

Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

Carolina Arts is the Largest and Most Read Publication Covering the Visual Arts in North and South Carolina in the Universe - Period!

That's a correct statement until proven wrong. I don't say things like that as I don't think we need to - people familiar with our publication know we have no competition. But, some folks seem to have a need to boast titles they have not earned or deserve.

The Spoleto Festival USA, which will take place in Charleston, SC, later this month, from May 24 through June 9, 2019, is the largest art event taking place in South Carolina and probably the Southeast. And, it doesn't even have a visual art component. The Piccolo Spoleto Festival, which takes place in Charleston at the same time as the Spoleto Festival is probably an even larger art event, but stands in the shadow of the Spoleto Festival. Combined, the two festivals present the largest offering of visual, literary, and performing arts in South Carolina and probably the Southeast - if not in the nation. There is nothing else in South Carolina which compares or even comes close. Anyone and everyone involved in the arts in South Carolina knows that.

So why would a small town located in the Pee Dee area of South Carolina claim that their nine day visual art event is the largest art event taking place in the South? I'm torn between ignorance and an outright lie. But it could be both.

ArtFields is eight days shorter than the Spoleto and Piccolo festivals and doesn't come close to offering the same number of events. Maybe they think it's that big because it involves artists from 12 States, but Spoleto and Piccolo draw artists from throughout America and the World. Perhaps they feel the \$140,000 they award to artists during the competition, although the largest

I know of for a visual art competition, gives them the right to claim to be the biggest art event, but again both Spoleto and Piccolo deal in millions of dollars to put on both festivals. And, displaying over 400 works of art is a lot, but I've been to art exhibits and competitions at the SC State Fair in Columbia, SC, which displayed almost 500 works of art and I'm sure there are art displays throughout the South showing as much, if not more art.

Last year, ArtFields tried to claim that one of their new venues was the largest art venue in South Carolina when it wasn't even the largest art venue in the county they are in. But, maybe no one involved with ArtFields has been to the new Florence County Museum or the Gibbes Museum of Art, Columbia Museum of Art, Greenville County Art Museum, Spartanburg Art Museum, etc.

What drives these folks in Lake City to make claims they can't live up to? Is it small town envy? Is it delusional leadership? Or, is it that they don't think anyone will come to their event without the stretch of truth?

Lake City's ArtFields event is an amazing event for a small town in the middle of nowhere in South Carolina. And, it is a great opportunity for artists in South Carolina, North Carolina, and a few artists in the other 10 States eligible to enter this competition, but it is not the largest art event in the South or South Carolina.

I used to be a big supporter of ArtFields, but it was lies like those mentioned here that turned me off of this event. I won't be a cheerleader for ArtFields anymore and the reason you don't see them mentioned in this publication, except in editorials, is that they don't send us info about their event after I expressed my discontent over their claims and hidden secrets about attendance and how winners are selected.

37th Annual North Charleston Arts Fest Set for May 1-5, 2019

The annual North Charleston Arts Fest is set to take place May 1-5, 2019. The celebration of arts and culture highlights the talents of national, regional, and local artists and performers in the areas of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and literature. Performances, activities, and exhibits are scheduled to take place in a variety of venues throughout the city of North Charleston, SC, including libraries, community centers, businesses, and parks. Many of the offerings are free, and those that are ticketed are moderately priced.

Recognized by the Southeast Tourism Society as a Top 20 Event in both 2008 and 2018, the North Charleston Arts Fest is now entering its 37th year. Arts Fest offerings include concerts ranging from classical to contemporary, theatre presentations, dance performances, children's programs, workshops, demonstrations, lectures, exhibitions, receptions, public art installations, and more.

The City of North Charleston Cultural Arts Department, which organizes and presents the event, is introducing some major changes to this year's festival programming. Most notable is the discontinuation of the two-day Arts Fest Expo at the Charleston Area Convention Center, and introduction of the one-day World Arts Expo at North Charleston Riverfront Park. The new event will be held on Saturday, May 4, from 11am-5pm, with free admission and parking. "A number of factors have encouraged us to switch our focus in 2019 to a new event that highlights some of the most popular components of the Arts Expo we've previously produced at the Convention Center," explains Cultural Arts Director Kyle Lahm.

"The World Arts Expo is our new flagship event celebrating visual and performing arts from cultures around the world. Patrons can enjoy the spring weather while experiencing a diverse line-up of music and



Animal Brass

dance performances, live art demonstrations, multi-cultural food offerings, art & craft vendors, hands-on activities, roving entertainment, and a kid's zone."

Despite this change, Exhibit Hall A at the Charleston Area Convention Center will continue to host the Arts Fest's *Judged Art & Photography*, *South Carolina Palmetto Hands Fine Craft*, and *Tri-County Youth Art Exhibitions* during the entire run of the Arts Fest, May 1-5. Viewing hours are Wednesday, May 1, 6-8pm (opening reception); Thursday-Saturday, May 2-4, 10am-6pm; and Sunday, May 5, noon-6pm. Another new event called the Arts Fest Exhibition Encore will be introduced in 2019 as a means to spotlight these exhibits. The Exhibition Encore on Sunday, May 5, from noon-6pm, serves as a closing reception and celebration, allowing patrons to view the artwork in a festive atmosphere and make final decisions on purchases. In addition to the vast array of artwork on display, the event offers musical entertainment, live art demonstrations, hands-on activities, and more.

Theatre and dance offerings during this year's Arts Fest include everything from showcases and improv comedy sketches, to one-woman shows and full stage productions. Award-winning sister act Gracie & Lacy make a dazzling return to the Arts Fest in a dinner theatre performance of *Gloriously Gatsby* on Wednesday, May 1, at the North Charleston Marriott. Their Jazz Era throwback production showcases the glitz and glam of the 1920s & 30s through song and dance. Theatre 99 will be doing a little song and dance of their own by taking on-the-spot audience suggestions during their popular *Improv Riot!* comedy show, which is popping up at The Sparrow in Park Circle on the same evening.

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Gracie & Lacy in *Gloriously Gatsby*

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Lady in White Productions will offer a one-night-only performance of *Big Mama* on Friday, May 3. The original musical,

written by Ade Ofunniyin and directed by Samelia Adams, centers on performers' experiences as members of the Theatre Owners Booking Association, the vaudeville circuit for African American musicians, comedians, and actors in the 1920s. Arts Fest patrons can also catch a musical at Midtown Productions. Their reprise of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Don Black's West End and Broadway hit musical *Tell Me On a Sunday* has a 15 show run taking place between May 2 and 18. The production stars Allison Sharpley and is directed by Sheri Grace Wenger, who received the 2013 Theatre Charleston Award for "Outstanding Director of a Musical" for her work on this production. Dancefx Charleston will present its second annual storybook show, *Wonderland*, on Saturday, May 4, at the Fort Dorchester High School Auditorium. The production features a series of dance performances woven together with narrated scenes from the beloved tale of *Alice in Wonderland*. Fort Dorchester will also host a Youth Dance Showcase featuring perfor-

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