

Spoletto Festival USA

Live from Spoleto 2025: Orchestra

Live from Spoleto 2025: Orchestra captures symphonic music in its most vivid state — alive, unfiltered, and charged by the presence of both performers and audiences. Recorded during the 2025 Spoleto Festival USA season, the album preserves performances shaped by urgency, trust, and the singular energy that only live music can generate.

At the heart of the recording is the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra, an ensemble defined by artistic excellence and forward momentum. For Music Director Timothy Myers, that momentum is inseparable from the festival itself. “Spoleto is a place where musicians arrive ready to give everything,” Myers said. “There’s an intensity here — a sense that every performance matters because it’s happening right now, in front of people who are fully present.”

That immediacy is central to the album’s identity. As Michael Hostetler, CEO of Phenotypic Recordings, notes, “watching extraordinarily talented musicians at the beginning of their careers — is where the magic happens.” The orchestra’s sound is fueled not by routine, but by commitment, curiosity, and the thrill of discovery.

The program itself reflects that spirit. Shawn E. Okpebholo’s *Stellar* opens the album with clarity and propulsion, its bright gestures setting an expansive tone. Jean Sibelius’s Violin Concerto, performed by Alexi Kenney,



album artwork

anchors the recording with elemental force and introspective lyricism. Myers describes the concerto as “music that demands vulnerability from everyone onstage — soloist and orchestra alike — and that shared risk creates something incredibly powerful.”

The album closes with Richard Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* Suite, a work of sumptuous color and nostalgic joy. Under Myers’ direction, the orchestra balances grandeur with immediacy, reminding listeners that even the most luxurious music gains new life when experienced in the moment.

For Phenotypic Recordings, preserving that moment is essential. Hostetler explains, “live performance brings risk, spontaneity, and humanity — and that’s exactly what we want listeners to hear. The mission here is to make

sure that the world has an opportunity to truly experience the best performing arts festival in the world.”

Shawn E. Okpebholo – *Stellar* (2024)
Premiere Recording

Stellar opens the album with a burst of kinetic energy and radiant color. Shawn E. Okpebholo’s music often draws on narrative and spiritual reflection, and here the orchestra is in motion — with bright, fleeting gestures coalescing into a larger arc. *Stellar*, composed in 2024, features harmonic clusters that flare like distant constellations and becomes a point of orientation—an invitation to expand the ear beyond the horizon.

For Timothy Myers, *Stellar* was a natural choice to set the tone for the recording, “It feels like a spark. It immediately brings everyone into the same shared space of attention and energy.” That sense of collective focus is palpable in performance, as the orchestra navigates the piece’s precision and momentum with alert intensity.

Jean Sibelius – Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47

Alexi Kenney, violin

Sibelius’s Violin Concerto stands at the intersection of elemental force and inward reflection. Its vast landscapes and fierce rhythmic drive frame a solo line that is at once virtuosic and searching. In Alexi Kenney’s hands, it becomes not only a display of virtuosity but a work of raw introspection. The concerto’s vast landscapes, shadowed lyricism, and elemental power emerge with striking clarity, carried by a solo line that seems to

challenge the orchestra before finally merging into its pulse.

Violinist Alexi Kenney’s interpretation balances clarity and intensity, allowing the concerto’s raw lyricism to emerge without sentimentality. Hostetler hears in this performance “a tension you only feel when musicians are taking real risks together,” he says. “That’s something you don’t want to smooth out — it’s where the excitement lives.” Captured in concert, the Sibelius becomes not just a monument of the repertoire, but a living, breathing act of collaboration.

Richard Strauss – Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*

Closing the album, Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* Suite offers a radiant contrast — sumptuous, nostalgic, and unapologetically theatrical. Waltzes bloom and dissolve; humor and tenderness coexist in music that glows with late-Romantic warmth. For Myers, the challenge lies in balancing polish with immediacy. “It’s incredibly lush music,” he notes, “but it still needs to feel spontaneous — like something unfolding right in front of you, not something preserved under glass.” Under his direction, the orchestra leans into both elegance and momentum, keeping the music buoyant and alive.

Hostetler hears the suite as a fitting culmination to the album’s arc. “There’s joy in this music,” he says, “and joy is something you really feel at Spoleto — between the musicians, the audience, and the city itself.” As the final chords fade, the suite leaves listeners with a sense of celebration, bringing the orchestral journey to a luminous close.

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