

Staging Charleston: The Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

by

Colleen K. Reilly

Bachelor of Arts, College of Charleston, 1995

Master of Arts, University of South Carolina, 2000

Master of Library and Information Science, University of Pittsburgh, 2005

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2009

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Arts and Sciences

This dissertation was presented

by

Colleen K. Reilly

September 4, 2009

and approved by

Attilio Favorini, PhD, Professor, Theatre Arts

Kathleen E. George, PhD, Professor, Theatre Arts

Deane L. Root, PhD, Professor, Music

Dissertation Advisor: Bruce McConachie, PhD, Professor, Theatre Arts

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Colleen K. Reilly, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2009

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is a seventeen day international arts festival held annually in Charleston, South Carolina. While the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. perpetuates many of the cultural practices of the hegemonic community of Charleston, it also participates in negotiations of culture on the contemporary global stage. The Festival and the City rely on one another to constitute an identity that is consumable for a tourist and/or festival audience, and this relationship became even more urgent after Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Hurricane Hugo serves as a peripeteia of the self-fashioning and self-reflexive narrative shaped by the Charleston elite since the 18th century, and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. serves as the agent of its denouement.

This function of the festival impulse in the contemporary urban setting of Charleston, South Carolina will be the focus of this dissertation, which will examine the relationship between the “placedness” of the historical city and the “placelessness” of the festival atmosphere. This study will identify the features of the festival impulse that engage history, memory, and community and negotiate the territory between “place” and “space”. It will compare the historical imaginary of the city with its contemporary identity as an international tourist destination and identify the strategies employed by the festival to destabilize homogenous worldviews and remap the geography of memory in Charleston’s past and present.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many debts were incurred in the undertaking of this PhD. Foremost, I would like to thank my dissertation advisor, Bruce McConachie, for his high standards and steadfast counsel. I would like also to thank my dissertation committee: Buck Favorini, for his intellectual example and mentorship; Kathleen George, for her inspiration to write well and often; and Deane Root, for his invaluable perspective.

My gratitude goes also to the Department of Theatre Arts, the Center for Instructional Development and Distance Education, and Kuntu Repertory Theatre for the teaching fellowships that sustained me throughout my residence at the University of Pittsburgh. Vernell A. Lillie was a powerful presence in my early career at the University of Pittsburgh, and I thank her. I am also grateful to Carol Washburn for her mentorship and guidance in my development in teaching.

This work would not have been possible without the full support of the academic community at the University of Pittsburgh, particularly the faculty and staff (past and present) of the Department of Theatre Arts. I am grateful for the kind assistance provided by Stephanie Barna at the Charleston City Paper, Gene Waddell and the staff of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Archives at the College of Charleston, and the librarians at the South Carolina History Room at the Charleston County Public Library. I was able to travel to Charleston and dedicate considerable time to my early research and prospectus development through the Summer Fellowship Award.

The impetus for this dissertation emerged from Buck Favorini's *Memory Theory* seminar my first semester at Pitt, and the research methodologies and historical frameworks were deeply informed by additional graduate seminars with Bruce McConachie, Lynne Conner, and Kathleen George. I also acknowledge my peers in the graduate program for their enthusiasm throughout this process, particularly Michelle Sullivan and Lofty Durham.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Sean and Brandy Sullivan, John Warrick, Nancy Young, and the folks at Theatre 99 for their unwavering friendship and support. Lynne Conner offered sage advice and heartfelt encouragement throughout this process. Her patience, wisdom, and good humor sustained me. I thank her for my freedom.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: Susan Craddock; Shawn, James, and Ethel Reilly; Hammond, Katherine, Christopher, and Chase Johnson; and Kenneth and Gail Leblanc. It is also dedicated to Paul Slater, who had the courage to tell me that I misspelled "Introduction" and the faith to love me regardless. To him I owe the greatest debt.

1.0 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING THE FESTIVAL IMPULSE

Festival studies have long overlooked the urban arts festival in the United States, focusing instead on programs in Europe, the United Kingdom, and Canada. These studies are generally formulated either as documentation of festival events or biographical description of the impresarios who guide the festivals to fruition. Both of these approaches marginalize the impact of the “festivalization” of an urban space, and detach the study of festivals from the places which host them.

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is one contemporary urban arts festival that has escaped both approaches to performing arts festival study. Founded in 1976 and continuing today, the festival is comprised of seventeen days of opera, theatre, music, dance, and visual arts staged in civic venues and public spaces scattered across the Charleston peninsula. As an annual event that has eluded either a documentary project or an in-depth study of its founder, Gian Carlo Menotti, it provides an opportunity to explore this new territory in festival studies.

Historically, performing arts festivals have been rooted to a particular place, and/or a specific time, as in the City Dionysia, the Medieval Pageant Cycles, and the Feast of Fools. The transformation of time and space is the primary characteristic of the festival impulse. Alessandro Falassi has described the temporal reality of a festival as a “time out of time” while contemporary tourist studies characterize festival sites as kinds of *places out of place*.

Contemporary festival attendees are often tourists; thus, they participate in the transformation of spatial and temporal experience in an embedded tourist experience.

In their study, *Remaking Worlds: Festivals, Tourism, and Change* David Picard and Mike Robinson note that “throughout the instances of European touring during the 18th and 19th centuries, the concentrated time-space frame of the festival helped to make visible the social life of ‘foreign’ townscapes and landscapes that, while rich in historic and architectural significance, often lacked animation.”¹ This modern relationship between festival, city and tourist is also investigated by Peter Marx, who argues that historic festivals were revived by the bourgeois class of the 18th century and resulted in “entirely a commercial affair” such as David Garrick’s Great Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769.² Garrick’s festival, void of any stagings of Shakespeare’s plays, included popular entertainments, horse racing, and other spectacles. In spite of this ironic exclusion of Shakespeare from the Jubilee, Matthew J. Kinservik notes that Garrick began the “vogue of bardolatry” in Stratford. This vogue remains a vehicle for festivalization in a global context, with Shakespeare festivals proliferating across the world.

¹ Picard, David and Mike Robinson. “Remaking Worlds: Festivals, Tourism, and Change.” *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds*. Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2006. 1.

² Marx, Peter W. “festivals of theatre” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*. Ed. Dennis Kennedy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Web. 28 January 2008.

In his article “Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism,” Dennis Kennedy argues that the model for modern cultural festivals arrived through “the great tourist agent Richard Wagner” and his Bayreuth Festival (1876). He argues that these arts festivals engaged in two main activities: “enveloping an audience” through found or designed festival spaces and “encouraging a sense of pilgrimage to a sacred locale” by controlling the festival calendar and location.³

The models of Garrick’s/Stratford’s/Shakespeare’s Jubilee and Wagner’s Bayreuth provide the genealogy of festival performance in which the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is rooted. The City of Charleston is occupied by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. rather than the festival arising through the “normal” activities of the urban space. The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is a commercial affair that animates the historic city. In her article, “The Placeless Festival: Identity and Place in the Post-Modern Festival,” Nicola E. Macleod notes that “cultural festivals” and mega-events have become part of a more generalized city archetype; the organization of such events has been applied as a repetitive formula to facilitate destination promotion, cultural regeneration schemes, and the reviving of unpopular venues.⁴ Thus, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. cooperates with the city’s attempts to promote itself as a tourist destination.

³ Kennedy, Dennis. "Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism," *Theatre Journal* 50.2 (1998): 176.

⁴ Macleod, Nicola E. “The Placeless Festival: Identity and Place in the Post-Modern Festival.” *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds*. Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2006. 228.

Kennedy's alignment of festivalization and cultural tourism and Macleod's evaluation of contemporary cultural festivals are crucial to this study of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. and the City of Charleston. In this project I define the strategies that Charleston and the Festival have employed to "envelop" its audience: the development of a tourist district, the rehabilitation of municipal places, and the marketing of the city center. I will also examine the ways in which the Festival and Charleston participate in the notion of a "pilgrimage," through tourist activities, performance locations, and the transformation of urban space. Finally, I will focus on the places of festival performance revived by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. - the City's theatres, auditoriums, and sites of visual arts installations.

While the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. perpetuates many of the antiquated cultural practices of the hegemonic community of Charleston, it also participates in negotiations of culture on the contemporary global stage. The Festival and the City rely on one another to constitute an identity that is consumable for a tourist and/or festival audience, and this relationship became even more urgent after Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Hurricane Hugo serves as the peripeteia of the self-fashioning and self-reflexive narrative shaped by the Charleston elite since the 18th century, and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. serves as the agent of its denouement, destabilizing homogenous worldviews and remapping the geography of memory in Charleston's past and present upon its haunted stages.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

The complexity of the urban arts festival invites a cultural discourse in which many theories converse. As Jacques Revel has argued, "Why make things simple when one can make

them complicated?”⁵ Since both the City of Charleston and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. are largely unnoticed participants in the discourses of urbanity, performance, and culture, I have undertaken a microhistorical approach through which to examine and interrogate their performative features.

As a cross-disciplinary approach rooted in archival evidence, microhistory provides the contextual atmosphere in which the features of the festival and the city can be traced across times and spaces. Contextualizing, in microhistory, is the “formal, comparative placing of an event, form of behaviour or concept in a series of others which are similar though they may be separated in time and place.”⁶ This contextualization is essential to this examination in two ways. First, it allows for the unearthing of multiple layers of history, memory, and performance given the multiple places in the city that the Festival has appropriated over time. It also permits the disruption of a strict chronology, allowing for the juxtaposition of performances that are serving similar cultural, memorative, or performative functions at different points within the Festival history.

These performances will be referred to and discussed within the discourse of what Ric Knowles has defined as “materialist semiotics,” the second key theory operating in this examination. Knowles’ approach to the reading of theatrical events employs multiple viewpoints

⁵ Revel, Jacques. “Microanalysis and the Construction of the Social.” *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*. Eds. Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt. New York: New Press, 1995: 439.

⁶ Levi, 108.

derived from cultural materialism, phenomenology, and semiotics “to provide a model for site-specific performance analysis that takes into account the specifics and politics of location.”⁷ This approach roots the discussion of the theatrical events, their production, and their reception not only in the particular historical landscape of Charleston, South Carolina, but also in their manifestation at Spoleto Festival U.S.A. (as compared to alternative stagings as parts of other festivals, tours, or collaborations).

Knowles’ approach invites comparison to Willmar Sauter and the International Federation of Theatre Research’s studies of “theatrical eventness” and “festivalizing.” Each of these contexts provides an opportunity to investigate the transmissions between the performance, the conditions of its reception, and the conditions of its production as a “playful exchange,” one in which some cultural work is being completed. The theatrical event is the coherent space in which these transmissions occur. Sauter defines it in four parts:

The performance itself, the encounter between stage and auditorium, was called Theatrical Playing, and remained the nucleus of the event in its narrow sense – the time and the place of the event. But this event is also part of the Playing Culture in a society, which includes such ‘playful’ activities such as sports, movies, carnivals, as well as other performative events like political demonstrations, religious services, civil ceremonies, etc. The status and the traditions of theatrical events within the realm of public life affects to a large extent the Cultural Context of a society, in which cultural politics, media attention, economical support and

⁷ Knowles, Ric. *Reading the Material Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 12.

legal regulations are negotiated. The societal frames have, again, a direct impact upon the Contextual Theatricality, through which theatrical events are both locally organized and historically defined.⁸

By applying the methodology of Knowles' materialist semiotics to the conceptualization of the theatrical event (by considering Theatrical Playing, Playing Culture, Cultural Context, and Contextual Theatricality), this study will be able to account for the event and its complex audience in a localized setting while pointing to the larger cultural implications. Furthermore, by looking at the "festivalization" of the theatrical events the broader narratives of the material economies of audiences, commodities, and sites can emerge.

While Knowles provides a coherent methodology for reading theatrical events as they relate to place, this examination will also consider the negotiation of cultural memory between the festival, the city, and the audience. This study will rely primarily on Pierre Nora's discussion of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), and *milieu de mémoire* (environments of memory), to investigate the ways in which memory operates through the festival events and urban geography to promote or undermine the cultural mission.

In his essay, *Between History and Memory: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Nora distinguishes between "*lieux de mémoire*, where memory crystallizes and secretes itself" and "*milieux de*

⁸ Sauter, Willmar. "Introduction: Festival Culture in Global Perspective." *Theatre Research International* 30.3 (2005). 238.

mémoire, real environments of memory.”⁹ He marks the loss of the *milieux de mémoire* through the eradication of communal or collective transmissions of memory by the processes of historicization. For Nora, “Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things.”¹⁰ The creation and erasure of memorative sites is a process inherent to the life of any urban space, and this inquiry will examine the agency of the festival to activate (or suppress) the memorative features of a site-specific place or experience.

Nora’s sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) will be discussed in relation to individual performances and installations, and to what extent they mark the disappearance of an “immense and intimate fund of memory”¹¹ in the community constituted by Festival participants. Furthermore, the “Festivalization” of the City of Charleston will be explored as a potential re-emergence of Nora’s environment of memory (*milieu de mémoire*) as a contemporary space through which communal memory is transmitted. The use of Nora’s memorative processes to examine these sites not only measures the cultural work of the theatrical event but also the persistence of memorative residues in shifting urban geographies and performances. Memory theory will serve to respond to the question of what the festival can activate to change in an urban geography and what remains essential and immutable to a given time and place.

⁹ Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”

Representations 26 (1989): 7.

¹⁰ Nora, 9.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 12.

In Chapter Two I take a closer look at the recent past in Charleston which gave rise to its current urban condition. In particular, this chapter provides an overview of the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition (1901), the Historic Preservation movement (1920-) in which the development and protection of a “Historic District” were fashioned, and the establishment of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. (1977). In this chapter I demonstrate the strategies of “staging place,” that the City of Charleston has employed over time and their emphasis on controlling the urban landscape and the historical memory of the peninsula.

Chapter Three examines the relationships between the festival and tourism, marking the shift from a culture of tourism to a touristic culture after Hurricane Hugo (1989). The chapter also connects the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. to modern cultural festivals through an exploration of the notion of “pilgrimage” as it operates for the festival community comprised of artists, residents, and tourists. It examines the audience’s travel patterns, not only as tourists who choose the City and the Festival as a destination, but also as pedestrians navigating the peninsula.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six look closely at the performance spaces rehabilitated by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. after Hurricane Hugo, tracing the city’s geography of memory through its performance on festival stages. In Chapter Four I examine the Festival’s *Places with a Past* site-specific art installation series and document the increasing theatricality through which the Festival engages the built environment of the peninsula.

Chapter Five looks at festival performance at the site of the oldest municipal theatre in the United States, the Dock Street Theatre. Chapter Six explores the renovation of the oldest municipal theatre in Charleston, Memminger Auditorium. The histories of both theatres are problematized by the shifting demographics of the peninsula over time and troubled local mythologies. This is further complicated as the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. gains momentum in the

years after Hurricane Hugo. In the final chapters I employ Knowles's conceptualization of the two manifestations of the "festival context" in which "placelessness transform[s] strong and culturally specific work into mere presentation."¹²

Chapter Five examines the intersections of the Dock Street Theatre, Dubose Heyward's *Mamba's Daughters*, and the festival context through the first of these senses in which "metaphor, analogy, or 'local color,' allow audiences and critics to detach themselves from the specific social issues under active negotiation in the plays and retreat into discussions of theatrical form and technique."¹³

Chapter Six explores the festival context, Memminger Auditorium, and *The Peony Pavilion* through Knowles's second theory of "national representation," in which a festival production comes to represent a nationhood "unrecognizable" to its home country. Both conclusions regarding the festival context point to the development of a touristic culture.

In conclusion I investigate the annual Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Finale, staged northwest of the peninsula at Middleton Place Plantation. The cycle of festivalization which plays out in the urban space of the city concludes on the plantation site, simultaneously looking back to the nostalgic past of the Charleston landscape while pointing to its urban future.

¹² Knowles, 182.

¹³ Ibid, 182.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO: STAGING HISTORY IN CHARLESTON

Charleston's current urban condition is framed by a tradition of "staging place" as a means to control the commercial and memorative environments of its urban spaces. In this chapter I argue that "staging place" is not only integrated into the cultural and economic fabric of the City of Charleston, but also that this tradition of the formation of performative and theatrical events emerges as a precedent for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

In this chapter I foreground the creation of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. with previous cultural events that engage the City's strategies of identity formation. I contextualize the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition and the Historic Preservation movement through the lens of Sauter's *cultural context* and *playing culture* to establish the performative traditions at work in the City's cultural fabric.

Sauter argues that "Cultural Contexts face towards the cultural, political, and social worlds of which every theatrical event is a part."¹⁴ This context is necessary to establish the particular cultural milieu of the City of Charleston, which has largely been shaped in isolation from larger paradigmatic shifts in the national cultural movement. Furthermore, *playing culture* points to the familiar modes of expression between performer and spectator. It becomes

¹⁴ Sauter, Willmar. "Introducing the Theatrical Event." *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames*. IFTR/FIRT Theatrical Event Working Group. New York: Rodopi, 2004. 12.

important to the Charleston tradition as it traces the persistence of the antebellum narrative and the features of that built environment that are sustained within the City's limits.

Sauter's *playing culture* points to a genealogy of "play" in the repetition of the Exposition's tourist experience throughout later cultural manifestations. In this chapter I argue that the "playing culture" of the peninsula is one in which the tourist experience is enveloped in the built and ideological environment of antebellum culture.

The privileging of the white elite memory of the antebellum Lowcountry¹⁵ is problematic given the racial atrocities which produced the prosperity of the plantation culture. The post-Reconstruction Charleston elite not only romanticized the role of the African American in their culture, but insisted on maintaining the image of the African American within that romanticization. While the urban contemporary African American was erased from the peninsula through dislocation and gentrification, the rural African American became a powerful participant in the cultural imagination of the white elite. I recognize that the "Negro Question"¹⁶ dominates the discussion of the urban south after Reconstruction; however, the scope of this study is limited to particular events in which that struggle impacts the development and persistence of festivalized space.

¹⁵ "Lowcountry" is a commonly used regional term referring to Charleston and the surrounding area of sea islands.

¹⁶ In referencing African Americans throughout this work, I use terms reflective of the historical context.

2.1 PLAUSIBLE SCHEMES, MOSTLY OF A PLAUSIBLE NATURE: THE SOUTH CAROLINA INTERSTATE AND WEST INDIAN EXPOSITION

Charleston stumbled towards the twentieth century recovering not only from the aftershocks of the Civil War (1861-1865) but also a massive earthquake in 1886. While the military conflict deeply impacted the social and economic fabric of the once thriving port city, the earthquake toppled the urban infrastructure, causing nearly \$6 million in damages to streets and structures. Over 60,000 people were displaced as a result of the disaster, but the following year Charleston hosted its first Gala Week to celebrate the recovery of the city.

For two months preparations have been in progress for the great festival which will begin tomorrow- ‘Gala Week’ it is called here. There is to be no exposition of the wonderful material resources of the State, but the entire week will be given up to general jollification. ... Doubtless some of the old-fashioned saints in the churchyards hereabout will turn over in their coffins, but young Charleston, new Charleston, earthquake Charleston is bound to keep up with the procession in spite of all preconceived notions of propriety.¹⁷

Gala Week continued as an annual event until the end of the century, although the focus of its celebration turned from general “jollification” to the demonstration of national pride and the hopes for that exposition of the state’s material resources. In 1892 the *New York Times* reports that in addition to the prevalence of the “Stars and Stripes” on public buildings, private

¹⁷ “Charleston’s Gala Week: In Honor of the City’s Resurrection.” *New York Times*. 31 Oct. 1887.

residences, and ships in port and the marked absence of the Confederate flag, "...this celebration was designed to be an everlasting memorial of the gratitude of the city for the assistance of the Nation in the time of its distress."¹⁸

The inception of Gala Week marks the participation of Charleston in the post-Reconstruction New South, or what Charleston historian Robert N. Rosen describes as the "Americanization" of the southern city. This movement was characterized by its spirit of national reconciliation; hence, the removal of the Confederate flag and the installation of the national symbol. Federal funding was a critical motivation for the City's outreach beyond its borders. The formerly insulated economy was in dire need of outside sources of capital.

In the final decade of the 19th century, Charleston received many improvements as a result of a federal coastal defense plan which included installation of a permanent army garrison, harbor dredging and development, and the eventual transfer of the naval base in 1901. This was in spite of the trade volume of the city port dropping from \$98.5 million in 1890-91 to \$29.5 million a decade later as Charleston's share of the total United States export dropped below 1 percent.¹⁹ The massive development of the city was achieved by the white elite of Charleston and resented by the interior and upcountry of the State, but the City maintained the delegate majority and held its voting power. The state's interests in this political climate were the

¹⁸ "Charleston's Gala Week." *New York Times*. 1 Nov. 1892.

¹⁹ Fraser, Walter J. *Charleston! Charleston! The History of a Southern City*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1991. 327-328.

interests of the City of Charleston, and the evolution of the fall festival from Gala Week to civic spectacle to exposition was essential to the City's ability to promote itself on the national stage.

From December 1, 1901 to May 31, 1902, the City of Charleston played host to the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition. At the time the Southern states represented the majority of agricultural interests for the nation, and the Exposition was a strategy to formalize trade routes to the West Indies and the United States territories acquired through the Treaty of Paris (1898). South Carolina had previously appeared in and benefited from the New Orleans Exposition (1885), the Chicago World's Fair (1893), and the Atlanta Exposition (1895).

As Robert Rydell describes, "The international expositions in the south originated from three sources: embarrassment felt by New South ideologues over the poor showing of southern resources at the Philadelphia and Chicago fairs; successful local industrial and cotton expositions sponsored by the same interests in Atlanta and in Waco, Texas; and most important, the nationwide search for new markets to alleviate the industrial downturns of the national economy and concurrent social protests."²⁰

The exposition was formally suggested by Col. John H. Averill, who had served as Georgia Railroad's commissioner for the Nashville Exposition (1897), and had relocated to the area as the general manager of the Charleston, Sumter and Northern Railroad lines. He approached the city's Annual Fall Festival Committee with the bid:

There is no agency so effective in bringing about good and great results as a credible Exposition. The resources and possibilities of our state are large. The

²⁰ Rydell, Robert W. *All the World's A Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. 6.

products of our waters, fields, and forests will make no inconsiderable display, and our industries are rapidly bringing the State into greater and greater importance with those who have capital to invest, and who are especially concerned in the development of industrial enterprises.²¹

These comments were subsequently printed in an 1899 letter to the *Tri-Weekly Charleston Courier*, published by J.C. Hemphill, a tireless advocate for the Exposition and the City. Hemphill aligns Averill's Exposition suggestion with the local discussion of creating a permanent auditorium for the Charleston metropolitan area. He argues, "The advantage of building a substantial and permanent auditorium was that it could be used not only as a meeting place for great assemblies, but would always be ready, and especially adapted, for the accommodation of industrial expositions."²² Charleston recognized that in order to perform on the national stage it needed a performance space.

Averill's suggestion of the exposition was met with mixed enthusiasm. In a letter to *The Nation*, an anonymous critic, "Honesty", refers to the event as a "one horse show, dignified by a long and high sounding name."²³ The author cites the planned exposition as an example of "another raid" on federal funds by the City of Charleston, and refers to the "standing committee of the town" as those who "concoct plausible schemes, mostly of a plausible nature" to obtain and distribute federal funds.

²¹ Hemphill, J.C. *Charleston Tri-Weekly Courier* 7 Oct. 1899: 4.

²² Hemphill, J.C. *Charleston Tri-Weekly Courier* 7 Oct. 1899: 4.

²³ Editorial. *The Nation*. 24 May 1900.

The anonymous complaint cites the recent channel dredging and construction of a Customs House and Post Office as a drain on the state's allocation for federal funds secured by the voting majority of the city's population, and points to the non-viability of the port for the relocation of a naval base, already thriving in Port Royal, approximately 60 miles southeast of Charleston. In a subsequent editorial to *The Nation*, Hemphill responds that the author is "Honest, But Not Truthful,"²⁴ summarily defending the city and its exposition, construction efforts, and review of the viability of the existing port. Hemphill argues that "'Honesty' has not told the truth in substance or detail from the beginning to the end of his communication."²⁵ The exchange continues but is eventually terminated by the editor of *The Nation*, who scolds, "We cannot publish any more letters on this subject."²⁶

The United States Congress, it seems, shared the sentiment expressed by the weary editor. While the plans for the exposition proceeded, Congress maintained an unprecedented refusal to provide the federal funding that it had previously granted to the Atlanta and Nashville expositions. However, Charleston's merchant class, who largely resided on the lower end of the peninsula, interceded and provided the sufficient funds for the exposition to proceed.

