO of Spoleto Festival USA, that sense of risk is essential to the Festival’s identity. “Spoleto is about adventure and excitement — about how different art forms can collide with each other to create something new,” he explains. The chamber music series, he notes, is one of the Festival’s core artistic pillars, shaped by the same DNA of curiosity and daring that animates the entire program.

That DNA is embedded directly into the music heard across both volumes. *Live from Spoleto 2025: Chamber Music, Vol. 1* moves fluidly across stylistic boundaries: Dinuk Wijeratne’s *Love Triangle* opens with an almost mischievous blurring of tuning and performance, pulling listeners immediately into a world where structure and spontaneity coexist.

Paul Wiancko, the Festival’s Director of Chamber Music, describes this quality as central to his curatorial vision. “I look for the energy of improvisation in everything,” he says — music played with such deep understanding that it feels newly invented each time.



album artwork



album artwork

That spirit carries throughout *Vol. 1*: the hushed, time-bending textures of Trueman and Mugan's *Ricercar*; the fiery, character-rich Pequeña Czarda, brought to life by Steven Banks' singular voice on the saxophone; the luminous stillness of Borodin's *Nocturne*, offered not as repertory staple but as a moment of shared breath. Even in works listeners know well, the live setting reshapes the experience.

Live from Spoleto 2025: Chamber Music, Vol. 2 "Vivaldi Meets Vahdat" deepens the sense of dialogue across time and culture. Mahsa Vahdat's songs are interwoven with movements from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, creating a listening experience that reframes both worlds. For Wiancko, the pairing was a deliberate leap — and a necessary one. He describes it as an experiment rooted in intuition, one that allowed listeners to "live in her world for an entire program," rather than encountering her music in isolation. The result is a continuous emotional narrative, where Persian song and Baroque concerto speak to one another across centuries.

For Hanna, this kind of temporal and stylistic conversation is fundamental to Spoleto's mission. He sees the Festival as a place where art across eras communes in real time, offering listeners both continuity and renewal. "Reaching across centuries into unexpected places gives you faith in the fundamental experiment of human expression," he reflects — a reminder that music's urgency does not diminish with time, but renews itself through encounter.

Taken together, the two *Live from Spoleto 2025: Chamber Music* albums — *Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2 "Vivaldi Meets Vahdat"* — are not simply documents of performance, but invitations into the Festival's inner life. These recordings offer what Hanna calls a "sampler of the aura of Spoleto" — a way to experience its intensity beyond the 17 days in Charleston, while still preserving the sense that something singular is happening in the moment of sound. What emerges is music not as refinement alone, but as lived exchange: artists listening deeply,

audiences leaning in, and music revealing — again and again — why it continues to matter.

Live from Spoleto 2025: Chamber Music, Vol. 1

Dinuk Wijeratne (b.1978) — Love Triangle

Geneva Lewis, violin · Jay Campbell, cello · Soyeon Kate Lee, piano

Love Triangle is both playful and profound: a sonic geometry in which three voices collide, repel, and reunite. Rhythmic volatility and stylistic openness drive the work forward — jazz pushes against classical architecture, while South Asian inflections shimmer beneath Western European counterpoint. Across fifteen minutes, tension becomes motion, harmony becomes embrace, and silence becomes breath. Wiancko points to this sense of freedom as central to the piece's impact: "The energy of improvisation is written into the music itself — it forces performers to be brave and fully present." That spirit is palpable in this performance, shaped by instinctive rapport and combustible intimacy.

Dan Trueman (b. 1968) & Monica Mugan (b. 1967) — *Ricercar* (arr. Owls)

Alexi Kenney, violin · Ayane Kozasa, viola · Gabriel Cabezas, cello · Paul Wiancko, cello

In *Ricercar*, Trueman and Mugan reimagine the Baroque form not as a historical replica but as a living movement. The Owls arrangement stretches contrapuntal melodies into new shapes: plaintive lines fold into each other; harmonies murmur like folk songs half-remembered.

Pedro Iturralde (1929-2020) — *Pequeña Czarda* for Saxophone and Piano

Steven Banks, saxophone · Soyeon Kate Lee, piano

With gypsy soul, *Pequeña Czarda* channels the improvisatory energy of Eastern European dance. Steven Banks brings both virtuosity and lyric heat to the saxophone's mercurial role, shifting from melancholy to exuberance in a

single breath. The piano anchors the music's sudden turns and accelerations.

Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)
— *Nocturne from String Quartet No. 2 in D major*

David McCarroll, violin · Melissa White, violin · Celia Hatton, viola · Paul Wiancko, cello

Borodin's *Nocturne* is one of chamber music's purest offerings, a melody suspended in perpetual twilight. The quartet plays with tenderness and patience, allowing the lines to bloom organically, like breath shared among friends.

Terry Riley (b. 1935) — *G Song*

Alexi Kenney, violin · Geneva Lewis, violin · Ayane Kozasa, viola · Paul Wiancko, cello

Minimalism rendered warm and human, *G Song* flows with Terry Riley's signature blend of repetition and improvisatory grace. Patterns loop and morph as the players shape the piece through deep listening, letting its pulses breathe and its colors glow. Within the album's stylistic breadth, *G Song* offers a meditative center — a place where time seems to widen.