²⁴ Editorial. *The Nation*. 7 June 1900.

²⁵ Editorial. *The Nation*. 26 May 1900.

²⁶ Editorial. *The Nation*. 19 June 1900.

Construction for the Exposition began in December of 1900, and architect Bradford L. Gilbert was advised by the Exposition Company to maintain “a typical Southern character and motif.”²⁷ This mandate would pervade in Charleston for years to come.

In his study of the sensory perception of the city, John Urry traces the ways in which “people encounter the city through the senses,” particularly sight, and notes that the hegemony of vision, the rise of photographic practices, and sensuous geography all contribute to the consumption of urban space. He connects this privilege of sight to geography and its characterization of the “world as exhibition”:

This discipline appears to have developed on the basis of the visual representation of the world, through the world conceived of and grasped as though it were a picture. It is presented as an object on display, to be viewed, investigated, and experienced. Central to geography have been the culturally specific visual strategies of both landscapes or townscapes and maps. These have reinforced a particular Western view of the world. They reduce the complex multisensual experience to visually encoded features and then organize and synthesize them into a meaningful whole. They both capture aspects of environment and society through visual abstraction and representation; both express distance and objectivity from what is being sensed; and both organize and express control or

²⁷ Chibarro, Anthony. *The Charleston Exposition*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2001. 25.

mastery over what is being viewed, thereby ushering in new ways in which
visuality is complicit in the operation of power.²⁸

The application of this visual landscape scheme and the accompanying notion of world-as-exhibition provide a valuable means to examine the spatiality of the Charleston Exposition. The Exposition was situated in the northwest sector of the Upper Peninsula, on waterfront property some distance from the Port of Charleston. The president of the Exposition, F.W. Wagener, donated the use of his 250-acre farm and plantation house.

The Exposition abutted the Washington Race Course, the site of horse racing for the elite classes since the antebellum period. The Washington Course had hosted an annual Race Week each February, which dovetailed into the winter opening of the exposition. Figure 1 shows an 1877 rendering of the Charleston peninsula, its lower boroughs, the Washington Race Course (upper left hand corner), and the projected line of the Charleston neck. In 1877 the map area comprised the entire physical and ideological expanse of the urban area of Charleston, with the boundaries of the Ashley River, Cooper River, and the Charleston neck bleeding into the largely rural suburban areas. The Exposition was staged in this liminal urban space between the Lower Peninsula and the greater Charleston region; however, it also utilized a territory that had long been associated with Charleston's elite *playing culture*.

²⁸ Urry, John. "Sensing the City." *The Tourist City*. Eds. Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein. New Haven: Yale UP, 1999: 76-77.

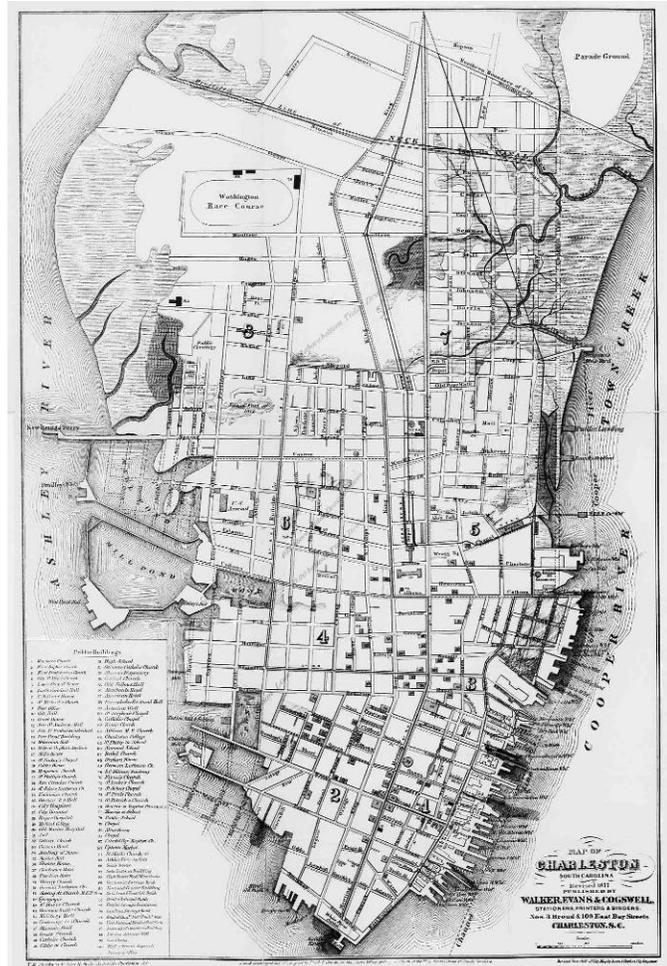


Figure 1. Charleston Peninsula, 1877²⁹

Rail travel was an important element to the exposition, not only because Averill's railroad interests encouraged the event, but also because of the city's interest in creating a rail infrastructure for the import and export of goods through the West Indies trade corridor. Visitors

²⁹ *Charleston Peninsula, 1877*. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia. Web. 1 June 2009.

arrived at the Exposition almost entirely by rail, and preparations for the Exposition spurred the construction of rail inroads to and from peninsular Charleston. Furthermore, the Exposition rail provided waterfront access on the Ashley River, which extends to the Charleston harbor and Atlantic Ocean.

In addition to the rail construction, the Exposition buildings that populated the site were constructed specifically for the event. While visitors could enter and exit the Exposition freely, they were encouraged to follow a designated route of navigation by the official program of the Exposition.³⁰ This route invited visitors to enter through the Administration Building of the Exposition Company through the primary exhibits of Mines and Forestry, the Palace of Commerce, the United States Treasury, State Department, and Smithsonian Exhibits. From there they were prompted to enter the Cotton Palace which included the exhibits of the textile industry, the Missouri and Illinois state exhibits and the Education Exhibit. The Cotton Palace also included the Philippine and Bureau of South American Republic exhibits, emphasizing the potential for Charleston to act as a gateway from the Midwest to the South American industries.

These associations continued through the Southern Railway exhibit, adjacent to the United States Agricultural, Post Office, Navy, and War sites. These led to the Palace of Agriculture which aligned the South Carolina State Building with the Louisiana, Oregon, Florida, New Mexico and Iowa State Exhibits, pointing to South Carolina's participation in the national narrative of progress while highlighting its contributions.

³⁰ *Official Guide: The South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition, Charleston, S.C. and Surroundings: 1901-1902.* Charleston: Lucan-Richardson, [1901?]. See Appendix A.

From the palaces, the visitor was encouraged to sightsee through the Bazaar Building and the Midway which opened to the West Indian Building and the Cuban and Puerto Rico Exhibits. The strategy of mediating these exhibits through the markets associated with the commercial ventures of the Midway and the Bazaar points to the economic aims of the Exposition.

The visitor was next encouraged to mirror their own rail journey by taking the Exposition's miniature railroad across the grounds to the Woman's Building, Louisiana Purchase Building, Negro, Guatemala, Cincinnati, and Illinois Buildings. The journey concluded with a visit to the Art Palace, a cruise across the "Venice of America," Juanita Lake, and finally, the Fireworks Park. This doubling of journeys positions the visitor in a layered landscape of visual consumption, first consuming the tourist experience of arrival at the Exposition, Urry's "world as exhibition," and next engaging the Exposition as a doubled "exhibition as world." The cultural context of the Exposition balanced local color with national commercial interests.

This hermetic vision of the exhibition was troubled by protests surrounding a sculptural exhibit planned for the exterior of the Negro Building and commissioned by the Exposition's Board of Directors.



Figure 2. Negro Group Statue by Charles A. Lopez³¹

The statuary design depicted three African American figures among decorative elements of cotton, tobacco, and banana: a female with a basket of cotton on her head, a male holding a plow and leaning on an anvil, and a second male resting with a banjo. One critic characterized the design as depicting the “moral, agricultural, and educational” aspects of the race.³²

Scholar William D. Smyth cites letters to Booker T. Washington, the chief commissioner of the Negro Department of the Exposition, from the designer Bradford Lee Gilbert that suggest

³¹ *Samuel Lord Hyde Photographs*, Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

³² Smith, T. Cuyler. “The Charleston Exposition.” *The Independent*. 16 Jan. 1902.

that the first male figure was meant to embody the “ideal...recognized and acknowledged leader,” Washington himself. The white Board of Directors expressed enthusiasm about the sculpture and its portrayal of the African American figures engaged in “appropriate” industries. However, the African American community was appalled by the reductive characterization of the active Black community. They demanded that the sculpture be placed among the statuary at the Court of Palaces. There, it seemed, it could be contextualized as a metaphor rather than a monument.

The intervention of the African American community illuminates the contested narrative of the City’s integrated present and its antebellum past. While the Board of Directors did not seek to make the African American invisible to the Exposition tourist, it did attempt to negotiate the identity of the contemporary African American through the idealization of agrarian labor as a continuous function of the race in the Americanization of the South. A vision for a contemporary African American fully participating in the New South was displaced by the foil of the familiar caricature.

The notion of “exhibition as world” was emphasized by the material culture of the Exposition. Many of the buildings were created in Spanish colonial style, pointing back towards a historical period in which Charleston was at the height of its imperial power, affluence, and grace. However, this period is also irrevocably tainted by Charleston’s wholesale participation in the slave trade, and its development of an agrarian economy utterly dependent on slave labor. By 1901 the population of Charleston had absorbed a generation of emancipated African Americans into its already substantial free Black population and the peninsula, although legally segregated, was largely integrated due to the constraints of the three miles of geography which comprised the City neck to point.

2.2 RAISING THE (BAR): THE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION MOVEMENT

The economic aims of the Exposition were undermined by the lack of federal support and an unusually harsh winter which resulted in lower than expected paid attendance; however, almost 675,000 people passed through the colonial gates. Charleston's collateral economies benefited from this influx of tourists, and the city's elite channeled the momentum of the Exposition into a larger cultural movement. The tradition of "staging place" was explored through the creation of house museums, national historic sites, and, later, a serious attempt at festivalized culture, the Azalea Festival. The zoning and protection of the City's colonial past became the focus of the elite community's attention as boundaries for tourism and development were created.

As the staged colonial landscape of the Exposition was being dismantled and destroyed, two historical colonial structures sparked a cultural intervention on the Lower Peninsula: the Powder Magazine and the Old Exchange Building. As Edwin Chase Charles describes, "Early preservation efforts had a specific ideological motivation: saving the city's remaining colonial era structures for educational purposes."³³

The Powder Magazine served Charleston as a military facility for storage of gunpowder through the nineteenth century. The National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of South Carolina acquired the property in 1902 and not only used it as their meeting site but also

³³ Charles, Edwin Chase. "Charleston: Guarding Her Customs, Buildings, and Laws." *Historic Preservation Forum*. 13.1 (1998): 7.

operated it as an onsite museum through 1993. The Daughters of the American Revolution played a similar early role in their acquisition in 1913 of the Old Exchange Building, the former city hall and customhouse of the eighteenth century.

The maintenance and interpretation of these museums and their sponsoring heritage associations point to the persistent cultural context of the Americanization of the city of Charleston. As Charles argues, “The motivation in both cases was the same: to acquire and preserve those buildings associated with past events which would physically reflect Charleston’s contribution to the development of the nation.”³⁴ However, for many Charlestonians, the intervention of these associations demonstrated an interest in and dedication to a heritage that could be traced back several generations to the origin of Charleston’s white European colonial families. As Weyeneth posits, “... preservation of local heritage was frequently inseparable from preservation of family history. ...The collective memory of civic conservators inspired their efforts just as it informed their ideas of what constituted meaningful history.”³⁵ Scholars frequently cite the vogue of Charleston’s elite fascination with genealogy, custom and family heirlooms.³⁶ The Historic Preservation movement became an outlet for the white community’s anxiety about the changing urban landscape.

³⁴ Charles, 7.

³⁵ Weyeneth, Robert. *Historic Preservation for a Living City: Historic Charleston Foundation 1947-1997*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000. 20.

³⁶ Doyle, Don H. *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990. 159-88, 226-45.

In 1920 the first of many historical preservation societies in Charleston was established. The Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings (SPOD) was created by Susan Pringle Frost to protect and preserve local histories. Frost had served as the stenographer for Bradford Lee Gilbert, the architect for the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition, and her exposure to the construction of the Exposition informed much of her architectural aesthetic.

The white elite anxiety over vanishing communal memory crystallized in 1920 when the Joseph Manigault House (1803) was threatened for demolition. The rice planter's urban mansion had been designed by Gabriel Manigault, a prolific nineteenth-century Charleston architect, and had eventually been divided into a tenement and a retail laundry. It seemed destined to be transformed into a Ford automobile dealership until SPOD intervened.

This was due in part because of the property's familial ties to inheritors of the rice plantation aristocracy. SPOD acquired the property through a massive bank loan. However, this early acquisition was troubled with debt, and by 1922 SPOD had sold the garden to the Standard Oil Company and agreed to lease the home to African American tenements. This triangle of heritage, commerce, and manipulation of community would become the signature of the Historic Preservation Movement.

This triangle is reflected in the cultural movement of the early twentieth century as well. In 1905 the Gibbes Memorial Art Gallery opened its doors and in 1910 Charleston established its own Art Commission. 1910 also marked the year in which the Smithsonian recognized the weaving of sea island grass baskets as a National Folk Art. For the white community, the physical landscape of Charleston, its architecture and gardens, and the African American engaged in traditional crafts, became a primary preoccupation of visual artists in the City. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, and Anna Heyward Taylor produced

architectural renderings, prints, and watercolors that received national attention and led to the establishment of the Charleston's Etchers Club in 1923. The importance of their work was not only the development of an artistic community rooted in peninsular Charleston but also the highly marketable and mass-produced prints of the city's buildings and landscapes that circulated internationally in the early quarter of the twentieth century. As Martha R. Severens states in her article *To Sell the City of Charleston*, "By the mid-1920's good publicity and enticing images had made Charleston a tourist and artist destination."³⁷

This commodification of the city's vernacular, the peaceful coexistence of antebellum architecture and lush gardens, and old family lineages contributed to the development of a salon culture in which the Charleston elite courted their counterparts in other major metropolitan areas. Fortunately the relatively mild winters and successful national marketing of the city brought an influx of seasonal dwellers who contributed to the city's emerging cultural movements.

The presence of a large number of wealthy Northerners in the Charleston area had a tremendous impact on the Carolina Lowcountry. Among the tangible economic gains were enhanced employment and the assumption of property taxes by outsiders. Many of the winter residents, although not all, contributed to the cultural life of Charleston, as patrons of artists and as donors to the Gibbes Art

³⁷ Severens, Martha R. "To Sell the City of Charleston." *Renaissance in Charleston: Art and Life in the Carolina Low Country: 1900-1940*. Athens, GA.: The University of Georgia Press, 2003. (48)

Gallery and the Dock Street Theatre. Many restored plantation houses, thereby contributing to the area's emergent preservation movement.³⁸

Lena M. McCauly argues, "That Charleston, S.C. may claim honors as an art center in America is the belief of pilgrims who go there to worship at the shrine of spring... Everywhere one turns there appears the inexhaustible picturesqueness of Charleston, and on every side an artist has set up an easel in his devotion."³⁹

It was this "shrine of spring" that inspired the City of Charleston to implement its second major tourist attraction after the Exposition. The Azalea Festival was founded in 1934 in an effort to rival New Orleans' Mardi Gras. The Festival combined the systemic festivity of Gala Week and the structure of the Exposition, containing parades, tournaments, sporting events, water shows, and historical pageants. A state-wide competition was held each year to crown the "Azalea Queen" and an accompanying "Coronation Ball" was held. Not many records exist for this festival, which was transferred to private management in 1947 and concluded in 1953. The Azalea capitalized on Charleston's early spring and the seasonal blooming gardens across the peninsula.

But Charleston was learning that its "picturesqueness" was not, in fact, inexhaustible. Cultural tourism in the first decades of the twentieth century had a price, as collectors became interested in the architectural features of Charleston homes, for private collections and the

³⁸ Twig, Edward. "Charleston: The Great Myth," *Forum and Century* 52.I (1940): 20.

³⁹ McCauley, Lena M., "Renaissance in the South," *Art World Magazine: Chicago Evening Post*, 17 April 1928: 8.

museum vogue of furnishing period rooms as exhibits. Architect Albert Simons feared that these collectors were “the greatest menace to the preservation of old buildings.”⁴⁰

Frost and her Society practiced the “museum solution,” a strategy of incorporating salvaged architectural elements into museum exhibits and opening restored properties to the public to provide income for additional restoration and maintenance of the City’s Architecture. The period of 1928-1947 marked the growth, development, and empowerment of the Preservation Movement in the city of Charleston. The preservation effort consistently relied on Northern capital for its pursuits.⁴¹

In 1931 Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings persuaded the Charleston City Council to establish and zone an Old and Historic District, the first of its kind in the nation.⁴² Article X of the zoning ordinance blended urban planning and preservation goals, and was upheld by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR). The Bar was comprised of a coalition of Charleston’s elite citizenry, consisting of members from the City Planning and Zoning Commission, local representatives of the American Institute of Architects and the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Charleston Real Estate Exchange, and the Carolina Art Association. It maintains authority over exterior architectural features of buildings zoned for the Historic District to this day. By 1959 the BAR could delay demolitions of buildings in the

⁴⁰ Albert Simons to Leicester B. Holland. 9 Nov. 1931. *Albert Simons Papers, 1864-1979*. South Carolina Historical Society. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

⁴¹ Weyeneth, 9.

⁴² Weyeneth, 1.

District and by 1966 it could prohibit them. Figure 3 outlines the initial designation of the Historic District in the lower eastern section of the peninsula in 1931.



Figure 3. The “Old and Historic Charleston District,” 1931

In 1940 Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. performed a major architectural survey of the City and provided the documentation necessary for the expansion of the historic district. This documentation led to the publication of a text, *This is Charleston* (1942), which highlighted Olmsted’s finding and the activities of the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings. A companion exhibit at the Gibbes Museum “consisted of thirty-four panels that offered an analysis of the city and its problems (many of which had been exacerbated by wartime preparations), stressing issues of housing, traffic, public health, recreation, and the physical appearance of the urban environment.”⁴³

In 1947, on the recommendation of Kenneth Chorley, the president of Colonial Williamsburg, the Historic Charleston Foundation was established to fill “the need for an independent, nongovernmental organization which could set its own agenda without ties to any

⁴³ Weyeneth, 30.

existing organization or city politics.”⁴⁴ In 1947 it was one of the first organizations to apply a revolving fund to its preservation efforts, a landmark achievement of the national preservation movement that set the standard for many projects across the nation.

This brief description of the Historic Preservation movement in Charleston serves to point out the activism of the white elite in maintaining the built environment which reflected their generational narratives of prosperity and cultural significance. However, the restoration of the built environment became increasingly important to the economic redevelopment of the peninsular economy as the boom of the World War II naval yard subsided. By 1980 the Old and Historic District had expanded to one half of the peninsula’s land mass, as seen in Figure 4. Gentrification became a powerful component of the world-as-exhibition impulse.

⁴⁴ Weyeneth, 10.

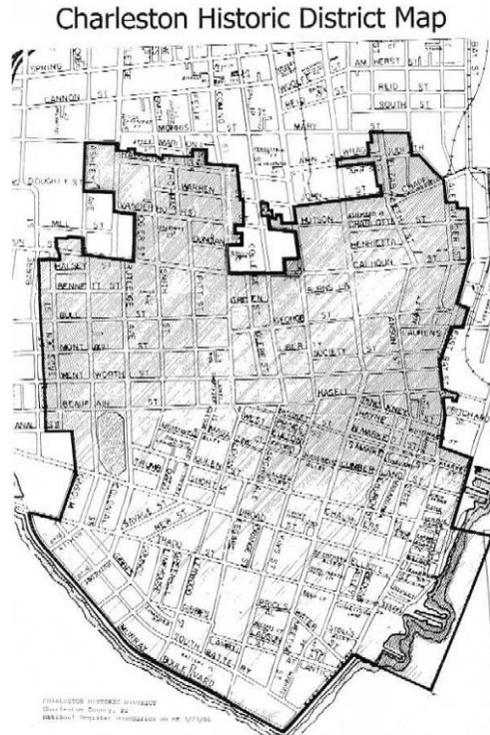


Figure 4. Charleston Historic District, 1986⁴⁵

In her study “Historic Preservation, Gentrification, and Tourism of Charleston, South Carolina,” Regina M. Bures explores the impact on the residential population of the peninsula in the 20th century process of urban redevelopment. She argues that, “Historic preservation, gentrification, and tourism are three related, yet distinct redevelopment processes.”⁴⁶ Burges

⁴⁵ *Charleston Historic District. 1986.* South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Web. 1 June 2009.

⁴⁶ Bures, Regina M. “Historic Preservation, Gentrification, and Tourism of Charleston, South Carolina.” *Critical Perspectives on Urban Redevelopment.* Ed. Kevin Fox Gotham. Oxford: Elsevier, 2001. 207.

uses a mapping of the white and black population movements to point to these processes, concluding, “While the early preservation efforts sought to maintain community, the long term consequence of preservation has been the maintenance of the physical façade of the city and the displacement of the social one.”

Burges uses Calhoun Street, which bisects the peninsula from East to West as the dividing line between populations and historic districts. She cites the U.S. Census of Population and Housing to demonstrate the shift of that population:⁴⁷

Table 1. Summary of Population by Race and Region of the City: Charleston, South Carolina, 1920-1990

		1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
North of Calhoun	Black	34.8	34.5	38.4	39.2	50.7	60.9	60.1	53.9
North of Calhoun	White	29.8	33.3	33.8	32.5	27.7	17.3	14.3	16.7
South of Calhoun	Black	14.3	10.5	6.2	5.9	3.0	3.5	2.9	2.5
South of Calhoun	White	21.1	21.7	21.6	22.4	18.6	18.3	22.7	26.9
	Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	<i>N</i>	65,768	62,239	71,725	70,174	62,165	46,575	40,795	36,540

This data is important to this discussion of the Historic Preservation movement and the built environment of the peninsula because it illuminates three things: 1) the population of the peninsula increased from 1920-1960 and was then marked by a drastic decline; 2) the integrated population of the Historic District (South of Calhoun) which comprised 35.4% of the total population in the 1920s is sharply segregated by 1990 when it contains 29.4% of the total

⁴⁷ Bures, 206.

population; and 3) the percentage of the Black population north of Calhoun shows a gradual increase through 1980.

The preservation ethics and organizations in Charleston have had a lasting impact on the preservation movement in the United States. “The Historic Charleston Foundation has helped to reorient a field of the historic preservation from a purely educational focus on house museums to the current view of preservation as a form of urban and environmental planning concerned generally with the quality of modern life.”⁴⁸

The mapping of the peninsula of Charleston through the perceived architectural, cultural, and social boundaries and the establishment of discrete historical zoning look back to the Exposition and its doubled staging of “world as exhibition” and “exhibition as world.” It also looks forward to the development of urban areas on the peninsula at large as spaces designated for the tourist gaze. Furthermore, it establishes that both the cultural context of the Preservation movement and its playing culture participate in strategies of enclosure, exclusion, and power. As Karolin Frank and Petersen assert, “Historic preservation is a vital means of ensuring that a particular area or place maintains its specific symbolic worth and enables the process of identification. Projects aimed at developing tourism... play a significant role here.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Weyeneth, Robert. xix.

⁴⁹ Frank, Karolin and Patricia Petersen. *Historic Preservation in the U.S.A.* Berlin: Springer, 2008. 140.

2.3 IF YOU BUILD IT *THEY* WILL COME: THE BATTLE OF CHARLESTON

Since the Preservation movement focused on the built environment of the City, it was largely unprepared for the democratization of the tourist industry in the 20th century, as leisure travel and mobility became available to larger sectors of the population. The successful commodification of the City was rapidly becoming *too* successful for the elite of Charleston, who began to express their concern about the influx of less than affluent visitors to the area. The mid-century preservation movement was characterized by shifting political and cultural alliances as communities engaged in identity formation, conflicts over physical and ideological territory, and competing desires to make the city available to tourism while controlling the evolving identities of communities and tourists.

As the rationalization of the City of Charleston focused on sustaining the architectural vernacular, the Charleston area experienced a new wave of growth and development with the impact of the Naval Yard's role in World War II. The influx of labor to the naval base in the 1940's has been likened to a western boom town, as over 25,000 workers descended upon the Charleston area.

Having opened in 1902, the Naval Base had not flourished until the demands of the Second World War, which, along with the completion of a hydro-electric power plant in 1944, brought a substantial increase in the City's population- from 99,000 in 1940 to 157,000 in

1944.⁵⁰ This burgeoning industrial military complex located just north of the peninsula put a tremendous amount of pressure on the city's infrastructure, which had added its first airport in 1929, the same year as the completion of the Cooper River Bridge which connected the peninsula to communities to the east. According to Herbert Ravenel Sass's 1949 perspective, "One immeasurable fortunate fact is this— the old historic Charleston and the new industrial Charleston are geographically separate and distinct, so that industrial development here can be wholly helpful with none of the disastrous cultural sacrifices which progress of this kind involves."⁵¹ However, the peninsula could not sustain this population, and the result was the suburbanization of Charleston. The Northwest section of the peninsula, the former site of the Exposition, became a hotbed of political power as its population surged. Furthermore, neighborhoods were created on the Charleston neck and to the west of the Ashley River. The out-migration of the city's middle class ensued.

This suburbanization marked a spike in the automobile culture which had found itself in opposition to the narrow streets and historic districts of the peninsula. Gas stations were second only to museum collectors for the vitriol of the Preservation movement. The tension between the reliance on a tourist economy and the amenities necessary to attract and keep them continued to grow throughout the twentieth century, as did the conflict between the economic and political

⁵⁰ Sass, Herbert Ravenel. *Charleston Grows: An Economic, Social and Cultural Portrait of an Old Community in the New South*. Charleston, South Carolina: Carolina Art Association, 1949. 28.

⁵¹ Sass, Herbert Ravenel. 28.

interests of the city and the native population of the peninsula deeply immersed and powerfully protected by the agency of the preservation and historical societies.

The topography of the peninsula had changed dramatically since 1909, when Mayor Robert G. Rhett developed its lower west side, building a seawall, filling in 47 acres of mud flats, and creating 191 new lots. His successor, John P. Grace, paved the peninsula's streets and improved city services. He also brought the docks under municipal control, and built the Cooper River Bridge (1929), opening inroads (and outroads) to the east of the peninsula.

The legacy of productive mayors continued with Thomas P. Stoney and Burnett Rhett Maybank, who brought a paper mill to Charleston, created public housing and spearheaded the revival of the Dock Street Theatre in 1937. In 1966 Charleston began construction on a municipal auditorium as a part of an urban renewal project under Mayor J. Palmer Gaillard. The Gaillard Auditorium, located on the western approach of Calhoun Street, served as the primary performing arts venue of the City of Charleston. Seating 2,701 patrons, its construction necessitated the removal and relocation of several private homes and a remapping of the immediate neighborhood.

In 1975 Mayor Joseph P. Riley was elected. His campaign broadly promised to revitalize the downtown King Street shopping district, which had once been a thriving destination for shoppers across the state, but had fallen into serious decline. He proposed a hotel and convention complex for peninsular Charleston to capitalize on the rise in the service industry as a result of tourism and the decline in the industrial military complex. For all purposes his vision for the City of Charleston was one of urban renewal through tourism; "...new urban tourism typically superimposes onto the template of old streets and buildings various combinations of

festival markets and shopping districts.”⁵² The separation of the historic district and the industrial sector noted by Sass in 1947 would be dissolved as the City pursued tourism as its major industry. As Weyeneth notes, “By the mid-1970s tourism had become the city’s leading source of revenue: visitors were coming to Charleston in ever increasing numbers, and they came during all seasons of the year, not just for the southern spring and the spectacular displays of flowers.”⁵³

The preservation community insisted that tourism should only happen on a “human scale” and that Charleston was a “living city.” This paradox of the museum solution which relied on visitors and the insular community of lower peninsula residents demonstrates the preservation community’s desire to control the flow of tourism for personal rather than economic reasons. In 1978 the group Save Historic Charleston Fund joined the fray between the City and the Preservation community claiming, “Charleston is a unique and special place, and residents would be better off if the city were left undiscovered.”⁵⁴

As tensions grew between downtown residents, merchants, and preservationists, Mayor Riley and the City of Charleston announced a plan for the installation of a convention center and hotel complex as the result of a multimillion dollar HUD Urban Development Grant. The

⁵² Fainstein, Susan S. and Dennis R. Judd. “Global Forces, Local Strategies, and Urban Tourism.” *The Tourist City*. Eds. Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. 9.

⁵³ Weyeneth, 80.

⁵⁴ Weyeneth, 102.

complex was to be located on the lower half of the peninsula, well in the Historic District, on a blighted retail block of King Street. It became the focal point for the preservation and commercial interests in the City, devolving into the 1978 “Battle of Charleston”, a conflict between the Mayor and the Preservation Society.

Members of the Preservation Society had a variety of reasons for their opposition to the hotel and convention complex, but in general their views reflected deep and genuine feelings about the incompatibility of massive new construction for the historic district, anxiety about the future of Charleston neighborhoods, and reservations- even hostility- to the prospect of a tourist based economy.⁵⁵

Riley envisioned tourism “as a catalyst, as a way out of the poverty the city’s poor, especially blacks, have always known.”⁵⁶ His dedication to the African American community, a voting base which helped his election immensely, drew harsh attacks from his dissidents, who lashed out at him with the epithets “*Little Black Joe*,” and “*Little Black Sambo*.”⁵⁷ But there were more than racial dynamics at stake, such as the viability of the peninsula and the economic well-being of its broad population.

The Historic Charleston Foundation took a non-oppositional approach and rather than protesting the complex outright, simply made recommendations to scale back the surface area of the complex and preserve the historic facades. This strategy circumvented the statutes of the

⁵⁵ Weyeneth, 102-103.

⁵⁶ Derks, Scott. “The New Battle for Charleston.” *Sandlapper*. March 1981. 30.

⁵⁷ Derks, 29.

Board of Architectural Review and claimed to simultaneously serve the preservation effort and make the King Street shopping district sustainable. But many in the preservation community felt that the Historic Charleston Foundation was itself a façade for a redevelopment agency only cursorily devoted to Charleston's built environment. Its ability to work closely with the Mayor's office tainted its local reputation as a serious preservation organization.

To mitigate the concerns of the larger preservation community the Mayor proposed secondary construction of a Visitor and Welcome Center, adjacent to the Joseph Manigault House, at the top portion of the Historic District above Calhoun Street. Much like the strategy of the tour route of the Southeastern Interstate and West Indian Exposition, establishing this remote point of entry to the lower peninsula provided opportunities for the control of tourist traffic and the designation of tour routes. It also anchored the upper portion of the Historic District and expanded the logistical territory for travel amenities like food, shopping, and lodging. His long range plan for the City included what urban development scholars refer to as the "Mayor's Trophy Collection"- Charleston Visitor's Center, the Charleston Place Hotel and Convention Center, and Waterfront Park. The preparation of the peninsula for the contemporary staging of the city of Charleston both as a historical place and a tourist space was complete.

The crux of the Battle of Charleston lay in the competing strategies of preservation and urban development. Urban scholars argue that these challenges are inherent to the tourist-based revitalization of any post-industrial Society. The resistance of the preservation community to the Mayor's development plan demonstrates their unwillingness both to abdicate control over their familial spaces and to recognize the greater communal need for new industries for the economically depressed on the peninsula. Communal memory had become deeply tied to the built environment of the City, and the threat not only of demolition to that environment, but also

of social pollution by non-affluent tourists was more than the old preservation community would stand. The annual Tours of Homes and Gardens were cancelled in protest.

The Preservation Society had presented itself as a powerful stakeholder in the future of the City of Charleston, particularly as it anchored its tourism in the presentation of its colonial past and historical significance. The non-participation of the Preservation Society, in fact, its refusal to take part in the contemporary tourist movement, created a vacuum for the ideological stage of the built environment of the Historic District. The facades were in place, the gardens were blooming, but the Preservation Society's boycott gave the impression that there was, in fact, nobody home. The empty urban space created in their absence was filled by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

2.4 WHY MAKE THINGS SIMPLE WHEN ONE CAN MAKE THEM COMPLICATED: THE INCORPORATION OF THE SPOLETO FESTIVAL U.S.A. (1977)

The creation of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in 1977 continued the tradition of presenting the City of Charleston as a consumable landscape within the “world as exhibition” framework and capitalized on the tourist industry evolving in the City of Charleston. It also inherited the anxieties of the Charleston elite about the impact of unmitigated tourism on the peninsula and the protection of what was perceived to be the City's high culture.

Early literature surrounding the creation of the American Spoleto Festival in Charleston cited what was perceived to be the many national cultural firsts which had been attributed to the City and absorbed into its memorative landscape:

There is abundant reason for the appropriateness of Charleston, South Carolina, as the site of Spoleto Festival U.S.A. – its pride in sustaining its own rich aesthetic heritage of architectural and botanical treasures, its long-time concern for the educational process (the College of Charleston is the oldest municipal College in the United States), the establishment of a repository of its life style (the Museum of Charleston is the oldest museum in the United States), the forming of the St. Cecilia society in 1762 as an outlet for the musically inclined, the first theatre in American built exclusively for theatrical purposes (the Dock Street Theatre), and the first opera in this country (*Flora*) performed in Charleston in 1735.⁵⁸

While this narrative convolutes the importance of Charleston’s cultural role in a national context, it indicates the intentional alignment of the establishment of the festival with the cultural context and playing culture of the peninsula. This strategy not only mediated the “otherness” of the Italian festival, but also pointed to the Festival as the natural outcome of the Preservation movement.

In 1956 Gian Carlo Menotti founded the *Festival dei Due Mondi* (Festival of Two Worlds) in Spoleto, Italy, with the express purpose to introduce new American talent to a truly international audience, bring young artists into contact with those of the “Old World,” and bring the best of the national art of America to European audiences. *The Festival dei Due Mondi*, or Spoleto Festival, aggressively maintained a young artist program that relied upon top musicians from across the United States colleges and conservatories to serve as the resident chorus and

⁵⁸ Reed, Christine L. Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Program, 1977. See Appendix A.

orchestra. This arrangement allowed these musicians exposure to major players in the international performing arts scene; furthermore, the involvement of this education initiative became the chief source of grant funding for the Italian Festival.

Menotti and the Spoleto Festival relied heavily on the financial support of American philanthropic organizations and national organizations with grants to support educational initiatives. A colorful account of his vision for expanding the Italian festival is depicted in Mary DeForest Geary's memoir *The Fate Behind the Fête: The Story of the Spoleto "Festival of Two Worlds:*

With hard work and study [Gian Carlo Menotti] climbed the ladder to fame. Ascending the steps one by one he was filled with tender thoughts of the land of his birth and devotion to the one to which he had come in his youth. How could he bring them together? He dreamed of bringing American music, art, and dancing to his own people in the form of a Festival.⁵⁹

While this account generously characterizes Menotti's personal interests in the establishment of the Festival, it is likely that the second festival would simply serve to legitimize continuing American support of the Italian Festival. Furthermore, it elides the transformation of the Italian city of Spoleto into a location where the festival could be sustained. "Menotti originally chose Spoleto as the European site for the Festival because of the historical and aesthetic richness of its architecture, the suitability of its facilities, its setting and its accessibility. 'Spoleto was spared

⁵⁹ Geary, Mary DeForest. *The Fate Behind the Fête: The Story of the Spoleto "Festival of Two Worlds."* Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, 1960. 12.

the disfigurements of modern change,” says Menotti. ‘And its historic beauty has remained intact.’”⁶⁰

The features of that Italian city, its “picturesque” location, relative obscurity, and persuadable local interests became Menotti’s criteria as he sought to expand the Festival to the United States in 1977 and Australia in 1986. The franchising of his festival was tied to these distinct notions of place. In 1957 the Festival Foundation, Inc. was established in New York City to provide fundraising and support to the Italian Festival. The Festival Foundation, under Menotti’s supervision, maintained the responsibility of selecting the young musicians to participate in the international exchange. It also served as the chief fundraising agency for Menotti’s festival. In the early 1970’s the Festival Foundation approached the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) on Menotti’s behalf, to investigate the feasibility of an American Festival.

Menotti was first attracted to the Hudson Valley region, but Walter Anderson, Director of Music Programs, encouraged him to look instead to the Southeast, a region lacking in

⁶⁰ “Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Press Release, 1977.” Box 9-1. *Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989*. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

performing arts festivals.⁶¹ In Charleston, Menotti and his staff were courted by philanthropist and Charleston winter resident, Countess Alicia Paolozzi. Paolozzi served as the bridge between the Festival Foundation and the Charleston elite. A \$25,000 audience development grant from the NEA in 1976 announced the intention of the Festival Foundation, Inc. to initiate a festival in Charleston:

Moreover, Festival Foundation, Inc. has received a firm and serious invitation from Charleston, S.C. to establish a “Spoleto Festival U.S.A.,” combining elements of so many fields of artistic endeavor, [it] will rapidly become a major force in the cultural life of the United States and, as our experience in Italy has proven, the economic life of the area selected. Therefore, we seek support from the National Endowment of the Arts towards: (1) the annual audition expenses involved with the programming of the American musical participation in the Festival and (2) full-scale preparation for the development and realization of the first “Spoleto Festival U.S.A.” in Charleston, S.C. in May, 1977. Assistance provided by the National Endowment for the Arts will be used solely for activities

⁶¹ See Hetzler, Sidney Neal. “Two Town Festivals: Signs of a Theater of Power.” PhD Dissertation. Emory University, 1990: 86. See also, Wilbanks, Judith. “Spoleto Festival U.S.A. 1977-1993: The Menotti Years.” MA Thesis. University of Florida, 1996: 43.

within the United States; accordingly, periodic reports will be made to the agency.⁶²

The dual aims of the festival as stated in the application both tie the city to its historical attempts to participate in the national cultural discourse and to reap the benefits of urban renewal through the economic impact of the annual event. The second festival hinged on its potential to function as a non-profit supported by national granting organizations, and its subsequent ability to underwrite the Italian Festival.

The management of the Festival in its first year was shared between Menotti, the Festival Foundation, and a Board appointed in Charleston. But there was immediate resistance on the part of the Charleston board to the vision which Menotti outlined. Unfortunately, the staunchest criticism came from the man appointed as Chair of the Charleston Coordinating Committee, Hugh Lane.

Lane was a former executive of the Citizens and Southern Foundation banks, with a reputation for fiscal responsibility. A resident of the lower historic district, he accepted his appointment with good humor, stating, "Being a man who only knows two tunes, *Dixie* and the

⁶² *Grant application from the Festival Foundation, Inc. to the National Endowment for the Arts*. 14 November 1976. Box 3-1. Spoleto Festival Archives 1956-1989. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

other one, I've got a lot to learn about music, but I'll try."⁶³ Lane apparently packed this "conservatism" when he travelled to Spoleto for the Italian Festival in the summer of 1976 for a first hand experience of what loomed on Charleston's horizon.

He returned from the Italian Festival horrified by his experience, and eventually pledged to return the donations received to date in the campaign that he believed to have misled the public about the nature of the potential Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

I attempted to view the activities in light of our Charleston festival and some thoughts come to mind which may prove helpful. ... the Charleston festival has to be somewhat different from Spoleto because the United States isn't Italy nor is Charleston, Spoleto. We are not only different physically but culturally and my personal opinion is that performances like "Umabatha" and "Pilobolus" are not adaptable to a local audience. In the case of "Umabatha" I believe we would offend many in the black community and the "Pilobolus" is too avant garde for current American audiences.⁶⁴

⁶³ *Letter from Hugh C. Lane to Henry "Teck" Tecklenberg, Jr.* 5 April 1976. Box 5-2. Spoleto Festival Archives 1956-1989. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

⁶⁴ *Letter from Hugh Lane to Nella Barkley, Director of Operations of the Charleston Spoleto Festival U.S.A.* . Box 5-2. Spoleto Festival Archives 1956-1989. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

“Umabatha,” the *Zulu Macbeth*, featured drummers, singers, and dancers of the Phe Zulu Theatre Company recounting the violent career of African warlord Shaka Zulu through a parallel narrative with Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. In addition to being avant garde, “Pilobolus” was exploring body conscious and near nude costuming. Lane’s concerns were complicated by his fear that Menotti and the Festival Foundation would mirror the Italian tradition of offering many of the performances held in churches free of charge. “I would question the wisdom of any free concert in the churches of Charleston for ‘free’ could attract undesirable youth groups who are not musically oriented but out to see what the white folks’ church looks like. Thus, I would strongly urge that the performances of the choir in churches be paid performances by tickets.”⁶⁵ Lane also insisted that the residential areas below Broad Street be free of Spoleto Festival U.S.A. performances, reserved solely for “private parties and receptions.”

The anxieties articulated by Lane upon his return from Italy were shared by the conservative elite; however, much like the Battle of Charleston, more progressive interests prevailed. Lane resigned as chairman and was replaced by Theodore S. Stern, the President of the College of Charleston and a powerful stakeholder in the viability of the City of Charleston.

Stern was approached for the post by Mayor Riley personally. The alliance of the College with the urban renewal movement was timely as the influx of undergraduate students depended on many of the shared amenities of the tourist sector. Under Stern’s leadership the College of Charleston had grown from 432 enrolled students in 1968 to over 5, 000 in 1978.

⁶⁵ *Letter from Hugh Lane to Nella Barkley, Director of Operations of the Charleston Spoleto Festival U.S.A. . Box 5-2. Spoleto Festival Archives 1956-1989. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.*

This was due in large part to Stern's advocacy for the College to become a state institution in 1970.

Stern's ability to create collaborative environments and pave inroads into embattled constituencies proved invaluable to the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., if not to the Festival Foundation. After the initial festival in Charleston in 1977, which was publicized nationally, Stern and Riley pursued major structural changes to the organization to better serve the needs of Charleston's communities.

National publications praised the festival but some locals expressed concerns that the festival was too much like a "sporting event" available only to the affluent and that the annual festival would siphon the resources of the local performing arts organizations. One patron expressed the following in a letter to Stern, "The black community felt totally left out, both in the planning and the performances. They look at this year's festival as a manifestation of white culture only. Since black culture has been a very important part of the general American culture, they feel that the concept of 'A Festival of Two Worlds' should have expanded into its full meaning— black and white."

The Piccolo Spoleto Festival U.S.A., the official outreach arm of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. was established in 1979 to foster community involvement in the festival and to make festival performances available to citizenry of all economic levels. The Piccolo Festival runs concurrent to the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. and shares many of the same performance venues across the peninsula. 1979 also saw the establishment of a biennial Charleston Black Arts Festival.

... A comprehensive celebration of Black Artists and performers from the Lowcountry's contemporary arts scene. Combining outstanding examples from all

the arts disciplines with a major representative exhibition of Black artists from the Southeast region as a backdrop, the festival effectively communicated the significant contributions of the African-American heritage to the cultural life of the region and of the nation. Highlights of this first festival included a duo-piano concert by Wilfred Delphin and Edwin Romain and a major visual arts exhibition at the Gibbes Museum of Art entitled *Reflections of a Southern Heritage: 20th Century Black Artists of the Southeast*.⁶⁶

The development of the separate festivals reflects the complexity of the cultural dynamics of the Charleston community. Wilbanks argues that Mayor Riley, “saw the Spoleto Festival as a chance to restore the city to its status in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—an open, tolerant city at the cutting edge of everything good happening in the United States.”⁶⁷ But, this of course, is only a reiteration of the antebellum perception that the city of Charleston had of itself. The complementary festivals, both endorsed by Mayor Riley, became a strategy that sought not only to capitalize on the full economic potential of the diverse city, but also to include a powerful voting base into participation with the urban renewal process.

After the inaugural festival Riley and Stern moved to incorporate the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in the State of South Carolina. They did this ostensibly to eliminate the necessity for the Charleston Festival to pay sales and amusement taxes to the State by complying with an agreement that Riley made with the state legislature to excuse payment subject to incorporation;

⁶⁶ Office of Cultural Affairs. Charleston, South Carolina. Web. 1 June 2009.

⁶⁷ Wilbanks, 45.

to comply with statutes that required funds borrowed from South Carolina banks to finance South Carolina incorporations; and to permit Spoleto Festival U.S.A. to receive tax exempt status for the donors interested only in contributing to the American festival.⁶⁸

These actions infuriated the Festival Foundation, Inc. which was subsequently dissolved and reorganized as a separate incorporation under the purview of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s Board of Directors. Menotti was convinced of the benefits of local control of Spoleto Festival U.S.A. through a subsequent appointment as Composer in Residence at the College of Charleston, although he revisited the issue and demanded that the use of his name and that of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. be remanded to him after his eventual resignation from the Charleston festival.

Overall, the inaugural festival was largely successful for both Menotti and the City of Charleston. The festival opened with Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, staged on a set invocative of the Charleston single house, an architectural feature unique to the peninsula. The Charleston single house was the predominant Charlestonian residential form at the close of the nineteenth century. The building is one room wide with two or more stories and a piazza along one of its longer sides. It was designed not only to circulate air through the structure during the height of summer, but also to minimize the impact of property tax which was assessed by the amount of property facing the street, and not by the depth of the structure. Invoking this Charleston icon at the inauguration of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. continued the subtle dialogue

⁶⁸ *Letter from Theodore S. Stern to Christopher T. Clark, General Manager of the Spoleto Festival.* 31 January 1978. Box 5-5. Spoleto Festival Archives 1956-1989. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

between the festival space of the performance and the architectural vernacular of the City; and this dialogue became an essential feature of the festival after Hurricane Hugo.

Hurricane Hugo, a Category 5 storm, came across the Charleston Peninsula in September of 1989. Surpassed in property damages and loss of life only by Hurricane Andrew (1992) and Hurricane Katrina (2005), the physical and psychological effects of the hurricane remain evident in contemporary Charleston. This event, which literally “blew the roof off the restored 18th century house the festival use[d] as its headquarters,”⁶⁹ marked a dramatic turn from a festival driven by the artistic vision of Menotti to one responding directly to the economic needs of a struggling urban space.

In their study of urban tourism, Susan S. Fanstein and Dennis R. Judd argue that “places constitute the essence of the tourist experience.”⁷⁰ Since the preservation community had strictly protected the urban geography of the peninsula by limiting the development of new structures and architectural revisions of building façades since 1920, the reconstruction after Hurricane Hugo was guided by this historical lens. Furthermore, the creation of events, celebrations, and festivals ensure year round appeal to tourists and form a persistent marketplace in the spaces and places that draw visitors because of their perceived cultural value. All of these factors contribute to what John Urry characterizes as the “free play of hegemonic visual sense,” much like the early

⁶⁹Kozinn, Allan. “A Calm After the Storm at Spoleto?” *New York Times* 17 May 1992.

⁷⁰ Fanstein, Susan S. and Dennis R. Judd, 4.

strategies of world-as-exhibition at work in the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition.⁷¹

In Charleston, this persistent marketplace is contained on the peninsula, forming what urban policy scholar Dennis R. Judd would come to refer to as a “tourist bubble,” a place (and space) created in the city center where new structures conceived of for a tourist market co-exist with “historic and architecturally significant structures.”⁷² He argues, “Because tourist enclaves are frequently the locations for communitywide celebrations (or, more accurately, corporate-sponsored events that are advertised as such), one must consider the possibility that they help foster community solidarity and spirit.”⁷³ He relates these celebrations to medieval festivals.

The urban geography of the City of Charleston has been shaped by the intentional creation of a “tourist bubble” on the peninsula. With the exception of the Festival Finale at Middleton Place Plantation, the significant programming of Spoleto Festival U.S.A. events take place within this bubble. As urban theorists Susan Fanstein and Dennis R. Judd observe, “A city that tries to build an economy based on tourism must project itself as a ‘dreamscape of visual consumption.’ People expect to experience the heritage, architecture, and culture that make up a city’s essence. A construction of any version of a city’s heritage requires large doses of

⁷¹ Urry, John. “Sensing the City.” *The Tourist City*. Eds. Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein. New Haven: Yale UP, 1999. 76.