Dobrinka Tabakova (b. 1980) — *Moreni for Clarinet, String Quartet, and Piano*

Todd Palmer, clarinet · Geneva Lewis, violin · Melissa White, violin · Celia Hatton, viola · Jay Campbell, cello · Pedja Mužijević, piano
Tabakova's *Moreni* unfolds as a landscape in sound: earthbound, luminous, and shaped by Balkan timbres. Clarinet, strings, and piano interweave rhythms with long, singing lines, revealing a dual nature — ancient ritual and modern reflection, joined at the root. Wiancko describes the piece as “full of the magic of first discovery,” a quality that resonates clearly in this live performance.

Mahsa Vahdat (b. 1973) — *Improvisation*

Mahsa Vahdat, voice · Daniel Chong, violin · Daniel Phillips, violin · Geneva Lewis, violin · Livia Sohn, violin · Jessica Bodner, viola · Ayane Kozasa, viola · Raman Ramakrishnan,

cello · Paul Wiancko, cello · Anthony Manzo, bass · Pedja Mužijević, piano

Mahsa Vahdat's voice carries the lineage of Persian song: ornamented, searching, luminous with longing. In this improvisation, she sings into open space, and the ensemble responds — sometimes as halo, sometimes as shadow. Meaning is formed in real time, like a prayer not yet written. For Hanna, moments like this define Spoleto's ethos: “It's about adventure — about allowing artists the space to take risks and create something new in the moment.”

Caroline Shaw (b. 1982) — “Other Song”

Steven Banks, saxophone · Alexi Kenney, violin · Melissa White, violin · Celia Hatton, viola · Gabriel Cabezas, cello

“Other Song” feels like a memory of a melody — familiar yet constantly shifting. Steven Banks' brings new color to Shaw's lyricism, with the saxophone acting as both narrator and witness. The music hovers just beyond articulation, a song glimpsed through morning light.

Live from Spoleto 2025: Chamber Music, Vol. 2 “Vivaldi Meets Vahdat”

Mahsa Vahdat (b. 1973) — *A Thousand Birds Will Chant Your Song*

Mahsa Vahdat, voice · Jessica Bodner, viola · Ayane Kozasa, viola · Raman Ramakrishnan, cello · Paul Wiancko, cello · Anthony Manzo, bass · Pedja Mužijević, piano

This song draws on Persian melodic tradition, pairing Vahdat's vocal line with chamber textures that emphasize continuity and lyric expression. The setting highlights the interaction between voice and ensemble, allowing the melody to unfold with restraint and focus.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) — *The Four Seasons “Summer” Presto in G minor*

Daniel Chong, violin · Daniel Phillips, violin · Geneva Lewis, violin · Livia Sohn, violin · Jessica Bodner, viola · Ayane Kozasa, viola · Raman Ramakrishnan, cello · Paul Wiancko,

cello · Anthony Manzo, bass · Pedja Mužijević, piano

This movement depicts the height of summer through rapid figurations and driving rhythms. Sharp contrasts and virtuosic passagework evoke the intensity of a sudden storm, with the ensemble emphasizing clarity, momentum, and rhythmic precision.

Mahsa Vahdat (b. 1973) — *Dialogue With the Beloved*

Mahsa Vahdat, voice · Daniel Chong, violin · Daniel Phillips, violin · Geneva Lewis, violin · Livia Sohn, violin · Jessica Bodner, viola · Ayane Kozasa, viola · Raman Ramakrishnan, cello · Paul Wiancko, cello · Anthony Manzo, bass · Pedja Mužijević, piano

Structured as an intimate exchange between voice and instruments, this work emphasizes clarity of text and sustained melodic phrasing. The ensemble provides a supportive, transparent framework that underscores the song's contemplative character.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) — *The Four Seasons* “Autumn” Adagio molto in D minor

Pedja Mužijević, piano · Daniel Chong, violin · Geneva Lewis, violin · Daniel Phillips, violin · Livia Sohn, violin · Jessica Bodner, viola · Ayane Kozasa, viola · Raman Ramakrishnan, cello · Paul Wiancko, cello · Anthony Manzo, bass

The *Adagio molto* offers a moment of repose within the cycle. Long, sustained lines and restrained harmonic movement create a sense of calm and reflection, allowing the ensemble to focus on balance, tone, and expressive control.

Mahsa Vahdat (b. 1973) — *Vaya Vaya*

Mahsa Vahdat, voice · Daniel Chong, violin · Daniel Phillips, violin · Geneva Lewis, violin · Livia Sohn, violin · Jessica Bodner, viola · Ayane Kozasa, viola · Raman Ramakrishnan, cello · Paul Wiancko, cello

Vaya Vaya is characterized by a steady rhythmic pulse and recurring melodic figures. The arrangement balances vocal expressiveness with ensemble accompaniment, creating forward motion while maintaining a sense of lyrical continuity.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) — *The Four Seasons* “Winter” Allegro non molto in F minor

Livia Sohn, violin · Daniel Chong, violin · Geneva Lewis, violin · Daniel Phillips, violin · Livia Sohn, violin · Jessica Bodner, viola · Ayane Kozasa, viola · Raman Ramakrishnan, cello · Paul Wiancko, cello · Anthony Manzo, bass · Pedja Mužijević, piano

Marked by repeated figures and sharp dynamic contrasts, this movement conveys the tension and stillness of winter. The ensemble highlights its rhythmic bite and structural clarity while maintaining a controlled, measured pace.

**For more information, please contact
Krista Williams or Carla Sacks at Sacks & Co., 212.741.1000,
krista@sacksco.com or carla@sacksco.com.**