⁷² Fanstein, Susan S. and Dennis R. Judd, 9.

⁷³ Judd, Dennis R. “Constructing the Tourist Bubble.” *The Tourist City*. Eds. Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein. New Haven: Yale UP, 1999. 53.

‘mythology, folk memory, and popular fantasy.’⁷⁴ The dynamic play between the dreamscape of visual consumption and the vernacular built environment of the peninsula after Hurricane Hugo will be the subject of the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

⁷⁴ Fainstein, Susan S. and Dennis R. Judd, 7.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE: “NOW CHARLESTON HAS EVERYTHING”

I think the main basis for a successful festival is first of all the scenery of the location. It should be small enough to give a feeling of intimacy and large enough to accommodate tourists. And of course, a festival should have a patron saint. Salzburg has Mozart. Bayreuth has Wagner. Now Charleston has everything. It has the proper atmosphere, intimate and with great warmth. And it has a patron saint, who is much more modest, but is at least alive and very dedicated.⁷⁵

I begin this Chapter with an excerpt from Menotti’s 1992 interview because it points to three essential factors in the relationship between the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. and the City of Charleston: its built environment, its selection as the festival site by Menotti, and its agency in the dynamic process of festivalization. It also speaks to Menotti’s personal identification with historic cultural festival traditions.

In what follows I take up an additional level of Sauter’s layered investigation of the theatrical event, “contextual theatricality.” Sauter continues to be useful to this study because his framing of the theatrical event as a process reveals the dynamic flows of presentation and interpretation in what constitutes a broad cultural territory as the site of theatrical investigation. While the remaining chapters will be dedicated to closer studies of Sauter’s “theatrical playing,”

⁷⁵ Kozinn, Allan. “A Calm After the Storm at Spoleto?” *New York Times*. 17 May 1992.

this chapter will define the “societal frames through which theatrical events are locally organized and historically defined.”⁷⁶

“Festival” and “Tourism” are two of the frames that I have identified for this study of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Although scholars in many disciplines have addressed relationships between theatre and tourism, I look to Susan Bennett whose work on contemporary commercial theatre invites discussion about the relationship between theatre, audiences, cities and tourism. While I do not suggest that the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is an entirely commercial affair, it is clearly tied to the economic flows of the City of Charleston. Furthermore, it has been a key player in the City’s resistance to mass tourism, particularly after Hurricane Hugo (1989).

Hurricane Hugo impacted not only the physical landscape of the City of Charleston, but also the function of the festival in the urban landscape. The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. underwent many significant organizational changes after Hurricane Hugo that point to its role in the negotiation of the City’s identity as a tourist site. I draw on Kevin Gotham’s distinction between cultures of tourism and touristic culture to mark the cultural shift that occurs in Charleston after Hurricane Hugo.

Whereas a “culture of tourism” is premised on the showcasing of local culture to attract tourists, a “touristic culture” refers to the blurring of boundaries between tourism and other major institutions and cultural practices. Specifically, touristic culture is a process by which tourist modes of staging, visualization, and

⁷⁶ Sauter, Willmar. “Introduction: Festival Culture in Global Perspective.” *Theatre Research International*. 30.3 (2005): 238.

experience increasingly frame meanings and assertions of local culture, authenticity and collective memory.⁷⁷

Ultimately, I argue that the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. facilitated the City's transition from a culture of tourism to a touristic culture after Hurricane Hugo. The contextual theatricality, therefore, is also defined by the persistence of staging the City.

3.1 FESTIVALS: WHO NEEDS 'EM?

I take the title of this section from a 1992 essay by Ritsaert Ten Cate, in which he criticizes the marginality of "art" as the goal of festivalization. He cites the lack of definition surrounding the "function" of contemporary festivals "within the larger contexts of a mélange of art and society and the world."⁷⁸ He argues that festivals "can be categorized," and proposes a brief typology of "festivals that operate and survive within their own context" (Avignon and Edinburgh); those "with a strong and simple thematic design" (London International Festival of Theatre and Theater de Welt); and those that produce the "growth industry of cultural Capitollness" (European Cultural Capital Festivals).⁷⁹ He argues that the festivalization of artistic

⁷⁷ Gotham, Kevin Fox. *Authentic New Orleans: Tourism, Culture, and Race in the Big Easy*. New York: New York University Press, 2007. 120-121.

⁷⁸ Ten Cate, Ritsaert. "Festivals: Who Needs 'Em?", *Theatre Forum* 1 (1992): 86.

⁷⁹ Ten Cate, 85-86.

expression in these contexts is fatal, and concludes that performance in this context is transformed merely into a “museum object.”⁸⁰ I submit that the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. falls into the first category of festivals that “survive within their own context”, and pose that the museum-ification of “art” in the festival atmosphere is inevitable in the historicized urban space of Charleston. As Tung observes, the urban space of Charleston operates as a “living museum.”⁸¹

But Ten Cate’s assertion challenges us to consider other typologies in which the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. might operate in order to construct our festival frame. Other scholars from multiple disciplines join this discussion. Victor Turner posits that people in all cultures have recognized the need to set aside certain time and spaces for celebration.⁸² Following Turner, Alessandro Falassi notes that festivals have been found to exist in virtually all cultures, and posits that the “symbolic meaning of the festival is closely related to overt values recognized by the community as essential to the ideology and world view, to its social identity, its historical

⁸⁰ Ten Cate, 87.

⁸¹ Tung, Anthony M. *Preserving the World’s Great Cities: The Destruction and Renewal of the Historic Metropolis*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001. 412-431.

⁸² Turner, Victor. *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982.

continuity, and to its physical survival which is ultimately what festival celebrates.”⁸³ Falassi also identifies various rites that comprise a festival: valorization, conspicuous display, conspicuous consumption, ritual drama, and exchange. Each of these is intended to separate the festival from the everyday and create a “time out of time.”⁸⁴ These broad determinations of festival form and function are underpinned by Stallybrass and White who argue that medieval festivals represented a fundamental ritual of order of Western culture⁸⁵ and point to carnival inversions and the studies of Bakhtin.

In his article, “Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism,” Dennis Kennedy proposes, “Like the restored Olympics at the turn of the century, the arts festivals laid claim to a connection with quasi-religious festivals of ancient Greece, which for theatres were idealized as arenas of political, social, and spiritual integration.”⁸⁶ He posits two essential features of these arts festivals, “First, performances in twentieth-century festivals tended to be placed in unusual designed or found spaces modeled on the circle that encourage a sense of togetherness among

⁸³ Falassi, Alessandro, ed. *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*. Mexico City: University of Mexico Press, 1987. 2.

⁸⁴ Falassi, 3.

⁸⁵ Stallybrass, P. and A. White. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. London: Methuen, 1986.

⁸⁶ Kennedy, Dennis. “Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism.” *Theatre Journal* 50 (1998): 176.

spectators,” and “Second, the location of the festivals and their calendar limitations meant that a large portion of the audiences had to travel to reach them.”⁸⁷ I suggest that the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. conforms to the festival typology that Kennedy proposes, and in its first decade in Charleston is particularly adaptive to the Bayreuth Festival formation.

In 1850 Richard Wagner wrote to a friend and described his scheme for developing a theatre and an audience for his works. He confided, “I am cherishing all sorts of bold and unusual plans, for the realization of which nothing further is necessary than that some rich old uncle should take it into his head to die.”⁸⁸ In the absence of such a generous relative, or comparable philanthropy, Wagner further fantasized in an 1852 letter to Franz Liszt, “I can only imagine my audience as being composed of friends who have assembled in some place for the sole purpose of being familiar with my works- preferably, in some beautiful retreat far from the smoke and industrial odours of city civilization...”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Kennedy, 176.

⁸⁸ Wagner, Richard. *Richard Wagner's Letters to His Dresden Friends*, Theodore Uhlig, Wilhelm Fischer, Ferdinand Heine. Transl. J.S. Shedlock. London: H. Grevel and Company, 1890. 472.

⁸⁹ Wagner, Richard. *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*. Transl. Francis Hueffer. New York, Haskell House, 1969. 189.

Wagner's comments reveal an underlying anxiety about the industrial age, and the "emergent commodification and commercialization of art."⁹⁰ However, Vazsonyi argues that he engages in a paradoxical solution by simultaneously fashioning a dedicated space and cultivated audience seemingly beyond the bounds of commercialism, and then employing marketing strategies and cultural branding within them. While Wagner's actions may not have been self-conscious, they prognosticate the crisis that Ten Cate describes in which festivalized art is overly commodified.

Wagner's first festival in the specially designed Festspielhaus staged his Ring cycle and was an artistic but not commercial success. It was followed by an extensive tour by Wagner to raise money to pay his debts and drive up interest in subsequent performances. This coincided with the rise of cultural tourism at the end of the nineteenth century, and Wagner's second Bayreuth festival proved profitable.

This improvement was due in part to Wagner's ability to gain control over the intellectual property of his stagings and scores. But it can also be attributed to the attractiveness of Bayreuth as a tourist destination. Bayreuth, before Wagner, was not merely another Bavarian town. Situated by the scenic Red River in Northern Bavaria, it had inherited baroque parks, gardens, and an opera house from a former Princess of Prussia, who had made her home there.

The juxtaposition of Wagner's maturing artistic vision for "gestamkunstwerk" and his selection of Bayreuth as the site for his "beautiful retreat" where his friends "gather for the sole purpose of familiarizing themselves with [his] work" suggests that the city itself might become

⁹⁰ Vazsonyi, Nicholas. "Marketing German Identity: Richard Wagner's Enterprise."

German Studies Review 28.2 (2005): 331.

an aspect of the total art work. This is evidenced in the first staging of *Parsifal*, which Wagner contextualized at Bayreuth by titling the opera, “A Festival Play for the Consecration of the Stage”.

The medieval content of the *Parsifal* narrative, an Arthurian myth of the Holy Grail, invokes tropes of pilgrimage and redemption. Act I of the opera finds Parsifal travelling purposelessly upon a holy site where he finds the wounded King of the Knights of the Grail. In Act II he begins his quest to heal the King, finds himself besieged by Flower Maidens, and is metaphorically “lost” and “found” again through the seductive advances of the opera’s antagonist and his resistance to them. In Act III he returns to the holy site with the means to heal the King, having retrieved the spear which pierced Christ at the Crucifixion. The opera concludes with the appearance of a white dove, a symbol of Christian mercy, descending to place itself on Parsifal’s brow.

The performance of this narrative “consecrating” the festival stage speaks not only to the religious mythology but also to the ritualistic value of its performance. Wagner maintained Bayreuth as the sole location for the staging of the opera (with the exception of private performances for his patron, Ludwig II). This satisfied his commercial interests in the production; however, it also established a rite of festivalization at the advent of each season. Within the larger trope of pilgrimage, communion, and redemption, the Festspielhaus became a “holy site” that patrons travelled or “pilgrimage” towards in order to “commune” with “art” (and Wagner).

The transformative agency of *Parsifal* is evidenced in 1951 in the act of redeeming Bayreuth from its Nazi occupation. Bayreuth once again became a festivalized place with the staging of *Parsifal*. A conductor at the festival, Herbert von Karajan, “told a friend that as he

approached this city he felt like getting down on his knees.”⁹¹ As the New York Times described, “The spirit in the theatre is like that of a temple.” Attendance at this reincarnated Bayreuth festival was described as a “rite.” *Parsifal* continued to be used in the cycle of pilgrimage, ritual, consecration, and redemption. As late as 1985, the opera was described as, “a solemn ritual of the aesthetic cult known as Wagnerism.”⁹²

The historical outcome of *Wagnerism* is crucial to this study of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Each of these cultural processes contributes to the “Festival” frame of the contextual theatricality that operates in the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.: festivalizing the city of Bayreuth, branding that Festival through Wagner’s operatic identity, and creating an “aesthetic cult.”

The Baroque features of the 19th century built environment in Bayreuth not only complement the anachronistic antebellum architecture of 20th century Charleston, but also the medieval remnants of Menotti’s first festival city, Spoleto, Italy. From 1986-1989 Menotti produced a third Spoleto Festival, Spoleto Melbourne, in a city renown for its Victorian architecture. However, Menotti abandoned the Australian Festival in 1989.

...that Festival made me focus increasingly on how much Spoleto Festival U.S.A. and the Festival of Two Worlds have in common. They both take place in cities small enough that they can be completely transfigured during the three

⁹¹ Taubman, Howard. “‘Tradition’ in Wagner: Questions About His Style are Raised by Staging and Performance of ‘Ring’.” *New York Times*. 12 August 1951.

⁹² Henahan, Donal. “Opera. Wagner’s *Parsifal* at the Met.” *New York Times* 10 April 1985.

weeks that the arts establish, unchallenged, their reign. But miraculous metamorphoses do not take place only in and around the theaters but throughout the city, in the restaurants, the cafes, the streets, where people meet friends ... , where artists mingle ... , and in the many *after-theater dinners and receptions* where old artistic rivalries become new germinal friendships. It is the creative energy that both Charleston and Spoleto have during the Festivals that makes me want to return year after year to these two cities.⁹³

It is important to note that Menotti published this statement in 1989, the same year that he staged *Parsifal* at the Spoleto Festival, Italy. While Menotti's nod to Bayreuth may not be explicit, it seems unlikely that the maestro was unaware of the resonance of the production at a major European festival. Furthermore, my emphasis in the quote on the "*after-theater dinners and receptions*" points to the private nature of the organized festival.

The elitism of both Bayreuth and the Spoleto Festival is an important feature of the contextual theatricality at work. Bassett asserts, "Support for the arts was implicit in the efforts made by social elites to exert their dominance and demarcate social boundaries between themselves and the population at large. Festivals, like those at Bayreuth... contributed to the process of reaffirming the civilizing and educational values of high culture."⁹⁴ High culture is a

⁹³ Menotti, Gian Carlo. "From the Artistic Director." *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Program, 1989*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

⁹⁴ Bassett, K. "Urban Cultural Strategies and Urban Regeneration: A Case Study and Critique." *Environment and Planning A*. 25 (1993): 1774.

trademark of both Bayreuth and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. which was marked in its first decade by a calendar of American and World premieres, the avant-garde, and perhaps most importantly, stagings of Menotti's oeuvre.

From 1979-1989 the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. featured seven of Menotti's original works: *The Medium* (1979), *Chip and His Dog* (1980), *The Last Savage* (1981), *The Leper*, (1982), *The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore* (1983), *Juana, La Loca* (1984), and *The Saint of Bleecker Street* (1986). He directed *Le Nozze de Figaro* for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in 1989. The tireless marketing of his own productions and his festival empire echoes Wagner's success in branding the Bayreuth Festival. The major distinction between the historical definition of Bayreuth and its direct descendants, the Spoleto Festivals, are the discourses of German identity and nationalism that denote it. I argue that rather than pursue national identity formation, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. engages the City of Charleston. The first decade of the Festival is marked by Menotti's attempts to invoke the Bayreuth model, but after Hurricane Hugo the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is absorbed into the fabric of Charleston's living museum.

3.2 TOURISTS: WHO NEEDS 'EM?

The urban interests invested in the festival's installation in Charleston, particularly those of the National Endowment for the Arts, Theodore Stern of the College of Charleston, and Mayor Joseph P. Riley anticipated its integration into the cultural life of the City. These interests

are reflective of Kennedy's characterization of post-war European festivals. These festivals, for Kennedy, Waterman, Quinn and others, "identified spiritual recovery as essential to their foundation," and "continued Enlightenment claims for the transcendence of high art."⁹⁵ The formation of the Historic District and the development of the tourist infrastructure prepared the city for the arrival of a festival audience.

The primary performance venue for the inaugural Spoleto Festival U.S.A. was the Gaillard Municipal Auditorium. In 1968 Charleston announced the opening of the municipal auditorium with a full page display ad celebrating its central location and modern amenities for "meetings, banquets, displays, and social functions." The advertisement stated that "A New Era Begins for Historic Charleston" with a facility that was "planned to serve the cultural interests of all Charleston"; furthermore, it heralded Charleston as "South Carolina's Convention City."⁹⁶ The new complex replaced the Memminger Auditorium, which will be discussed in Chapter Six.

⁹⁵ Kennedy, 177.

⁹⁶ *Charleston Vertical Files*. Charleston County Public Library. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

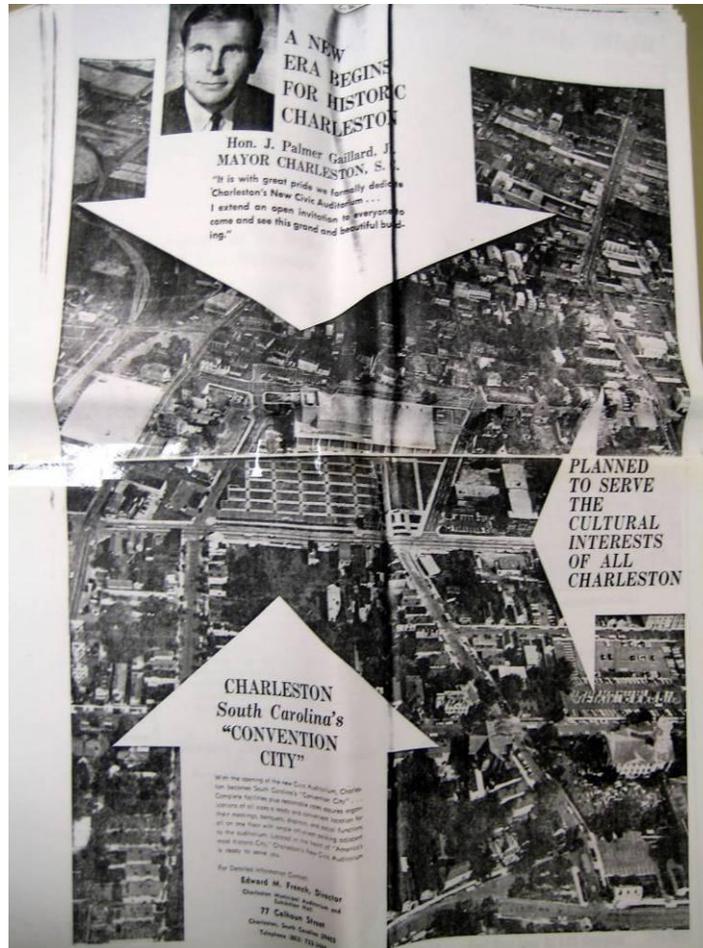


Figure 5. “A New Era Begins for Historic Charleston”

Like any construction project on the peninsula, the development of the Gaillard Auditorium Complex was met with trepidation. The City approved the project in 1958 but major debates ensued over its ultimate location. The City first settled on a site in the Northwest Sector, near the old Exposition Fairgrounds, but in 1964 the City Council approved a mid-town location on the southern border of Calhoun Street on the eastern side of the peninsula.

The area, Ansonborough, had yet to be designated by historical preservation zoning, but would be by 1975. The population was primarily African American, many of whom had been

displaced by the first wave of gentrification brought on by the preservation movement. The area was mediatized as being “heavily populated by depressing slums”⁹⁷ and “substandard housing.”⁹⁸

While the demolition of the houses and the gentrification of the neighborhood was the subject of Chapter Two, this chapter will focus instead on the ways in which these strategies participated in “urban branding.” The auditorium allowed Charleston to present itself to the broad base of conventioner sales, and the first Spoleto Festival U.S.A. was preceded by the Miss U.S.A. pageant hosted at the auditorium.

Urban branding alludes to Kennedy’s found spaces and festivals as destinations. But it is also important to this study because, as Kevin Gotham describes, “the distinction between the real city and imagined city implodes and advertised representations become the indicators and definers of urban reality.”⁹⁹ After its incorporation in 1978, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. participated in the iconography of Charleston’s urban branding, using a symbol of Charleston’s architectural history as its corporate logo. Charleston’s ironwork was an important constituent in the Preservation movement. One site of particular importance in the “save the iron” movement was the Planter’s Hotel, an 1806 building constructed to accommodate visitors for

⁹⁷ “Dream to Reality: Municipal Auditorium and Exhibition Hall.” *The Charleston Gateway* July 1968.

⁹⁸ “Council Approves Midtown Site for Civic Auditorium.” *News and Courier* 29 May 1964.

⁹⁹ Gotham, 10.

Charleston’s Race Week, and the adjacent Dock Street Theatre, constructed in 1735.¹⁰⁰ Both structures will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Figure 6 demonstrates the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.’s linkage to the decorative ironwork that is part of the architectural vernacular of the historic district; furthermore, it points to the insular nature of the festival in its use of enclosed space.



Figure 6. Logo, Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

Charleston’s urban branding and potential as a cultural destination improved as it incorporated the arts into its cultural fabric, created a performance space of significant scale, and actively promoted a city image of “Convention City.” The simultaneous existence of “Convention City”, as signified by the auditorium with modern conveniences, and “America’s Most Historic City” as marked by the establishment of the preservation district, contributes to the contextualization of Charleston and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. as Kennedy’s found “enveloping” space.

¹⁰⁰ Bland, Sidney. *Preserving Charleston’s Past, Shaping Its Future: The Life and Times of Susan Pringle Frost*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press. 71.

Kennedy provides a useful festival frame for the contextual theatricality of this study. His identification of the arts festival space that “envelops” its spectators and encourages community describes the staging of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. on the Charleston peninsula. In addition to utilizing the municipal auditorium, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. uses the urban landscape of the peninsula to envelop the audience. The 1977 festival had 32 venues, 29 of them within walking distance of one another on the peninsula. Those venues include theatres and auditoriums (6); churches and synagogues (11); public parks and greenspaces (5); galleries, libraries and museums (3), the Citadel Military College, the City Market, and the South Carolina Ports Authority Passenger Terminal. The Festival Club was located at the city’s southernmost point and was the site for many of the private parties and gala events that trademarked the elite participation in festival events.

The Citadel and Hampton Park bounded the northern festival territory on the former Exposition grounds. Events scheduled off the peninsula included performances at the island resorts of Kiawah Island and Seabrook Island and the finale at Middleton Place, a festival tradition throughout the festival’s history. A guide to the Festival’s venue location is provided in Figure 7.

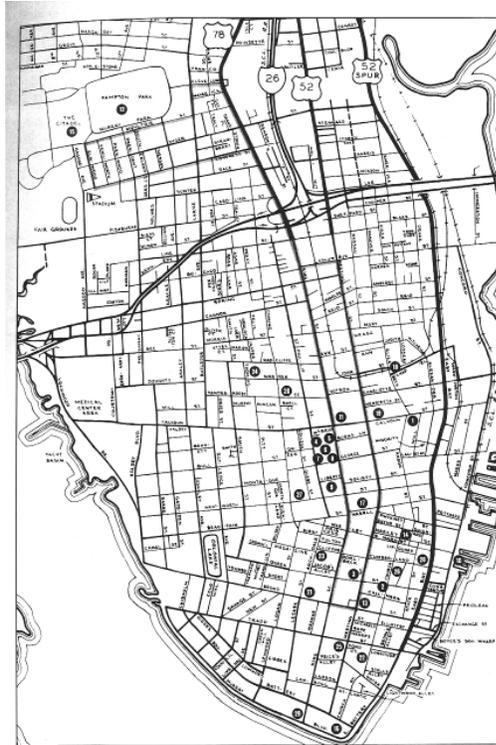


Figure 7. Festival Venues, 1977.

The strategies for establishing a tourist economy and attracting visitors to Charleston were working. Between 1970 and 1976 tourism grew by 60 percent, and in 1980 an estimated 2.1 million visitors had descended upon the peninsula. In one of the few tourism studies with mention of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., Briavel Holcomb notes that, “The arts are important in the creation of a city image, projecting an aura of high quality, civility, creativity, and sophistication and consequently conferring status on its visitors.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Holcomb, Briavel. “Marketing Cities for Tourism.” *The Tourist City*, Eds. Susan S. Fanstein and Dennis R. Judd. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. 64. She lists Charleston and the Festival, which she refers to as the Spoleto Festival of Performing Arts, among “Baltimore and Seattle (which celebrate Wagner); Portland, Oregon (Strauss); Ashland, Oregon

By the mid-1970s Charleston had developed a tourist based economy. As Susan Fanstein and Dennis R. Judd describe, “Tourism is divided up into well-defined circuits. The experiences and places marking these established routes are constructed through signs and signifiers that name and enshrine particular places as sacred objects of the ‘tourist ritual’.”¹⁰² The Historic District had become one such well-defined circuit, entrenched in designated historic tour routes and contained not only by the outer barrier of the Charleston harbor, but the inner matrix of cobblestone streets, historic homes and, gardens. Fanstein and Judd continue, “Tourist spaces are designed to produce ‘liminal moments’ that lift the tourist above ordinary, everyday experience.”¹⁰³

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. helped create the “liminal” moments that tourists were seeking through theatre, dance, opera, and visual arts. The historic commodification of the City also participated in what Dennis Judd describes as a “romanticized, nostalgic sense of history

and Stratford, Ontario (Shakespeare); Aspen (music, ballet, and theatre); Durham, North Carolina (dance).”

¹⁰² Fanstein, Susan S. and Dennis R. Judd. “Global Forces, Local Strategies, and Urban Tourism.” *The Tourist City*. Eds. Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein. New Haven: Yale UP, 1999. 7.

¹⁰³ Fanstein and Judd, 10.

and culture.”¹⁰⁴ But Judd also notes that, “Ironically, as the tourist spaces become more and more alike from city to city, it becomes easier for cities that otherwise have no outstanding tourist attractions to remake themselves into tourism sites. This happens when the tourist space, not the historic city, becomes the principal signifier of a locality.”¹⁰⁵

Menotti argued that a festival should “overwhelm” its surroundings. “The atmosphere of an arts festival... should be like that of a very beautiful mansion which you and other guests have been invited to enter.”¹⁰⁶ What Menotti could not have known in May 1989 when he made this statement, was that an uninvited guest, Hurricane Hugo, would make quite an entrance in September of that year.

3.3 “THE CLOSEST THE CAROLINAS ARE GOING TO GET TO BAYREUTH”

Hurricane Hugo severely damaged the built environment of the peninsula, devastated the outlying coastal areas through its storm surge, and halted the state’s lumber and agricultural industry. Striking in the fall of 1989, just as the administrative offices of the Spoleto Festival

¹⁰⁴ Judd, Dennis R. “Constructing the Tourist Bubble” *The Tourist City*. Eds. Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein. New Haven: Yale UP, 1999. 37.

¹⁰⁵ Judd, 39.

¹⁰⁶ Honan, William H. “Menotti and His Spoleto Festival.” *New York Times* 23 May 1989.

U.S.A. were preparing for the 1990 Festival, the loss of labor and time for the duration of the Hurricane and its aftermath was significant. Furthermore, the ability of the city to support the Festival came under harsh scrutiny. As the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. chairman of the board states in the opening comments of the 1990 Festival program, “Gaillard Municipal Auditorium, site of the Festival’s largest productions was a wreck, and even optimistic estimates projected a nine-month repair period. The Garden Theatre, where so many exciting smaller dance and theater events occur was condemned because of roof and water damage. Charleston’s beautiful churches, home to much of the Festival’s music making, had sustained damage in varying degrees.”¹⁰⁷

While the Festival Board was uncertain about the viability of the 1990 Festival, Menotti and the city’s Mayor, Joseph P. Riley rallied to the cause. Menotti defended this position as early as December 1989, stating, “Some people on my board of directors thought that we shouldn’t have any festival next year, but the mayor of Charleston sent me a cable; and he said ‘We must have a Spoleto Festival. It must be as splendid as ever, and I assure you that the theater will be built in time.’ I hope so; I hope it’s not impossible. So we are planning our programs.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Way, Charles S. Jr. “From the Chairman of the Board.” *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Program, 1990*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

¹⁰⁸ McLellan, Joseph. “The Menotti Magic: For ‘Amahl’s’ Composer, No Calm after Storm.” *Washington Post* 10 December 1989.

The Festival planning was not only meant to serve as an economic engine for the hospitality industry stricken by the Hurricane, but also as a symbol of the City's survival. Way argues, "... the board realized that the Festival had to be a symbol to all the world that Charleston is still a vibrant and flourishing place. Putting on the strongest possible Festival would be our contribution to the city's recovery."¹⁰⁹ As managing director Nigel Redden asserts, "The 1990 Festival will also be a special opportunity to affirm Charleston's survival."¹¹⁰

Fundraising for the 1990 festival was a complicated venture. Not only were the local arts organizations scrambling to secure funding for operating and programming costs, but local philanthropy was exhausted by the pressing concerns of the community which included housing, electricity, and reconstruction. The Festival received an extension for a Challenge Grant awarded in 1988,¹¹¹ but remained committed to its fundraising efforts, turning to the national arts scene for assistance.

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. board planned a gala fundraiser at New York City's Lincoln Center. The fundraiser was announced in January and was promoted by such luminaries as Alice Tully, Mrs. Gordon P. Getty, Mrs. Milton Petrie, Mr. Karl Allison, Mrs. Ottavio Serena Lapigio and Miss Joanne Woodward. The event demonstrated a "tremendous amount of concern and

¹⁰⁹ Way, 1990.

¹¹⁰ Spoleto Festival U.S.A., "Spoleto Festival USA Announces 1990 Programs" Box 9-25. *Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989*. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

¹¹¹ Way, 1990.

affection for Charleston in the New York cultural community',¹¹² and featured benefit performances from Jerome Robbins, Martha Graham and Philip Glass. In addition to the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. proceeds were distributed to the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, the Gibbes Museum of Art and the Trident Community Foundation Arts Relief Fund.

In addition to the gala fundraiser, Menotti secured an appearance from Leonard Bernstein to direct Beethoven's Symphony no. 7 as part of the opening festivities. Although Bernstein was forced to cancel due to illness, his projected appearance provided a significant boost in advance ticket sales. Although local resources were limited, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. continued to rely on the Charleston community for support. In addition to calls for housing for artists on the peninsula, the Spoleto Festival offices looked to the immediate community to provide substantial contributions to its operating expenses. The call for local contributions reflected the codependent nature of the relationship between the City and the Festival.

The importance of the local fund drive cannot be over-emphasized. Each year our Festival becomes more expensive to produce, as the ever-increasing number of international arts festivals has made the business of putting on a world class event like Spoleto more and more competitive. The Festival is remarkably successful in winning numerous foundation and government grants and major corporate gifts in this very competitive international arena. It's up to the local community to provide that final 10% of the total contributions goal. When you consider that the

¹¹² Spoleto Festival U.S.A., "New York Relief Fundraiser Set for Spoleto U.S.A." *News from Spoleto*, 12 January 1990. Box 9-25. *Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989*. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

festival, with a total annual budget of \$4.25 million, generates an impact of more than ten times that amount in Charleston and South Carolina through the tourism dollars it attracts, the local fundraising goal of \$250,000 becomes a very attractive investment. A successful local fund drive is also important to foundations and agencies, who want to know that the local community is doing its part to keep the Festival going. ... There is some concern here that the effects of Hurricane Hugo are still being felt and that this may have an impact on people's ability to give this year. ... This year's Festival is going to make an important statement for all of Charleston, that we are still going strong and are still a beautiful and flourishing city. It's really the year to give to Spoleto, even the smallest contributions are important and our committee will call on as many people as humanly possible to ask for contributions.”¹¹³

The local fundraising events were largely successful, demonstrating the community's investment in the festival. Individual and corporate sponsorship met the demands of the festival organizers, who continued to strive to demonstrate the reciprocity between the city and the festival. At the major local fundraising event by the Port Authority, a significant gesture deserves note, “Our decorations committee has solicited nearly two dozen trees from area nurseries and landscapers. After the auction they will be donated to the City to be planted wherever they are needed throughout Charleston. In this way Spoleto hopes to help repay the

¹¹³ Spoleto Festival U.S.A., “Spoleto Announces 1990 Local Fund Drive: Goal is \$250,000.” 15 February 1990. Box 9-25. *Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989*. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

City for all it does every year to keep the Festival growing.”¹¹⁴ As the Festival contributed to the physical and communal recovery of the urban geography, Charleston’s Mayor Riley mused, “perhaps even more important is the spirit of Spoleto and its impact on the city... We have developed a belief that there is nothing worthwhile we cannot do.”¹¹⁵

The discourse surrounding the 1990 festival reflects the restorative power invested in the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Numerous local and national newspapers cite the ongoing festival as a signal of the peninsula’s recovery from the devastating storm. “Several of the concert halls used by the festival were damaged by Hurricane Hugo, but the festival’s administration has said the damage will be repaired in time to present a full program of 114 events this spring. The composer Gian Carlo Menotti, the festival’s founder and artistic director, said that despite the hurricane he wanted the festival to be ‘as challenging to the heart and mind as in the past.’”¹¹⁶

Menotti’s 1990 staging of *Parsifal* in Charleston invokes its Bayreuth staging in that it recalls the cycle of pilgrimage, communion, and redemption. Tourists travelled to the hurricane-

¹¹⁴ Spoleto Festival U.S.A.. “Spoleto Auction Set for April 26, 1990.” 19 March 1990. Box 9-25. *Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989*. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

¹¹⁵ Way, Charles S. et al. “The Second Decade: Spoleto Festival USA Long Range Plan.” (1991) Box 1-1. *Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989*. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

¹¹⁶ Kozinn, Allan. “Undefeated by Storm Spoleto to Open in May.” *New York Times* 15 April 1990.

ravaged peninsula as pilgrims, with the means to revitalize the ravaged landscape, in a journey that mirrors Parsifal's return to the Castle of the Grail to heal the wounded King. Or, at least, perhaps, this is how Menotti and his supporters may have envisioned it.

...it is not necessary to project the great piety and other-worldliness of *Parsifal* as the most important theme of the opera. An emotion which has been felt deeply within the city of Charleston itself over the past year is at the core of Parsifal. "This opera is about compassion. ... This feeling of compassion should be made clear. It is something that must be made clear in the staging of the opera."¹¹⁷

Menotti's 1990 revival of *Parsifal* in the newly restored Gaillard Municipal Auditorium, therefore, points to the phenomenological dimension of the "Consecration of the Festival Stage." One reviewer notes, "There is a curious sense in which the action of *Parsifal* mirrors the journey of the opera, itself, through the world."¹¹⁸ While this was to be the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s first performance of Wagner, Menotti had staged the production in the previous year in the Italian Spoleto Festival. In the interim the largely undiscovered lead performers, William Pell and Ruthild Engert-Ely had leveraged their performance in Italy to launch careers at Wagner's

¹¹⁷ Schwartz, Jerry. "Wagner's Parsifal." *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Program, 1990*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. 22. See Appendix A.

¹¹⁸ Schwartz, 22.

theater, “they have become pillars of Bayreuth, the Wagnerian mecca, where they are now heard regularly in these roles.”¹¹⁹

The strength of Menotti’s production was not only in the critically acclaimed performances of his lead singers, but in his interpretation of the opera not as an allegorical mystery but as a highly relevant narrative.

You cannot underestimate the importance of myth. And you cannot just dress everyone in modern clothes as if the audience were too stupid to understand. You have the artistic conception of presenting some truths— truths that are still valid to us nowadays— under the guise of myth. It is as old as art itself.¹²⁰

Menotti’s interpretation of the opera resonated with the fragile festival community. One reviewer noted that the opera “sent the massive audience at last weekend’s opening performance into the nocturnal streets of this charming city in a mood of quiet contemplation.”¹²¹ He also suggested that “in Menotti’s intelligent hands, *Parsifal* is above all a plea for compassion in a world severely out of joint.”¹²²

¹¹⁹ Blomster, Wes. “Menotti Presents a Parsifal that Returns to Wagner’s Text.”

Philadelphia Inquirer 10 June 1990.

¹²⁰ Schwartz, 22.

¹²¹ Blomster, Wes. 10 June 1990.

¹²² Blomster, Wes. 10 June 1990.

The performance takes on increasing significance as Menotti made a personal revision to the opera and had Parsifal exit the stage with the Grail to “take his message to the whole world.”¹²³ As one reviewer described, “Risking everything to uphold tradition, Mr. Menotti arranged to have a live white dove flutter over the final scene.”¹²⁴ As it happened, this detail for Menotti created an additional burden to his staff. Carmen Kovens, Director of Operations of the 1990 festival placed a call to the Charleston community for “an opera-loving bird trainer in the area who can help us.” As a small example of the community’s support of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., this call was answered.

Perhaps for Menotti the staging of the medieval play and the image of the white dove in the inaugural performance after the Hurricane, recalled, if it did not re-member, the medieval staging of *Noah’s Flood*, which further alludes to the sacred and secular relationships between the contemporary arts festival and the broader historical festival tradition. In the highly symbolic medieval play the arrival of the white dove marks the covenant of man with God. In *Parsifal*, the dove marks the resolution of the dramatic tension and the redemption of the fallen king. In 1990 Charleston, it might mark both the receding floodwaters of Hurricane Hugo and the covenant between the tourist audience and the festivalized city. As one reviewer describes, “Music’s great ‘moveable feast’ has stolen away for another year but it has left in its wake memorable performances and a demonstration by its host city of great courage and spirit in rising

¹²³ Schwartz, 22.

¹²⁰ Henahan, Donal. “A Premiere of Menotti’s ‘Parsifal’” *New York Times*. 5 June 1990.

like the Phoenix after Hurricane Hugo.”¹²⁵ Another reviewer observed the production of *Parsifal* was the “closest the Carolinas are going to get to Bayreuth,”¹²⁶ which I pose as a prediction for the contextual theatricality of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. after 1990.

3.4 HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE MENOTTI

Throughout this chapter I have identified multiple features of the contextual theatricality of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. — that it is rooted in the festival formation of Wagner’s Bayreuth, that the Festival and the City of Charleston have formed an interdependent process of urban branding, and that the tourist audience in Charleston is strategically enveloped in the nostalgic “bubble” of the Historic District of Charleston. The built environment of Charleston persists in each of these, as it does in a unique way in the recovery that followed the hurricane.

After Hurricane Hugo, the national media emphasized both the physical and phenomenological environment of the peninsula. “The historic district of the town, crowded with 18th century houses, looks much as visitors remember it. Even in advance of its intense

¹²⁵ Toman, Phil. “This Performance of *Parsifal* was Outstanding.” *The Post* 20 June 1990.

¹²⁶ *The Charlotte Observer* 5 June 1990.

period of blossoms next month, tourists are being guided over the cobblestones as if last Sept. 21 never happened.”¹²⁷

As Charleston began its process of physical recovery it diverged from many of the practices which have contributed to the loss of historical continuity in other urban sites following traumatic events. The National Research Council reported that 85% percent of all buildings in Charleston suffered storm damage resulting from the wind, rain, and tidal surge.

Damage to porches and porticos was common, as was the loss of chimneys and architectural details. ... In Charleston’s Old and Historic District 50 houses collapsed, and in Charleston City as a whole the National Park Service survey sample of 120 historic structures found two-thirds had suffered damages exceeding \$10,000. The repair estimates are in excess of \$10 million for Category 1 (National Historic Landmark Buildings) and \$150 million to \$200 million for lesser historic buildings.¹²⁸

In spite of the extent of the damage, Mayor Riley suspended the first wave of building permits, and enacted a city ordinance to “require adherence to accepted standards for historic

¹²⁷ Wade, Betsy. “Charleston Comeback: It’s Ready for Spring” *New York Times* 11 Feb. 1990.

¹²⁸ National Research Council. “Hurricane Hugo: Puerto Rico, The Virgin Islands, and Charleston, SC: September 17-22.” *Natural Disasters Studies: An Investigative Series of the Committee on Natural Disasters Volume Six*. Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences 1994. 270.

structures”¹²⁹ The architectural requirements established by the Board of Architectural Review were upheld in the reconstruction of the peninsula, resulting in the massive restoration of the built environment in the period following the hurricane. To aid in the recovery, “outside experts in architectural conservation, museum conservation, and archaeology were called upon for emergency assessments of damage.”¹³⁰ The City’s preservation ordinances not only protected the integrity of the antebellum landscape, but also required that property owners apply their insurance claims under these conservation guidelines. One year later, Charleston was described as “a Southern Belle who has put on a new dress even though some of her bones are broken.”¹³¹

The wave of new “historic” construction problematizes the City’s claims to historical authenticity and points to a complex relationship between the representation and actualization of the City’s historical claims. This, in turn, marks the City’s investment in maintaining the picturesque environment that contributes to the flow of cultural tourism. One might argue that the cosmetic homogenization of the peninsula contributes to its “Disney-ification,” and certainly, the reconstruction after Hugo maximized the potential for Charleston to present itself as a seamless consumable landscape.

¹²⁹ National Research Council, 270.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 270.

¹³¹ Ross, Nancy L. “Rebuilding in Charleston: After the Hurricane.” *The Washington Post* 14 June 1990.

In a culture of tourism, as Gotham asserts, local culture is exhibited to attract tourists.¹³² I suggest that the accumulated strategies employed by Charleston in 1989 participate in this culture of tourism. However, the re-construction of the built environment of Charleston after Hurricane Hugo resulted in “re-staging” of the City, adding additional levels of complexity to the exhibition of local culture. A touristic culture emerges after these events, in which “tourism discourses and practices increasingly frame meanings and assertions of local culture.”¹³³

Just prior to the 1990 Spoleto Festival U.S.A., the administration announced a plan for a conceptual art series for the following year. The project, *Places with a Past*, would invite visual artists to explore the history of Charleston and create site specific installations. Their responses would be guided by the built environment of the City, which had been newly restored by the Hurricane Recovery efforts. The proposal was led by Nigel Redden, the General Manager of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., and announced in the October 1990 Board Meeting.

Although many aspects of the program were on the agenda, perhaps the most vigorous discussion centered on the exhibition planned for 1991; it was also of the most radical change from previous years. ... The fundamental importance of the exhibition lies in the works that artists will have created for us in Charleston. If

¹³² Gotham, 120.

¹³³ Ibid, 120.

these works succeed, we will learn something about this city, about its past, about ourselves. The exhibition will expand the experiences of Festival visitors ...¹³⁴

While a detailed account of the exhibition will be provided in Chapter Four, here I will focus on the organizational impact of the proposal and implementation of *Places with a Past*. Menotti urged caution given what he perceived to be the expense of the visual arts series and its potential for controversy in the current philanthropic climate. He warned the Board, “This is the kind of art where someone may put up a coat hanger and call it art. ... It is something that will shock you.”¹³⁵ Although he urged the Board of Directors to “vote their conscience” on the proposal, he submitted his resignation when the project was conferred. Menotti argued, “... the issue is not the exhibition. The issue is artistic freedom. I feel that the general manager and the board of directors have sided against me, and I will not accept that. I’ve told them my ideas about the festival, and I expect them to share them.”¹³⁶

Both Redden and the Chairman of the Board capitulated. Redden insisted that “the artistic director have full artistic control.” Markwardt cautiously agreed, “...when an arts

¹³⁴ Markwardt, Ross A. “From the Chairman of the Board.” *Festival Program/Spoletto Festival U.S.A. 1991*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

¹³⁵ Morgan, Kerri. “Something That Will Shock You.” *The News and Courier*. 29 May 1990.

¹³⁶ Kozinn, Allan. “Menotti and Spoleto Split On Issue of Artistic Control.” *New York Times*. 15 October 1990.

organization matures, it will begin to move in different directions, even though it retains the values on which it was founded.”¹³⁷ Menotti’s resignation was not accepted and planning of the 1991 festival continued. The installation of *Places with a Past* moved forward in spite of Menotti’s reservations.

The 1991 festival program also included an 80th birthday celebration for the impresario, which included both a staging of his opera, *Maria Golovin*, and a Gala Birthday Concert. I suggest that Menotti’s negative response to *Places with a Past* was also rooted in the potential of the visual arts exhibition to overshadow his personal association with the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. This was an issue that was becoming more urgent for him since his contract as Artistic Director was set to expire in 1992, after which the Board had suggested he continue as Director Emeritus of the Festival, rather than Artistic Director. Finally, his son Francis (Chip) Menotti had begun to aggressively pursue succeeding his father as Artistic Director, although he lacked both artistic and administrative experience.

Places with a Past was a critical success, but weeks after the festival closed Menotti demanded the resignation of both Redden and Markwardt. The Festival Board voted against any changes to the festival’s organization, and Menotti threatened to leave. Redden and Markwardt resigned. Their resignations were followed by a mass departure of nineteen members of the Board, who felt betrayed when Mayor Riley intervened on Menotti’s behalf.

My duty as Mayor was to make sure that this marvelous festival continued at the level of quality and renown that it enjoyed, and it would not have continued at that level if Gian Carlo Menotti had been removed. Also, I felt it would be

¹³⁷ Kozinn, Allan. 15 October 1990.

morally wrong for him to be removed from his creation. I was unalterably opposed to that, and I made it clear that the city, as an important part of the festival, would be opposed to continuing with Maestro Menotti.¹³⁸

The conflict between the Board, Menotti, and the Mayor Riley illuminates the processual shifts in any artistic organization; however, they are informed by the larger cultural negotiations discussed in this chapter. Upon his resignation Markwardt stated that he “felt that it was more important to shape the future than to preserve the past, but we ran afoul of the preservationists.”¹³⁹

Mayor Riley’s intervention, on behalf of the City of Charleston, intimates the shared perception that Menotti was essential to the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. As the impresario of the festival, Menotti presented himself as the authentic signifier of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., much like the Historic District before Hurricane Hugo claimed to signify the local culture of Charleston. The presentation of *Parsifal*, the festival’s first Wagnerian opera, was an attempt to legitimize that claim in an environment where his role was increasingly threatened.

Riley’s actions alienated numerous board members who participated in other cultural events in the City, and there were substantial political risks to his actions. In order to mediate those risks, he reinstated Theodore Stern as the interim Chairman of the Festival Board. The remembering of the festival’s original administrative structure reflects the physical reconstruction

¹³⁸ Kozinn, 17 May 1992.

¹³⁹ Kozinn, Allan. “Spoleto Festival Resolves its Dispute; Menotti is Winner.” *New York Times* 17 Sept. 1991.

of the peninsula after Hurricane Hugo; it only addressed the Festival's facade. Stern may have been the new dress for the Festival Board, but it remained broken.

In 1993 Menotti gave his final resignation to the Festival Board. Redden had provided effective financial oversight during his tenure, but in his absence and with a popular but ineffectual Board, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. could no longer weather the financial storm that was Menotti. Their proposal to temper the festival to a twelve day format to curb spending prompted Menotti's resignation, and it was accepted. Even Mayor Riley stood down.

I feel like I'm watching a tragic opera unfold. You can tell from the sound of the music that it isn't going to have a good ending. In this case, I think the tragedy is Maestro Menotti's. We wanted him to remain involved with the festival for as long as he felt able, and after that to preserve his legacy in the context of the festival. It seems to me that his precipitous decision is more harmful to him than our community.¹⁴⁰

Menotti's claim that "Now Charleston Has Everything" prefigured his own dislocation from the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. His 1993 staging of his own *The Singing Child* and a production of *The Birthday of the Infanta* marked his final formal association with the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. However, as reconstruction efforts of the festival offices were completed after Hugo an adjacent street was named after him. A symbolic integration of the maestro into the built environment of the City, Menotti Street runs perpendicular between the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. offices and the Gaillard Municipal Auditorium.

¹⁴⁰ Kozinn, Alan. "Menotti Leaves Spoleto Festival U.S.A." *New York Times* 26 Oct. 1993.

Cities and Festivals are dynamic entities that continuously shape and re-shape themselves as cultural formations are created, experienced, and discarded. For the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. *Places with a Past* and its collateral effects mark the beginning of a shift in the festival ideology from Menotti to the cultural fabric of the City of Charleston. As the built environment of the peninsula was restored after Hurricane Hugo, the “placedness” of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. became more important. As the City moved from a culture of tourism to a touristic culture, the Festival required the flexibility to engage multiple frames of tourism and culture within its contextual theatricality.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: IT COULD ONLY HAPPEN HERE: PLACING THE PAST

History begins at ground level, with footsteps.
Michel de Certeau

Chapter Four anchors the realization of the visual arts series, *Places with a Past*, as a turning point for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. and its contribution to the touristic culture of the City of Charleston. As a site-specific visual arts installation that self-consciously engaged the many layers of the City's history and cultural memory, *Places with a Past* indicated the increasing theatricalization of the presentation of the city's milieu. With *Places with a Past*, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. intensified the framing of the tourist experience of the City's history as a theatrical staging.

The theatricalization of these sites participated in their transformation into objects for what John Urry would define as the "tourist gaze." Urry posits, "Central to tourist consumption is to look collectively upon aspects of landscape or townscape which are distinctive, which signify an experience which contrasts with everyday experiences."¹⁴¹ The transfiguring of sites across the peninsula into festival attractions demonstrates the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s increasing participation in shaping a constitutive role for itself in the formation of a touristic culture. Furthermore, the contrast to everyday experience was defined by the persistent intention

¹⁴¹ Urry, John. *Consuming Places*. London: Routledge, 1995. 131.

to re-collect the marginalized histories in the city's collective memory. As the final narrative report of the series states, "Exploring the broad issues of culture and collective memory, the site-specific works drew inspiration and their very concept from the architecture of the location and its layers of history."¹⁴²

I argue that the experiential component of each of the installations not only links the formalist art installations to broader traditions of performance art, but also assists us in moving towards a definition of the festivalization of contemporary urban space. Here, "festivalization" refers to the transmission between the audience and theatrically framed events through the tourist gaze. *Places with a Past* assisted the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. with its objectives to appear inclusive. Furthermore, the staging of art installations in the public milieu transformed all participants into tourists to the extent that they engaged the liminal atmosphere.

I also suggest that the *Places with a Past* installations became powerful participants in Charleston's festivalization after Hurricane Hugo, particularly in terms of the following features. First, its timing after Hurricane Hugo reflected the public's renewed interest in the built environment of the peninsula, its persistent features, its restoration, and its transformation after the crisis of a natural disaster. The timing of the installation allowed the installations to engage and respond to a historical shift as it was taking place. Second, the movement of the audience across the peninsula pointed to both spatial and temporal rhythms, but was ultimately contained in the geographical area of the city. The "placedness" of the installations became significant not only to the individual sites but to the matrices of time and space that connected them. Finally, the

¹⁴² "Final Sponsorship Report, 1991" Box 5-20. *Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989*.

College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

installations could be experienced individually, through proposed walking tours, or through sequences self-determined by the patron. The instability of the narrative created by the collective installation denotes the ruptures and inconsistencies in the City's collective memory.

4.1 WALKING THE CITY: *PLACES WITH A PAST*

In her discussion of site-specific and site-oriented art Miwon Kwon asserts, "Site-specific work in its earliest formation ... focused on establishing inextricable, indivisible relationships between the work and its site and demanded the physical presence of the viewer for the work's completion."¹⁴³ In this analysis site-specific art is like theatre in the three-sided relationship constructed through an embodied encounter (the physical presence of the viewer), triangulated by a dramatic formation (the work) and a place (the site).

These site specific installations also functioned mnemonically, inviting audience participation as "*the lived body*" through which Edward Casey asserts the relationship between memory and place is realized.¹⁴⁴ For Casey, memory is place based, a phenomenological

¹⁴³ Kwon, Miwon. "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity." *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*. Maleden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 33.

¹⁴⁴ Casey, Edward. Casey, Edward S. *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000. 189.

orientation of the lived body in the spatial frames of intra-place and inter-place. “The body as intra-place,” Casey argues, “is thus a place through which whatever is occurring in a given setting can take place: it is a place of passage for such occurrences, which array themselves around it (and do so even if it is only their silent witness.)”¹⁴⁵ Reading Casey informs Jacobs’ use of the location “here”; emphasizing the presence of lived bodies in the intersection of city and the constructed installations. Casey continues, “... we almost always remember places from the point of view of our body’s own interplace within a remembered place: *there we were*, there and nowhere else.”¹⁴⁶

The mnemonic function of *Places with a Past* also operates in the proposed method of engagement, the walking tour. Exploring the installation on foot invokes Casey’s notion of “inter-place,” or “the trajectory traced” in “a body’s movement between places.”¹⁴⁷ Casey concludes, “... the locomotion is to be construed in terms of a dialectic between here and there.”¹⁴⁸

That dialectic is problematized by others who have “walked” the memorative territory of the city, particularly Michel de Certeau and Joseph Roach. Certeau proposes that in traversing

¹⁴⁵ Casey, 196.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 196.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 196.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 196.

the city, “bodies follow the cursives and strokes of an urban ‘text’.”¹⁴⁹ He suggests that “A first definition of walking thus seems to be a space of uttering.”¹⁵⁰ In his discussion of New Orleans, Roach muses that festivals “intensify and enlarge” these speech acts to “activate the spatial logic of a city built to make certain powers and privileges not only seasonally visible but perpetually reproducible.”¹⁵¹ He asserts, “Walking in the city makes this visible.”¹⁵²

I look to Casey, Certeau, and Roach as cornerstones in constructing the space inhabited by *Places with a Past*, the ambiguous strata layering memory and history in Charleston after Hurricane Hugo. Casey reminds us that the lived body must be present for a memorative action to transpire. Certeau allows us to read those actions as a text, and to note “the presence of absences.”¹⁵³ Roach directs us to examine that which is repeatable, particularly as it points to the hegemonic order and potential strategies of resistance and representation.

¹⁴⁹ Certeau, Michel de. “Walking the City.” *The Certeau Reader*. Ed. Graham Ward. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000. 102.

¹⁵⁰ Certeau, 106.

¹⁵¹ Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. 14.

¹⁵² Roach, 14.

¹⁵³ Certeau, 114.

Pierre Nora provides the last of these cornerstones. He describes places of memory, or *lieux de memoire*, as sites where “memory crystallizes and secretes itself.”¹⁵⁴ I argue that *Places with a Past*, self-consciously produced *lieux de memoire* in Charleston after Hugo.

These lieux de mémoire are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory but has abandoned it. They make their appearance by constructing, decreeing, and maintaining artifice.¹⁵⁵

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. used *Places with a Past* as a medium to establish *lieux de memoire* in the tourist districts of Charleston in order to make visible the historical formations that provoke interest for a tourist audience. Nora suggests that these *lieux de memoire* operate in “a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the archives, cemeteries, *festivals*, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders- these are the boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity.”¹⁵⁶

In her final narrative report following the series, curator Mary Jane Jacobs concludes, “It could only happen here. ... As site-specific works, an essential part of their meaning and

¹⁵⁴ Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” Transl. Marc Roudebush. *Representations* 26 (1989): 7.

¹⁵⁵ Nora, 12.

¹⁵⁶ Nora, 12.

existence is their relationship to places and events in Charleston.”¹⁵⁷ I pause to scrutinize this statement because of the specificity implied in her use of “it” and “here.”

“It” refers not to urban installations in general, but to the actual *Places with a Past* exhibit, the largest urban installation project in the United States at the date of its inception. Urban site-specific installations of this kind had a recent vogue in Great Britain and Europe, starting with the “Skulptur Projekte” in Münster, Germany (1977, 1987, and 1997). Similar city wide exhibitions had been staged in Ghent (1986), Great Britain (1987, 1990), and Amsterdam (1987). Perhaps the most striking of these urban installations was a project conceived by Heiner Muller, Rebecca Horn, and Jannis Kounellis to mark the fall of the Berlin Wall, *Die Endlichkeit der Freiheit* [*The Finitude of Freedom*] in Berlin (1990).

According to its exhibit catalog the Berlin installation was, “an international, artistic confrontation with the transformed political situation,” in which “the invisible becomes visible, the hidden comes to light, the cosmopolitan meets the provincial, utopias collide with practice and bureaucracy.”¹⁵⁸ The exhibit in Charleston shared many of the features of the Berlin installation, including its response to memory and history, the ephemerality of the installations, and the positioning of the audience as “witnesses” to the events invoked by the transformation of

¹⁵⁷ “Final Sponsorship Report, 1991” *Box 5-20. Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989.*

College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

¹⁵⁸ Herzogenrath, Wulf et al. *Die Endlichkeit der Freiheit* exh. cat. Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1990.

individual sites. The exhibits also shared an artist, Christian Boltanski, whose work "... centered on the concepts of imagined and recreated past."¹⁵⁹

Jacobs also posited that the installation could only happen "here", which signaled the placedness of the communal exhibit in the architectural and cultural fabric of Charleston. Artists were invited to Charleston as early as 1990, in the midst of recovery efforts post-Hugo. Sites were self-selected by the artists. The places designated for the installations varied from the Gibbes Museum of Art, historical house museums, places of worship, city landmarks and parks, and private homes. Seven of the seventeen installations were on city property, and permissions were gained through coordinated efforts of city leaders, community activists, and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. The combination of sites public and private, interior and exterior, highly visible and off the beaten track, pointed to a diverse contextualization of place across the city. It also mapped the territory designated for touristic engagement in the clusters of installations that appeared across the peninsula.

Of course, the discussion of *Places with Past* can only happen "there", as in the reconstructed territory of a historical perspective on the event. I create four frames through which to examine *Places with a Past*: The Living Museum, Cosmograms, Urban Texts and Festival Spaces. These are not curatorial divisions, but reflect composites of installations in proximity of one another in spatial and ideological territories. While all of the installations share

¹⁵⁹ Caines, Rebecca. "Christian Boltanski: Representation and the Performance of Memory." *Afterimage* 32.1 (2004): 4.

a preoccupation with history, memory, and the artifice of both, similarities emerge in the clusters formed by pairings and triangulations of exhibits close to one another.

Of the seventeen installation sites, only one appeared off the peninsula. It is interesting to note that this “off-site” work was also the only installation to directly engage twentieth century history, the Battle of Midway (1942). Ian Hamilton Finlay created a poem sculpture at the *Patriot’s Point Naval and Maritime Museum* in Mt. Pleasant, on the east side of Cooper River. He commemorates the USS Yorktown (CV5) lost in the battle; however, Patriot’s Point is the concurrent resting site of the USS Yorktown (CV10), decommissioned in 1975 and installed in the maritime museum. Jacobs explains, “In a sense, this new ship, like Finlay’s work, is a memorial to the one for which it is named. The vast park on shore offered the artist the unique possibility of having both a gardenlike setting and being in immediate proximity to a key object of reference.”¹⁶⁰

The exclusion of modern events from the peninsular installations points to the prevailing preoccupation with Charleston’s early American history discussed in the first two chapters. Of the sixteen remaining installation sites, thirteen were located within the designated Old and Historic District. The three sites outside of that district delved into the contradictions of the ideological construct that Charleston had become. These installations were *Holy City* by Gwylene Gallimard and Jean-Marie Maliclet; *Camouflaged History* by Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler; and *America Street* by David Hammons.

¹⁶⁰ Jacobs, Mary Jane, et al. *Places with a Past: New Site Specific Art at Charleston’s Spoleto Festival*. exh. cat. New York: Rizzoli, 1991. 117.

Gallimard and Maliclet were the only local artists represented in the series. Known locally for their bistro on Broad Street in Charleston, the pair had been a part of the cultural life of Charleston since 1984. Their installation, *Holy City*, played with the notion of the city as a site of religious tolerance. Charleston holds nearly five hundred churches representing over sixty-five denominations. The greenspace selected for the installation, Wragg Mall, was dedicated in 1801 as a public space. It borders the predominantly white historic district to its south, and a primarily African American residential district to its North, which had evolved through gentrification and displacement of the preceding decade. The 1991 opening of the exhibit coincided with that of the Charleston Visitor Center, just across the street.

The installation contained a promenade where “concealed in artificial grass were ten speakers from which issued church music and a litany of statistical information about five hundred churches ... in French, English, and Gullah.”¹⁶¹ It also housed a kiosk which played a video “whose program featured 120 local churches of radically different architectural styles” and a “monumentally scaled book with thick rubber pages on which Gallimard and Maliclet had written excerpts from church advertising.”¹⁶² The juxtaposition of the aural landscape, reminders of the built environment, and the massive text is repeated throughout the *Places with a Past* exhibit. This is not only a result of the material aspect of the works of art, but also what Casey would refer to as participation with the “the mediating presence of various *commemorabilia*,” that

¹⁶¹ Jacobs, 172.

¹⁶² Ibid, 172.

contribute to the process of commemoration.¹⁶³ Each installation signaled a contribution to the memorial text of the city.

“Holy City” served as a midpoint for the proposed walking tour for *Places with a Past*, which originated at the Gibbes Museum of Art (See Figure 8, no. 1) and moved clockwise around the peninsula. Figure 8 shows the proposed sequence for the walking tour, published by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

¹⁶³ Casey, 247.

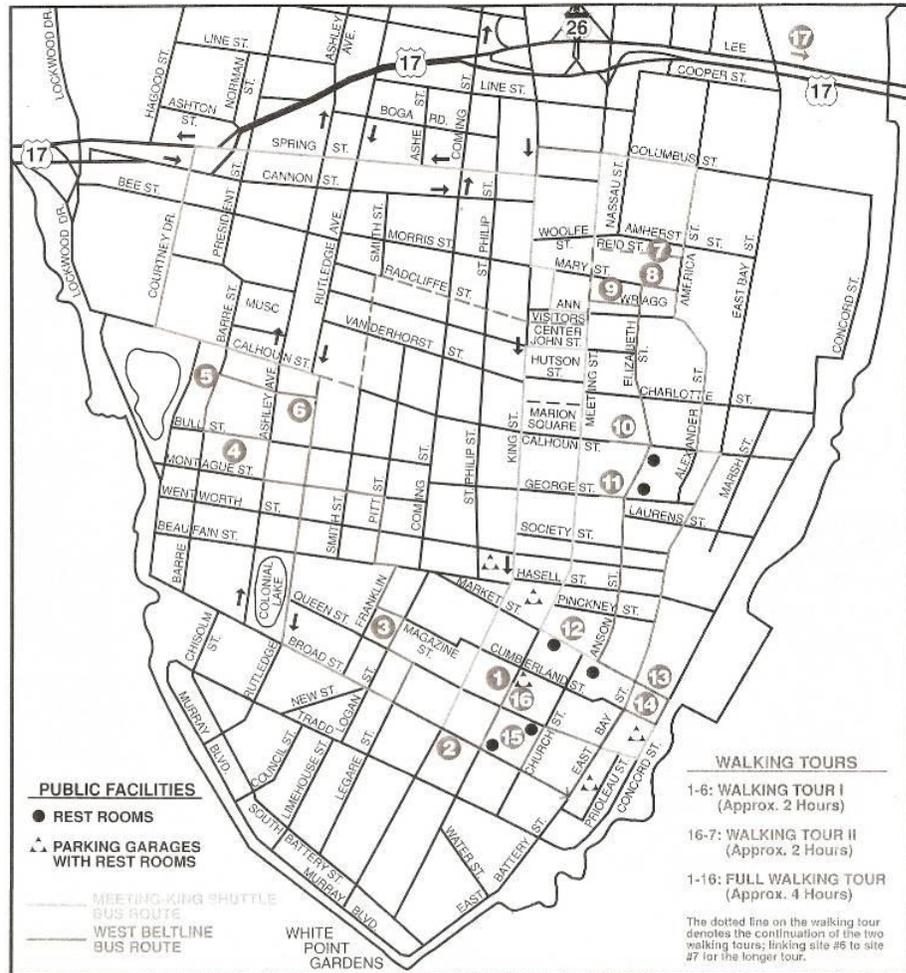


Figure 8. Map of Installation Sites, *Places with a Past*, 1991

4.1.1 The Living Museum

It is interesting to note that the tour of installations begins in the traditionally contained and aesthetically charged space of the museum. The origin of the tour of installations in the Gibbes Museum points to the tension between the series of installations as public art and the collaboration of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in the City's selective tourist strategies. While there was free admittance to the exhibits, the Gibbes generally required an admission ticket. Program

guides and maps to the installations were only available through Festival outlets, and the orientation to the installation was located at the Gibbes.

The Gibbes had been used before for special visual exhibits for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., adding to the precedent of contemporary art in Charleston. The Carolina Art Association had operated at the Gibbes Museum location since 1905, and in 1936 it sponsored the first showing in the United States of Solomon Guggenheim's private collection of abstract works.¹⁶⁴

For the 1991 Spoleto Festival U.S.A. the Gibbes housed three of the installations, Cindy Sherman's *Untitled*; Christian Boltanski's *Inventory of Objects Belonging to a Young Woman of Charleston*; and Chris Burden's *Three Ghost Ships*. Sherman drew on the Civil War short fiction of Ambrose Bierce to stage the "gut-level reality of the battlefield"¹⁶⁵ in a graphic photographic study of staged disembodied limbs. Working in the milieu of the "first war we know well through photography,"¹⁶⁶ Sherman rendered the physical trauma of the Civil War as a formal text, to be read through aestheticized techniques in the museum gallery.

In his installation Boltanski, "transform[ed] a gallery at the Gibbes Museum of Art into a present day historical museum by displaying the belongings of an anonymous contemporary college student. Showing these commonplace items like treasured artifacts, Boltanski speaks about how objects — even our own someday — become memorialized and made valuable over

¹⁶⁴ Yuhl, Stephanie E. *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. 56.

¹⁶⁵ Jacobs, 108.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 108.

time and by their presentation.”¹⁶⁷ Boltanski’s self-conscious framing of the museum installation as an artificial strategy introduces an ironic tone that complicates subsequent engagements of *Places with a Past*.

While Boltanski established “inventories” as a thread in the *Places with a Past* series, artist Chris Burden drew upon the city’s nautical history and its role in the emerging nation to invoke the trope of “journeys.” Burden designed and installed three small sailboats in the gallery space of the Gibbes. The boats, named *U*, *S*, and *A*, were reminiscent of the *Nina*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria*. (See Figure 9). The capstone of the Burden’s installation was a proposed deployment of one of the ships to undertake an unmanned crossing of the Atlantic guided by a computer system. This, however, did not take place and the sailboats were removed from museum storage and returned to Burden in California in 1995.



Figure 9. *Three Ghost Ships*, Chris Burden¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Jacobs, 3.

¹⁶⁸ Burden, Chris. *Three Ghost Ships; Overview of Installation*, 1991. Gibbes Museum of Art. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-04-03-02.

The unrealized potential of the Burden exhibit leads to larger questions tracing the intention of the artists and the realization of their projects. This is further complicated by the lack of formal reviews of the series, with the exception of a single mention in the *New York Times*. In his review, Michael Brenson refers to the series as “what may be the most moving and original exhibition of contemporary art in the United States.”¹⁶⁹ Local publicity referred to *Places with a Past* as being “controversial,” but only in retrospect and solely to the extent that the series provoked Menotti, who described the potential installations as “nothing but silly sophomoric stunts... hardly worthy to be seen in a cheap discotheque.”¹⁷⁰

The museum installations also invite the question of how these works of art operate as being site-specific. They engage the “museum” as a cultural construct, but do not directly reference the historical territory of the Gibbes museum. The site, therefore, relates to a much larger construct of Charleston’s memorative milieu. The *lieu de memoire* created is one of historical fictions, pointing to the frame of the living museum which contextualizes the tourist experience in Charleston.

This territory is explored further in the next destination of the walking tour, Christian Boltanski’s second installation, *Shadows*. (See Figure 8, no. 2). *Shadows* implemented source material from the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind* to invoke the “idea of the South,” and Charleston as “a dream reconstructed according to modern-day memory – ‘not a real town, but a

¹⁶⁹ Brenson, Michael. “Visual Arts Joins Spoleto Festival U.S.A.” *New York Times* 27 May 1991.

¹⁷⁰ Ashley, Dottie. “Spoleto to Mix Art, Environment.” *Post and Courier* 12 Feb. 1997.

museum town' ...” (Jacobs, 18). The construct of the living museum, embedded in the contextual theatricality of the city played through many of the *Places with a Past* installations.

The designated walking tour directed patrons four blocks west to 21 Magazine Street, the site of the Old City Jail (See Figure 8, no. 3). The original structure, constructed in 1802, remains largely intact, with 1822 additions to house the Lunatic Asylum, and wings added in the 1850s. The building served as the County Jail through the 1930s.¹⁷¹

Antony Gormley used multiple rooms in the interior of the Old City Jail to create a seven-part installation. One of its most provocative components was the attachment of lead figures to the ceiling at the neck. (See Figure 10).



Figure 10. *Sculpture for the Old City Jail*, Antony Gormley¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Poston, Jonathan H. *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City's Architecture*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997. 393.

¹⁷² Gormley, Anthony. *Untitled, Detail of Two Lead Figures, 1991*. Old City Jail. Charleston, SC. Art on File TP-09-15-12.

These were cast from the artist's own body, and the darkness of their metal cast and suspension provoked comparison to black bodies lynched and hanged. But Gormley was never explicit about racial or historical associations. Instead, he worked within a metaphor of confinement and referenced the materiality of the building rather than engaging the historical narrative of the place.¹⁷³ Jacobs asserts, "Each room finds a corresponding, related work in another room; walking through the space, the entire building becomes incorporated into the viewer's experience."¹⁷⁴

The Old City Jail was the most well attended installation on the peninsula.¹⁷⁵ Not only centrally located, the Old City Jail had also long been a site of local and touristic interest. For many residents and tourists alike; however, this was a first opportunity to explore the grounds and interior, but exterior tours highlighting the city's architecture, landmarks, and haunted spaces had frequently included the Old City Jail.

The added thrill of entering a haunted space informs larger questions surrounding *Places with a Past*. To what extent were participants claiming sites from which they had previously been excluded? The metaphor of the museum and the temporary lift on the ban to enter spaces

¹⁷³ The self-referential installation excluded much of the building's documented history, including its temporary housing of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment.

¹⁷⁴ Jacobs, 3.

¹⁷⁵ Box 5-21. Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989. *College of Charleston*. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

suggest strategies of cultural consumption and inclusion augmented by the “free” eventness of the visual arts installations.

4.1.2 Cosmograms

A cluster of installations on the west side of the peninsula continued the proposed walking tour. On foot from the Old City Jail, patrons would cross out of the cultural district through primarily residential areas. In the western section, each of the installations dealt directly with the African American experience. Building on the thematic and formal elements of the first three exhibits, these installations engaged less fictitious landscapes and created sites for the recuperation of history and memory. All evoke a meditative atmosphere and present alternative worldviews, and were created by artists more closely aligned with the goals of public art.

I refer to these clusters as “cosmograms” after Houston Conwill, who uses the flat geometric figure in both his material and method of artistic expression. Conwill’s *The New Charleston* (See Figure 8, no. 4), was housed at the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. In many ways this 1990 exhibit mirrored Conwill’s 1989 installation at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, *The New Cakewalk Humanifesto*. Irit Rogoff explains, “Conwill has produced a Spatialized history charted on to an articulated location which in turn becomes a concrete manifestation of cultural double consciousness.”¹⁷⁶ The cartographic

¹⁷⁶ Rogoff, Irit. *Terra Infirma: Geography’s Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, 2000.

representation of cultural memory, Conwill's trademark, enhances the historical environment by providing intellectual and emotional cues in the memorative process.

Dolores Hayden describes Conwill's Spoleto Festival U.S.A. installation which he created in collaboration with his sister, Estella Conwill Majozo, and Joseph de Pace. (See Figure 11).

They painted [a detailed map of historic places] on the brown wooden floor of a public room with indigo blue, once grown in Charleston, and white made from local oyster shells. ... There are fourteen places, called "Spiritual Signposts," each marked with a crossroads sign of Congolese origin. What is magical is that, despite the intensive research, the artwork functions not only as a dance floor but also a cosmogram, a "description of the universe of the African American story," and as an image of a water journey, delineating the waterways that slaves traveled, from the Rokel River in Sierra Leone, across the Atlantic Ocean, through the Caribbean Sea, and into the Charleston Harbor. Drawing visitors onto the dance floor are the spiraling song lines of spirituals ... and freedom songs. In the space, spirituals could be heard...¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995. 69-72. The *Spiritual Signposts* were "South Carolina Heroic Models," including Mary McLeod Bethune, Benjamin Mays, Septima Clark, William H. Johnson, Janie Hunter, Clayton "Pegleg" Bates, Modjeska Simpkins, Esau Jenkins, Annie Green Nelson, Jesse Jackson, Marian Wright Edelman, Levi Pearson, Bernice Robinson, and Dizzy Gillespie, each of whom is represented by a quotation on the map.



Figure 11. *The New Charleston*, Houston Conwill¹⁷⁸

Conwill's cosmogram points to the complexity of the strata of memory and history in Charleston. It also directly engages people, places, and events within that formation. The components of Conwill's exhibit, the material aspects of the landscape, the aural landscape, cartography, the naming of things, combine to contribute to the memorative process described by Casey, "... Sites are all too easily filled up with a clutter of things or events that may appear and disappear in disconcerting rapidity. It is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Conwill, Houston, Estella Conwill Majoso, and Joseph DePace. *The New Charleston: Overview of Installation*, 1991. Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, 1991. Art on File: TP-05-04-02.

¹⁷⁹ Casey, 187.

Casey's metaphor of containment is useful to this study of *Places with a Past*. Not only is the installation largely contained on the peninsula, but also individual works are encapsulated within their built environments and within the smaller aggregations of sites that relate to each other. Thus, Conwill's *The New Charleston* was installed in close proximity to Lorna Simpson's *Five Rooms* (See Figure 8, no. 5), which engaged similar themes and materials. While each installation was comprised of "clutter of things or events" some sites were more successful at mediating that clutter through place, as when Conwill's cartography guided patrons through his proposed African American narrative.

Lorna Simpson included similar visual, textual, and narrative cues in her installation, *Five Rooms*, (See Figure 12), at 69 Barre Street, the Governor Thomas Bennet House. Once the location of a flourishing rice mill, the prominent industry of the antebellum city, only the main house, garden, and slave dependencies remain at the location. According to Poston, these were restored in 1988.¹⁸⁰ Simpson located her installation in five rooms in one of the dependencies. Beryl J. Wright describes the installation.

In collaboration with vocalist composer Alva Rogers, Simpson selected a two-story structure originally built in 1822 to house Africans working in the nearby plantation mansion. The original installation, called *Five Rooms*, occupied all of the partitioned living quarters of the house. Simpson and Rogers organized the rooms to document the experience of slavery, including the Middle Passage, incidents of slave insurrections, the disclosure of the rice market and the economic justification for slavery in Charleston, the pervasive crime of lynching,

¹⁸⁰ Poston, 494.

and, finally, evidence of the death toll exacted by the economic system then and now.¹⁸¹



Figure 12. *Five Rooms*, Lorna Simpson¹⁸²

The material elements of the installation, glass, rice, water, photographic renderings, and printed historical text produce a literal memorative environment. In one room jars of water are labeled with names of rivers and waterways that mark the Middle Passage from Africa to the Carolinas. In a second room jars of rice are named after children born into captivity. Figure 12 shows a braid connecting twinned photographic portraits of an African American woman. Jacobs asserts that this is “as if to link the American to her African ancestor.”¹⁸³

The third exhibit in the Western section is similarly preoccupied with familial links. Joyce Scott worked in collaboration with her mother, Elizabeth, a former South Carolinian

¹⁸¹ Wright, Beryl J. “Back Talk: Recording the Body.” *Callaloo* 19.2 (1996): 410.

¹⁸² Simpson, Lorna. *Five Rooms: Room with Jars of Rice*, 1991. Governor Bennett House. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-18-08-05.

¹⁸³ Jacobs, 4.

sharecropper and a nationally recognized quilt-maker to create *Believe I've Been Sanctified*, (See Figure 13), in Cannon Park. (See Figure 8, no. 6).



Figure 13. *Believe I've Been Sanctified*, Joyce Scott¹⁸⁴

Cannon Park was the first greenspace to be used in the *Places with a Past* exhibit, but it is in conversation with the communal exhibit and the built environment of Charleston in interesting ways. First, it was created on the former site of the Bennet Mill pond and therefore points back to Simpson and the Dependency. In 1899 the site was suggested for a civic auditorium, but the temporary structure was occupied instead by the Charleston Museum. The Corinthian columns pictured in Figure 13 evoke the ruins of antebellum Charleston, but were only just “ruined” in 1980. The Museum moved to Meeting Street in 1980, and the former building was lost to a fire the same year; afterwards the City restored the site as a greenspace.

Simpson’s installation is also in conversation with another greenspace, Marion Square, to the east on Calhoun Street. Marion Square, named after Revolutionary War patriot Francis Marion, contains a massive statue of John C. Calhoun, a troubled figure in Charleston’s history. The statue was raised in 1896 with funds collected from various women’s associations. At the

¹⁸⁴ Scott, Joyce. *Believe I've Been Sanctified: Overview of Cannon Park*, 1991. Cannon Park. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-16-02-01.

time of its creation Calhoun's statue was, "The largest bronze statue ever cast" in New York, at "12 feet 8 inches high and about 6,000 pounds."¹⁸⁵

Simpson's installation plays with the memorialization of Calhoun, known as a great orator, by representing the silenced voices of victims of the historical process. Jacobs explains, "Scott claims this monumental site for a memorial to anonymous persons of all race and cultures that have suffered under persecution."¹⁸⁶ She used elaborate beadwork, woven material, and trees felled by Hurricane Hugo on top of the columns and a suspended black beaded mass to create a tapestry of grief. Jacobs asserts, "In this work, Scott symbolically links the burning of the building that formerly occupied this site, to the ravages of the War in the South, to victims of racism, to the wounds of all mankind."¹⁸⁷

The constellation of installations on the west side of the peninsula map reflect this point of view of filling absences and giving voice to silenced aspects of historical narratives, particularly those of African Americans in the milieu of the Old South. As the walking tour progressed, those considerations became mediated through a sense of play with the built

¹⁸⁵ "John C. Calhoun's Statue: It is the Largest Bronze Ever Cast in this State." *New York Times*. 3 June 1896. The statue was installed in 1896 on an eighteen foot pedestal. It now stands at one hundred and fifteen feet, having been raised due to rampant vandalism attributed to the African American community. (See Geneviève Fabre and Robert O'Meally (eds.) *History and Memory in African American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁸⁶ Jacobs, 5.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

environment, beginning with David Hammons' *House of the Future* (Figure 8, no 7). I characterize his installation and those in its proximity as "Urban Texts" because of their preoccupation with the built environment of the City.

4.1.3 Urban Texts



Figure 14. *House of the Future*, David Hammons¹⁸⁸

Hammons worked in the borderland of the Historic District and the resulting east side neighborhood of primarily African American Residents. His *House of the Future*, (See Figure 14), recalls the architectural formation of a Charleston single house, evocative of the historic district homes. However, Hammons restaged the single house as a structure that is only the width of a doorway, rather than the width of a room. The metaphor for a doorway takes on

¹⁸⁸ Hammons, David. *America Street: House of the Future*, 1991. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-11-07-02.

increasing significance since Hammons set up an architectural workshop in the interior of the structure for neighborhood youths to gain exposure to carpentry and historic restoration. Jacobs explains, “They created a house that is a learning center of materials and methods, and a means of fostering respect for the area’s old houses and pride in the history of the past.”¹⁸⁹ The *House of the Future* is one of the few installations that remain intact in Charleston.

Hammons structure is in conversation with *Camouflaged History* by Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler. (See Figure 8, no. 8).



Figure 15. *Camouflaged History*, Kate Ericson¹⁹⁰

At 28 Mary Street, steps away from *The House of the Future*, (See Figure 15), the external transformation of a Charleston single house engages the city’s military history with its

¹⁸⁹ Jacobs, 5.

¹⁹⁰ Ericson, Kate and Mel Ziegler. *Camouflaged History*, 1991. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-06-03003.

camouflage pattern and the commodification of the historical district through the paint selections and its physical location. The home is painted using “all 72 “Authentic Colors of Historic Charleston” produced by the Dutch Boy paint company; each is named for aspects of the area’s history or geography.”¹⁹¹

The northeastern installations fall outside of the normative travel patterns of the tourist district of Charleston, but as the walking tour travels south it traverses more familiar ground in the historic district. *Holy City* (See Figure 8, no. 9) is adjacent to the Charleston Visitor’s Center. Ronald Jones’ installation served as a remembrance of Denmark Vesey, who was convicted for planning a slave uprising in Charleston in 1822.¹⁹² The conspiracy was largely mobilized through the Emanuel A.M.E. Church, also known as the Hampstead Free African Church, the oldest African American congregation in the South. The congregation was disbanded after the insurrection, but reorganized in 1865 and built the Emanuel A.M.E. Church on Calhoun Street in 1891. The church was restored after Hurricane Hugo. Jones created a sculpture after a 19th century stereograph of two black youth posing as Raphael’s cherubs, which he installed at the entrance to the Church’s nave with an inscription.

¹⁹¹ Jacobs, 6.

¹⁹² Prior to Jones’ installation Denmark Vesey had emerged as a prominent figure in the cultural life of the city of Charleston. His portrait had been installed in the Gaillard Municipal Auditorium in 1976. (See Rosen, Robert. *A Short History of Charleston*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992.)

This representation of George B. Bernard's stereographs, *South Carolina cherubs (after Raphael), Charleston, SC, c.a. 1874-1875*, is a remembrance of Denmark Vesey's righteous rebellion. ... though the insurrection was put down only hours before it was to unfold across the city, Vesey's spirit of revolt against injustice was an expression of the promise of civil rights in a free society.¹⁹³

As the walking tour creeps back into the established touristic territories of the cultural life of the City, it stops at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. office, which hosted a *Places with a Past* installation on its third floor, (See Figure 8, no. 11). The building, the Middleton Pinckney house has a peculiar polygonal front projection, creating oval rooms. Built in 1796 it passed through two old line Charleston families, the Pinckneys and the Middletons, before being converted into the Charleston Commissioners of Public Works after the Civil War.



Figure 16. *Honey in the Rock (Got to Feed God Children)*, Elizabeth Newman¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Jacobs, Mary Jane, et al. *Places with a Past: New Site Specific Art at Charleston's Spoleto Festival*. exh. cat. New York: Rizzoli, 1991. 164.

¹⁹⁴ Newman, Elizabeth. *Honey in the Rock (Got to Feed God Children)*, 'Great Room' with Seven Stools. Middleton-Pinckney House. Charleston, SC ART on FILE: TP-15-15-10;

4.1.4 Festival Spaces

Newman engaged the domestic history of the building as well as its place in the public life of the city in her installation, *Honey in the Rock (Got to Feed the Children)*, (See Figure 16). She created a playing space on the third floor that included photographs of white children and their black nursemaids and a black doll suspended on a tightrope. The installation included an aural landscape of “sounds of caring and comforting.”¹⁹⁵ The location of the exhibit at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. offices, and the context of what was considered to be a taboo subject in the polite society of Charleston problematizes the Festival’s role in navigating the City’s cultural milieu.

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is also directly invoked in Narelle Jubelin’s *Foreign Affairs*. (See Figure 8, no. 14) Located in the United States Customs House near the waterfront on East Bay Street, *Foreign Affairs* “revolves around a global image: the world represented as a large circular floor medallion.”¹⁹⁶ That medallion is translated in Jubelin’s work as the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. logo whose “motif is based on the communion rail at St. Michael’s Church

and *Honey in the Rock (Got to Feed God Children)*, *Detail of Doll on Tightrope*, 1991.

Middleton-Pinckney House. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-15-15-12.

¹⁹⁵ Jacobs, 4.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 8.

which had been imported from England in 1772 and became highly influential on Charleston ironwork.¹⁹⁷



Figure 17. *Foreign Affairs*, Narelle Jubelin¹⁹⁸

Its location on the floor of the Customs House maps the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in the flow of commerce and ideas that are transmitted through the Customs House. *Foreign Affairs* created a metaphor for the role that the Festival plays in the cultural transmission of the city.

These Festival Spaces explicitly map the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. and its material culture into the memorative and historical perceptions of the City. The presentation of the Festival offices as a container for one of the most private memorials created for the series, and the inscription of the Festival logo on the Customs House floor point to the simultaneous flows of culture and capital through the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

The remaining installation sites brought the walking tour full circle conceptually and geographically. At 45 Pinckney Street Ann Hamilton's *Indigo Blue* (See Figure 8, no. 12),

¹⁹⁷ Jacobs, 8.

¹⁹⁸ Jubelin, Narelle. *Foreign Affairs, 1991*. U.S. Custom House. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-13.04-01.

which included thousands of folded blue shirts, expressed her artistic, “concern with haunting presences that are barely detectable, and yet somehow persistent.”¹⁹⁹



Figure 18. *Indigo Blue*, Ann Hamilton²⁰⁰

Hamilton also engaged the installation through a theatrical frame, and included an actor in her installation.

Only after entering the somber space did one see positioned at a table behind the mound a solitary figure erasing the texts from standard history books. Above and to one side was a small elevated room from which the manager could survey the work under his purview; here were hung sacks of soya beans, and rags of undyed cloth. The layering of the imagery and the interweaving of reference were

¹⁹⁹ Coffey, Mary Katherine. “Histories that Haunt: A Conversation with Ann Hamilton.” *Art Journal* 60.3 (2001): 11.

²⁰⁰ Hamilton, Ann. *Indigo Blue: Mound of Indigo Shirts, 1991*. 45 Pinckney Street. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-10-08-02.

conveyed in ways that resist analytical description: the power of the piece lay in its presence; in the singularity of the experience.²⁰¹

Hamilton incorporated indigo, one of Charleston's major antebellum industries, into her installation. As the walking tour concluded, other repetitions became visible. Barbara Steinman's *Ballroom* transformed the city's Pump House, a somewhat anonymous space adjacent to the United States Custom House. In the circular structure Steinman installed a chandelier over a photograph etched on the floor of what appeared to be abstract lines. Steinman invoked the hidden military presence in Charleston by revealing that the photograph was an "enlargement of sonar submarine tracings."²⁰² Submarines have been an important part of Charleston's naval history dating back to the Hunley Confederate submarine in 1864.

Military history was also revisited in the remaining two sites: Liz Magor's *Hallowed Ground* (See Figure 8, no. 15) and James Coleman's *Lines of Faith* (See Figure 8, no. 16). Liz Magor strategically placed cannonballs throughout the garden and piazza of the Confederate Home. She also installed photographs of contemporary Civil War re-enactors staging scenes from F. T. Miller's *The Photographic History of the Civil War in Ten Volumes* (1911). Coleman manipulated similarly re-staged contemporary photographs and a popular *Currier & Ives*

²⁰¹ Cooke, Lynne. "'Places with a Past': Charleston, South Carolina." *The Burlington Magazine* 133.1061 (1991): 573.

²⁰² Jacobs, Mary Jane, et al. *Places with a Past: New Site Specific Art at Charleston's Spoleto Festival*. exh. cat. New York: Rizzoli, 1991. 59.

depiction of the Battle of Bull Run²⁰³ (1861) through a stereoscopic projection to explore the misrepresentation of battles in the media.

The collective exhibit of *Places with a Past* provides fertile ground for the landscape of memory suggested in its inception. Certainly each of the exhibits demonstrated the potential for a liminal audience experience. The reclamation of lost narratives, reinforcement of marginalized communities, and dialogue with preconceived notions of local mythology all contributed to a memorative atmosphere.

Records indicate that the installation series was well attended, noting 37,348 patrons from May 31 to June 5, 1990. The four sites most frequented by patrons were Antony Gormley's *Old City Jail*, Narelle Jubelin's *Foreign Affairs*, Ann Hamilton's *Indigo Blue*, and Barbara Steinman's *Ballroom*.²⁰⁴ All were in relative proximity to each other, and in areas already normally frequented by tourists. The relative failure of the outlying installations may point to the resistance of areas not designated for tourism to the framing strategies of the installation.

It may also have been a result of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s reliance on largely untrained handlers at each of the sites to assist patrons with the local history, artist's biography, and directions for the walking tour. The orientation packets distributed to the site handlers

²⁰³ This military engagement is referred to as the Battle of Manassus in Confederate literature.

²⁰⁴ Box 5-20. *Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

contained as much information regarding inclement weather and dealing with patrons exhausted from the heat as site specific or contextual language.

In the place of individual evaluations, statements, or feedback the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. published a detailed exhibit catalog documenting the individual installations. The catalogue and the limited press surrounding the installations is marked by language like “memorialized,” “evoked,” and “transformed.” The curatorship of the installations displaced the individual experience almost from the outset of the installation.

This points to the touristic experience which relies on the framing of the experience rather than the experience itself. It also translates into Casey’s commemorative process in which commemoration “can be considered the laying to account of perishings, the consolidating and continuing of endings. It is the creating of memorializations in the media of ritual, text, and psyche; it enables us to honor the past by carrying it intact into new and lasting forms of alliance and participation.”²⁰⁵

4.2 WALKING THE LINE: *PLACES WITH A FUTURE*

The lack of immediate discourse surrounding *Places with a Past* may also have been a result of Menotti’s resistance to the installations. But his fears of sparking controversy in a national climate charged by the 1989 NEA controversies were proved unfounded. The

²⁰⁵ Casey, 257.

installation largely went unnoticed until Redden returned to the Festival and launched a second installation series.

The retrospective construction of *Places with a Past* allowed Redden the opportunity to create an uncontested narrative of its importance to and impact on the cultural life of the city. The series was not only absorbed into Redden's larger process of legitimization of his leadership of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., but also the restatement of the importance of place to the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. A decade later, Charleston had evolved in its relationship to tourism. It had expanded its tourist friendly territory not only on the peninsula, but also in the outlying areas, particularly those that led to the beach and resort islands.

The 1997 *Human/Nature* engaged this larger conceptualization of tourist space, featuring twelve projects "dispersed around the city and the surrounding countryside, offering perceptive glimpses into the low-country environment for Spoleto visitors and native Charlestonians alike."²⁰⁶

While *Places with a Past* engaged the built environment of Charleston, *Human/Nature* invested itself in the "natural" landscape surrounding the city. Through this installation Redden continued to infiltrate additional territory in the construction of the placedness and visual culture of Charleston. These installations also played into the Festival's strategies of inclusion, first by being free, and second, by inhabiting places more familiar to the local public.

Unlike *Places with a Past*, however, *Human/Nature* exceeded the boundaries of the touristic peninsula. Of the twelve projects only eight were on the peninsula, and only five were

²⁰⁶ Beardsley, John. *Human/Nature: Art and Landscape in the Charleston Lowcountry: A Project of Spoleto Festival U.S.A.* exh. cat. Washington, DC: Spacemaker Press, 1998. 12.

enclosed by the Historic District. Some of the installations were not only off-peninsula but also outside of sites marked by tourist strategies. Martha Schwartz's *Field Work* on McLeod Plantation drew particular scrutiny. Previously private property on the main road leading from the peninsula to Folly Beach, the site was both visible in that traffic passed it throughout the day and invisible in that trespassing had been prohibited. The installation of gauze tunnels meant to mark the passage between the plantation home and the slave cabins was locally characterized and criticized that it appeared as if someone had left their linen laundry on the line.

But there was more on that line than laundry. In many ways, *Human/Nature* became a way through which the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. could revisit *Places with a Past* and contribute to the material layering of history in the City. It also allowed the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. to participate in broader national discussions of public art as a strategy to attract funding and continue to make the festival visible to national philanthropic organizations.

Funding for *Places with a Past* and *Human/Nature* were both tied to the strategies of inclusion and definitions of community. Grant Kester argues that, "The 'community' in community-based public art often, although clearly not always, refers to individuals marked as culturally, economically, or socially different either from the artist or from the audience for the particular project."²⁰⁷

In 2001 Redden returned the installation project and its tourist community to the Charleston peninsula with a third installation series, *Evoking History*. This occurred on a much

²⁰⁷ Kester, Grant. "Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art." *Afterimage* 22.6 (1995): 5.

smaller scale, with only nine installations, coupled with a three year program commitment to oral histories and outreach programs. *Evoking History* was also curated by Mary Jane Jacobs who asserts, “Memory is tied to place,” and “History as distinct from memory is the way modern societies organize the past.”²⁰⁸ Jacobs insisted that previous installations were “representations and not real environments”²⁰⁹ With *Evoking History* she proposed an alternative.

“Evoking History,” beginning in 2001, stems from a different practice in two important ways. First of all, it is a collaborative process that involves relationships among institutions and persons over time who are engaged in listening to and negotiating their ideas with one another. Secondly, it engages the “now”- the past as it lives on in the present- and seeks embodied forms that can embody living memory.²¹⁰

The evolution of the visual art installations from solely aesthetic engagements with sites to community based projects points not only to the shifting philanthropic incentives but also to the emerging identity of a touristic culture in Charleston. The festival atmosphere destabilizes temporal and spatial realities, and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. becomes a site where Charleston continues to audition its identity to contemporary tourists. The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. allows,

²⁰⁸ Jacobs, Mary Jane. “Evoking History.” *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A. 2002*. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 30.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 30.

encourages, and develops that identity as a creative and emergent form, both by commemorating consumable narratives of the past and suggesting strategies of interpretation for the future.

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: PLAYING THE PAST

“Charleston will greet the production like a family member that they didn’t know they had.” (Target Margin Theatre Company, 1999)

I begin this chapter with a public statement made by Target Margin Theatre Company in anticipation of bringing their Obie Award winning production of DuBose Heyward’s *Mamba’s Daughters* to Charleston for the 1999 Spoleto Festival U.S.A. The production invokes countless memorative associations, but in this chapter I focus on the legacy of Heyward and the Charleston Renaissance, the spatial resonance of the Dock Street Theatre, and the increasingly complicated presentation of Charleston’s history as the sites in which the discourses of “place” and “festivalization” occur. Central to this discussion are the activation of memorative strategies through festival performance.

In this chapter I engage the theatrical playing in what constitutes Sauter’s theatrical event. Theatrical Playing describes “the actual communication between the performer and the spectator in the event.”²¹¹ I argue that the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. further contributes to the

²¹¹ Sauter, Willmar. “Introducing the Theatrical Event.” *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames*. IFTR/FIRT Theatrical Event Working Group. New York: Rodopi, 2004. 12.

touristic culture of Charleston through reciprocal strategies of formalization and commemoration.

5.1 “ACTIVE, ACTUAL, AND AUDIBLE”: THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF SPIRITUALS

In 1918 DuBose Heyward founded the Poetry Society of Charleston along with Hervey Allen of Pittsburgh and John Bennett of Ohio. Allen and Bennett were seeking inroads into Charleston society, and Heyward, an old-line Charlestonian, was seeking broader horizons for his burgeoning literary career. Bennett arranged for the Poetry Society to raise its national profile through lectures and meetings with Carl Sandburg, Amy Lowell, Gertrude Stein, and Edna St. Vincent Millay while providing a forum for DuBose Heyward to profile his writing.

Like his preservationist contemporaries, Heyward was preoccupied with the tensions between the old and new south, and expressed an overwhelming nostalgia for what he perceived to be the “golden age” of antebellum Charleston. This nostalgia was deeply personal and rooted in his own family history. When invited to write a play for the Charleston museum in 1923, he commemorated his own ancestors for its establishment.²¹²

I focus on Heyward in this discussion because his texts provide a site of convergence for the discourses of this study that bear on the festivalization of place— hegemony, the built

²¹² Greene, Harlan and James M. Hutchisson. *Renaissance in Charleston: Art and Life in the Carolina Low Country: 1900-1940*. Athens, GA.: The University of Georgia Press, 2003. 3.

environment, and the performative impulse. I rely on two memorative strategies to structure the communication in the theatrical playing that occurs in the performance of Heyward's texts, *commemoration* and *surrogation*. Surrogation, as defined by Joseph Roach, is "the enactment of cultural memory by substitution."²¹³ This enactment becomes important to the identity building that the white elite undertake post-Reconstruction, and is explored in the private societies and salons of Charleston's elite as they audition nostalgic features to mediate the inescapable stain of slavery. As these communal memories are constructed, there is a need to create rituals to shore up their permanence. As Nico Frijda suggests, "Commemorations ... are transition rituals. They enact the transformation of the past into the present."²¹⁴ The process of commemoration becomes increasingly important to Charlestonians in the early twentieth century. The larger preservation movement points to this desire to bring the past into the present in a tangible way, and the literary movement of the Charleston Renaissance engaged the intangible.

The commemorative impulse operates in many of Heyward's literary texts, including *Porgy* (1925) and *Mamba's Daughters* (1929). Commemoration, according to Nico Frijda, "derives from the desire for orientation in time, for integrating oneself in one's past by appropriating that past, and by confirming one's identity by way of one's group identity."²¹⁵ For

²¹³ Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the Dead*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. 80.

²¹⁴ Frijda, Nico. "Commemorating." *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspectives*. James W. Pennebaker, Dario Paez, Bernard Rimé, eds. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997. 112.

²¹⁵ Frijda, 109.

Heyward and many of his contemporaries, that disorienting time was the span of the Charleston Renaissance (1915-1940), the past an antebellum plantation, and the group identity that of benevolent stewards of the Gullah culture.

By the time DuBose entered the Heyward family line they were twice removed from the “remote and legendary past” of the antebellum South, referred to in the opening lines of the novel *Porgy*.

Porgy lived in the Golden Age. Not the Golden Age of a remote and legendary past; nor yet the chimerical era treasured by every man past middle life, that never existed except in the heart of youth; but an age when men, not yet old, were boys in an ancient, beautiful city that time had forgotten before it destroyed.²¹⁶

Heyward writes of the Charleston of his own youth, just prior to the turn to the twentieth century- the past that he was looking to appropriate was that of his affluent predecessors.

Thomas Heyward, a paternal ancestor, had signed the Declaration of Independence. The Heywards that followed thrived on South Carolina plantations until their fortune was lost in the Civil War. His father labored in a rice mill until an accident brought about his untimely death. Heyward was three years old at the time. The escalating poverty of the surviving family put Heyward’s mother and the family in close proximity to the African American community in Charleston. By 1905 she was publishing poems and stories in their vernacular, and eventually launched a prominent career as a “dialect recitalist.”²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Heyward, DuBose. *Porgy*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925. 16.

²¹⁷ Greene and Hutchisson, 8.

I linger on these biographical details because they not only come to bear on the historical milieu of *Mamba's Daughters*, but also they complicate the nostalgic field of the Charleston Renaissance. Heyward's economic situation was typical of old line Charleston families, and was part of the disorientation the twentieth century brought to their sense of identity. The Heywards' fetishization of African American culture in Charleston mirrored the visual arts movements that capitalized on images of the Charleston Black engaged in traditional roles. As Stephanie Yuhl asserts, "Elite whites appropriated black spirituals, folktales, and bodies to weave an identity for Charleston in which African American primitivism was a central foil to white gentility."²¹⁸

The Heywards' seizure upon African American culture as an ethnographic and literary subject coincided with a massive outmigration of the actual African American population. Black Charlestonians suffered under the inequality of economic, political, educational, and cultural opportunities in the first decades of the twentieth century. The First World War formed a landmark movement in African American activism in the South. While racism was pervasive in the military, and black Carolinians were often rejected at state draft stations, the federal government's Selective Service Act in 1917 resulted in African American draftees holding the majority in South Carolina registration.²¹⁹ African Americans in South Carolina contributed to the war efforts in other ways as well.

²¹⁸ Yuhl, Stephanie E. *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. 14.

²¹⁹ Hemmingway, Theodore. "Prelude to Change: Black Carolinians in the War Years, 1914-1920" *The Journal of Negro History*. 65.3 (1980): 215.

In addition to military service, several other factors led to a significant out migration of African Americans in South Carolina and Charleston in this early part of the century. Job opportunities in factories lured them North and a boll weevil infestation crippled the remaining agricultural industry in South Carolina. Scholar Theodore Hemmingway cites the “dissatisfaction with labor conditions, poor educational facilities, unfair sharecropping arrangements, lynching, letters from friends in the North, labor agents, and a desire to better one’s self” as factors encouraging Carolinian African Americans to vacate the South. He concludes that the outmigration led to the development of the “New Negro” in the South.²²⁰

This outmigration and the development of new roles for the African American in national identity politics provided a vacuum for the construction of African American character by the white elite in Charleston. As Roach asserts, “In the life of a community, the process of surrogation does not begin or end but continues as actual perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric.”²²¹ In the absence of competing stakeholders, Charlestonians like Heyward lay claims as keepers of the “authentic” Sea Island culture that they felt was threatened by the subsequent African American generations seeking to disassociate themselves from a past scarred by slavery.

In some ways Charlestonians were following the larger cultural movement concerned with what was then characterized as cultural primitivism.; for example, the Sea Grass Basket, a

²²⁰ Hemmingway, Theodore. “Prelude to Change: Black Carolinians in the War Years, 1914-1920” *The Journal of Negro History*. 65.3 (1980): 215.

²²¹ Roach, 2.

craft indigenous to Carolina Sea Island African Americans, was granted the status of Folk Art by the Smithsonian Institute in 1910. In other ways they were absorbing the Gullah culture into their own construction of identity in Roach's process of surrogation. The most potent example of this is the creation of the Society for the Preservation of Negro Spirituals in 1923.

The Society for the Preservation of Spirituals is an organization unique in the roster of musical associations. Composed of people who are not actually musicians, it has as its main purpose the preserving of a form of music indigenous to the South Carolina coast, the songs of the plantation Negroes of ante-bellum times. ... An important subsidiary interest of the Society is the providing of financial assistance each month to rural Sea Island indigents.²²²

The Society, which changed its name to the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals (SPS), shortly after its inception, was comprised completely of white old-line Charlestonians who gathered to sing Gullah spirituals in private gatherings, and later, public concerts. They toured the Eastern cultural corridor, performing for the Sixteenth Biennial Conference of the National Federation of Music Clubs (1929) in Boston, the New York City Thursday Evening Club (1930), and the Roosevelt White House (1935). The SPS became a celebrated cultural export of Charleston.

As previously discussed in Chapters Two and Four, the Gullah formed the majority of the African American community in Charleston before and after the Civil War. As Hutchisson describes, "Their geographical isolation— they were confined primarily to the barrier islands of

²²² "Society for the Preservation of Spirituals" *Charleston Vertical File*. Charleston County Public Library. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

South Carolina and Georgia— created a strong ethnic homogeneity. Their ancestors in slavery had been a single self-contained African community that was imported wholesale by South Carolina slavers.”²²³ Hutchisson continues, “As an ethnic group, the Gullah’s ties to their African ancestors were more concretely intact than those of other Negroes.”²²⁴

Underneath the paternal tone, Hutchisson reveals characteristics unique to Gullah culture such as their “homogeneity,” their isolation from urban society, and their ability to trace their ancestry in a fairly straightforward process. These were qualities that the white elite in Charleston believed they had in common with the Gullah. With the Preservation Movement well underway, and the visual commoditization of the city in process, a romanticized Gullah culture became a part of the past appropriated for the white elite commemoration.

The SPS played an active role in the negotiation and internalization of Gullah identity. The spirituals were gathered by the society through personal recollections, African American church observances, and contact with the dwindling Gullah community. In a feature article printed in 1960 Isabella Leland writes, “Members sing only the songs they have learned from the Negro himself, going to the churches and listening and watching.”²²⁵

While its goals were ostensibly charitable, using proceeds “to assist old and indigent Negroes who are not otherwise supported,”²²⁶ the underlying motives of the voyeuristic SPS

²²³ Hutchisson, James M. *DuBose Heyward: A Charleston Gentleman and the World of Porgy and Bess*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2000. 7.

²²⁴ Hutchisson, 7.

²²⁵ Leland, Isabella. “Sunday Magazine.” *The News and Courier*. 20 March 1960.

were considerably less progressive. The limited membership consisted of white men and women descended through plantation lines, and were exclusive to those who would take “an active, actual, and audible part,” in the singing. This element of participation points to the performative and symbolic nature of the society’s events.

In his discussion of commemoration, Frijda suggests a broad definition of a commemorative ritual as “an occasion that is defined by the social community or by tradition to perform some action that in general is also defined by the community or tradition, that in principle is performed publicly, and that is held to serve a moral or emotional goal.”²²⁷ SPS performances followed a standard program, starting their concerts with, “Come en Go wid Me,” (*Come and Go With Me*) and concluding with “Primus Lan” (*The Promised Land*). As Leland describes, “When the curtain rises for curtain call they follow an attractive custom of shaking hands while crossing the stage and sing “I’m uh Goin’ to Leab’ You en Duh Han ob uh Kin’ Sabeyah.” (*I’m Going to Leave You in the Kind Hands of the Saviour*).²²⁸

The repetition of the program and the rehearsed display of fellowship in the closing moments of the performance points to the production of the commemoration, in contrast to the spontaneous call and response that was the hallmark of the Gullah Spiritual. The scripting of the commemorative act is an important element of the commemoration; furthermore, it is a necessary component for the permanence of the Gullah culture from the hegemonic perspective.

²²⁶ Leland, 20 March 1960.

²²⁷ Frijda, 110-111.

²²⁸ Leland, 20 March 1960.

In addition to the concerts, the Society published an anthology of essays and Gullah lyrics, *The Carolina Lowcountry*, in 1931 and field and studio recordings in following years.

DuBose Heyward was an active member in the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, and published the essay, “The Negro in the Lowcountry” in the society’s anthology. In the essay he not only proposes a genealogy for the African American slaves in the Carolinas in the Middle passage, but also argues that the SPS project, “the task of salvaging the spirituals of the Negroes from a mutual past becomes not an unwarranted audacity, not a gesture of patronizing superiority, but a natural and harmonious collaboration wrought in affection and a deep sense of reverence.”²²⁹ He claims that the Negro is “authentic Southern atmosphere, and as such, has something to sell in a limited, but rich and highly specialized market.”²³⁰ Heyward’s *Mamba’s Daughters*, like his mother’s recitals, becomes the vehicle for this commodified and commemorated construction.

The plantation master and the plantation Negro stand today definitely at the parting of the ways. This then becomes our valedictory- our requiem for a lost yesterday.²³¹

²²⁹ Heyward, DuBose. “The Negro in the Lowcountry.” *The Carolina Lowcountry*.

Augustine T. Smythe. et al. New York: MacMillan, 1931. 186.

²³⁰ Ibid, 186.

²³¹ Ibid, 186-187.

5.2 REQUIEM FOR A LOST YESTERDAY: *MAMBA'S DAUGHTERS*

Mamba's Daughters is often overlooked in Heyward's oeuvre, which is dominated by discourse surrounding the Gershwin opera *Porgy and Bess*. The novel was written after *Porgy* (1925) and the Theatre Guild's Broadway staging of *Porgy: A Play* (1927), and Heyward had established relationships with New York literary and dramatic circles. His play adaptations were co-authored with his wife Dorothy, who was trained by George Pierce Baker in the 47 Workshop at Harvard.

Porgy's trajectory to the Broadway stage has been well documented, as has Gershwin's 1934 visit to Folly Island, a barrier island off of the coast of Charleston. Heyward hosted Gershwin on the island, introduced him to Charleston society, and exposed him to the Gullah outposts often cruised by the Society of Preservation of Spirituals. Heyward's biographers claim that he often shared an anecdote about one Gullah service at which Gershwin started "shouting with them and to their huge delight stole the show from their champion 'shouter.'" Heyward concluded, "I think he is the only white man in America who could have done it."²³² Gershwin integrated many of the rhythmic techniques, the layering of voices, and the congregational movement into the opera. The vocal underscoring of the hurricane scene in *Porgy and Bess* (II.iii) was inspired by prayers overheard while Heyward and Gershwin toured the rural sites.

²³² Alpert, Hollis. *The Life and Times of Porgy and Bess: The Story of an American Classic*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990. 89. See also Hutchisson, 152.

The play adaptation of *Mamba's Daughters* (1939) followed *Porgy and Bess* (1935). It revisits *Porgy's* social critique and depiction of the Gullah subculture. But both the novel *Mamba's Daughters* and its play adaptation rely on the Gullah spiritual as a central narrative device. Following the national tour of the SPS and the popular success of *Porgy and Bess* the Heywards had grown aware of the spirituals' potential for building an audience.

5.2.1 *Mamba's Daughters* on the Page

“Don’ Ya Mind What de Debil Do” (Don’t You Mind What the Devil Do), a spiritual from the SPS repertoire, is featured in the first scene and foreshadows the action of the play. The song’s admonishment of worldly concerns guides the play’s narrative, as “devil” is replaced by “Reverend,” “Lawyer,” “Deacon,” and “Hypocrite.” The spiritual is performed in the Prologue over a radio broadcast listened to by Mamba and her tenement neighbors in Charleston.

Table 2. Lyrics for “Don’t Ya Mind What de Debil Do”²³³

Don’t yuh min’ w’at duh debble do, Don’t yuh min’, Don’t yuh min’ w’at duh debble do, Don’t yuh min’, ‘E cyan’ git tuh Heben en ‘e won’ let you, Don’t yuh min’	Don’t you mind what the <i>devil</i> do, Don’t you mind, Don’t you mind what the <i>devil</i> do, Don’t you mind, He can’t get to Heaven and he won’t let you, Don’t you mind.
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Mamba's Daughters is defined by a melodramatic, nonlinear structure that spans across twenty years and two geographies, Charleston and the fictional barrier island, Ediwander Island. It is likely that the fictional location is based on Sullivan’s Island, where the Heywards

²³³ Red Top Congregation. “Don’ Ya Mind What de Debil Do.” *The Carolina Lowcountry*. Augustine T. Smythe, et al. New York: Macmillan Company, 1931. 320-321.

maintained a summer tenement. The structure of the play underlines Heyward’s point of view of moving forward in time by looking back.

Table 3. Dramatic Structure of *Mamba’s Daughters*

Prologue	Mamba’s Room in a tenement on the Charleston (South Carolina) waterfront	Night, the present time
Act One	Scene 1: The Courtroom. Charleston.	A summer morning, twenty years ago
Act Two	Scene 1: The Commissary of Brick House Plantation on Ediwander Island.	Early evening in May, fifteen years ago.
	Scene 2: The Church	Later, that same evening.
	Scene 3: Mamba’s Room, in Charleston.	Later, that night.
Act Three	Scene 1: The Commissary	An evening, three years ago
	Scene 2: Gilly’s Cabin	Later, that same night.
Act Four	Scene 1: The Commissary	Night, the present time. (It is the same night and hour as the Prologue.)
	Scene 2: Gilly’s Cabin	Later, same night.
	Scene 3: The Commissary	Later, same night.

The density of the major plot points, ruptures in linear time, and reductive characterizations present a challenge for any analysis; thus, I begin with a summary of the play’s events.

Hagar is the central character of the play, and its conflicts emerge from her inability to negotiate the polarized cultures of the city and the sea island that Heyward has laid out for her in his commemorative territory. She is foiled by her mother, Mamba, who embodies Heyward’s Charleston Negro, neither aspiring to white society nor acknowledging her Gullah past. She is also foiled by her daughter, Lissa, who represents the outmigrated African American who leaves Charleston for a better life in the North.

In Heyward’s characterization Hagar possesses an almost supernatural strength, is easily persuaded to drink, dance, and sing, and is utterly submissive to white authority. His paternalism

towards her is epitomized in the character of Saint Wentworth²³⁴, the white male character who moves through both societies as both a member of the Charleston elite, and manager of the commissary on Ediwander Island, a surrogate for Heyward himself.

Saint Julian Wentworth is the type of Southern gentleman that the city of Charleston is convinced no other community can grow. His face is high bred, sensitive. His voice low and pleasant. His accent Southern but not exaggerated. His manner is courteous to both whites and blacks. He is about thirty and is now dressed in city clothes, which are worn but well cut and well pressed.²³⁵

Act One of the play finds Hagar on trial for attempted murder and public nudity on the waterfront. Initially, the judge looks to her record of “disorderly conduct while under the influence of liquor”²³⁶ and sentences her to five years. But Mamba pleads with Wentworth that Hagar, as a nursing mother, cannot be sent to jail. The judge questions Hagar further about the incident and a comical account follows in which Hagar explains that having been lured onboard

²³⁴ Wentworth is an old line family name, and also a street which runs east to west across the Charleston peninsula.

²³⁵ Heyward, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward. *Mamba's Daughters: A Play*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939. 27.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 25.

while delivering laundry she had been coaxed into drinking liquor and “purty soon dat little boat fair rock wid de pure song.”²³⁷ The judge delves deeper and Hagar recounts:

Den I see de boat was movin’, so I reaches over de side an’ I take um roun’ de neck an’ I lif’ um out of de boat up onto de wharf. An’ den I shake um an’ he grab de front of my dress an’ tear um off me. Tear my underbody, too, den all de people on de wharf see I’s nekked an’ dey laughs an’ dat mek me mad. So I shake um some more.²³⁸

Having received this evidence of provocation, the prosecuting attorney concludes that “she is not – er, equipped by nature to cope with city life. I believe that if she’d been a country negro there wouldn’t have been a steadier or more hard-working negro in the district.” She is remanded to Wentworth’s custody on Ediwander Island where she must remain for five years without returning to Charleston on threat of a prison term.

One of the most fascinating details of Act One is the way in which Wentworth is selected as Hagar’s steward. Unable to provide a last name when questioned by the judge, Mamba claims that their surname is Wentworth after she “looks around wildly and her eye lights on Saint.”²³⁹ Mamba suspects that Wentworth has pull with the judge, and confides to Saint that her family is connected to his, “... since the day my grandpappy belong to yo’ grandpa down on de ole

²³⁷ Ibid, 37.

²³⁸ Ibid, 39.

²³⁹ Ibid, 21.

Ediwander plantation.”²⁴⁰ She uses this as leverage to convince the reluctant Saint Wentworth to intercede on Hagar’s behalf, and Saint concedes.

While Saint expresses suspicion towards Mamba’s motives throughout the play, revealing Heyward’s anxieties about the modern Charleston Negro, he grows to respect and admire Hagar, even trusting her to close the commissary after he’s departed. In Act Two, which features a raucous congregation singing “Come Out de Wilderness,” Hagar jeopardizes her own freedom by shuttling a wounded gambler, Gilly Blunton, to Charleston for medical attention. When no one in the congregation moves to assist her she swears, “Yo’ fair mek me ‘shamed to be black.”²⁴¹

After leaving Blunton at the hospital, Hagar flees to Mamba’s quarters to await her imminent arrest. In Mamba’s room she is disoriented, “Eberyt’ing so different. I hardly knows where I am at. Mos’ like white pusson’s home.”²⁴² Hagar neither identifies with the hypocritical community on Ediwander Island nor feels at home with her mother in Charleston.

The juxtaposition of religious fervor and violence, and of Hagar’s humanitarian act and the inflexible laws of civil society, put her in the uncompromising position of failure. She is remanded for a five year prison sentence, and afterward returns to Ediwander Island.

Act Three of *Mamba’s Daughters* contains the play’s crisis. Hagar’s daughter Lissa, now grown and preparing to launch a singing career in New York, is seduced and violated by Gilly

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 28.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 79.

²⁴² Ibid, 84.

Blunton. Hagar confronts him but he flees, and Mamba insists that Lissa's reputation be preserved.

De cops get yo' an' dey make yo' talk. Yo' know dey can make yo' talk. Dey can even make smart people talk.; an' dey goin' ax yo' why yo' done um. An' dey goin' to put in de paper how Lissa's ma- what got jail sentence befo,- been set in de 'lectric chair fo' killin' dat dirty nigger. An' why? – 'Cause he been sleepin' wid Lissa. Dat goin' be fine fo' Lissa, ain't it? Wid a ma like yo' , what chance dat gal got?²⁴³

The crux of this passage is in Mamba's suggestion that Hagar's confession would be "put in de paper." The print version of the narrative, in Heyward's and the hegemonic economy, is the version of record and has implications for Lissa's future success. Hagar internalizes Mamba's lesson and the remaining action of the play relies on this distinction between the spoken word of the culture of Ediwander Island and the written record of Charleston authorities.

In the final act of the play, Hagar reveals to Saint Wentworth that Lissa secretly gave birth to Gilly's child, who died soon after and was buried in the marsh. He learns that Gilly is blackmailing Hagar and Mamba and threatening a police investigation over these events, having gained the confession of the Vina, Lissa's midwife. Hagar tells Saint, "Den he make a writin' an'

²⁴³ Ibid, 132.

she put her mark on it,”²⁴⁴ Wentworth comforts her, explaining, “Don’t worry over Gilly too much. There must be some way to stop his mouth. We’ll have to think hard.”²⁴⁵

This is all disclosed as Lissa is heard over the radio in the broadcast first played in the prologue of the play. Hagar goes to Gilly’s cabin just as Lissa begins singing a dedication of “Lonesome Walls” to her mother. The song, which Hagar teaches to Lissa early in Act Three, is set in a jailhouse, and expresses the longing of the prisoner to break down her prison walls.

One of dese mornin’g if I’m livin’ day long

I’m goin’ to rise up singin’ such a good-bye song

Dat walls will fly open to de sky an’ de sea-

Oh, Mister Jailer, can’t be – I’m free!

Den I’ll travel always singin’ to my home where tomorrow is a-waitin’ for me.

There’s still a tomorrow waitin’ there for me.²⁴⁶

When confronted by Hagar, Gilly threatens to go to New York and find Lissa, “If dat gal love you so much that she can sen’ you all that jus’ fo’ spendin’ money, there’ll be pretty fat pickings when she hears how someday her ma’ an’ gran’ma might be fryin’ in the electric

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 155.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 157.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 117.

chair.”²⁴⁷ Lissa’s voice is heard over Gilly’s radio as Hagar strangles him, saying, “I gib yo’ back yo’ life an’ now yo’ goin’ to do dat to my Lissa.”²⁴⁸

In what functions almost as an epilogue, Hagar returns to the commissary, purchases jawbreakers and a “keg of bounce” for the group gathered to hear Lissa’s radio broadcast. She asks the congregation, “Has any of yo’ eber hear of a nigger killin’ his own self by what de white folks calls committin’ suicide?”²⁴⁹ Drayton tells her that “Everybody know nigger never kill he’self.”²⁵⁰ Mingo explains, “‘Cause nigger ain’t worry he’self dat much.”²⁵¹ Hagar muses, “Ain’s allus goin’ to be like dat. Time comin’ when nigger goin’ worry he’self just like white folks. An’ then when he trouble get too deep fo’um to wade through all alone, Gawd goin’ show um what to do.” She dictates a letter to Davey accounting for Gilly’s murder as an act of jealousy, steps outside the commissary, and shoots herself with Gilly’s gun. Vina, the midwife implicated in Lissa’s scandal and the oldest woman on Ediwander Island ends the play singing, “I’m uh Goin’ to Leab’ You en Duh Han ob uh Kin’ Sabeyah,” (*I’m Going to Leave You in the Hand of the Kind Saviour*), with a solo voice. This spiritual is also the closing anthem of the SPS repertoire.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 163.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 164.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 167.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 167.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 167.

5.2.2 *Mamba's Daughters on the Stage*

Harlan Greene notes that after *Porgy and Bess*, Heyward recognized that he was in the “midst of a great cultural shift.”²⁵² I add that this was highlighted by the divergent modes of theatrical playing and contextual theatricality in Charleston and New York. In Charleston Heyward was absorbed into the insular culture of the SPS and the Carolina Art Association. In New York the Heywards and their texts were exposed to a much broader cultural base. This played out in the complicated process of producing a play on Broadway, engaging the intricate network of producers, directors and venues. It was also evident in the visibility and commercial appeal of African American performance in New York.

The Heywards were dedicated to enfranchising African American performers, but during rehearsals for *Porgy: A Play* and *Porgy and Bess* they noted the influence of vaudeville performance in the African American acting styles. They “addressed the audience when speaking lines,” and “When asked to register high spirits they broke into the Charleston or some other dance movement.”²⁵³

The Heywards had tapped Ethel Waters for the role as Hagar as early as 1933, four years after the novel and six years prior to the Broadway premiere. At the time Waters was appearing in *As Thousands Cheer*, a musical revue by Irving Berlin with sketches by Moss Hart. The

²⁵² Greene, Harlan. “Mamba’s Milestones: The Journey of an American Play.” *Festival Program/Spoletto Festival U.S.A., 1999*. See Appendix A.

²⁵³ Alpert, 57.

production used timely but fictional newspaper headlines to frame the individual songs in the revue. Waters performed “Heat Wave,” “Harlem on My Mind,” and “Supper Time.”

“Supper Time” was a dirge. It told the story of a colored woman preparing the evening meal for her husband who had been lynched. If one song can tell the whole tragic history of a race, “Supper Time” was that song. In singing it I was telling my comfortable, well-fed, well-dressed listeners about my people.²⁵⁴

Waters’ role in *As Thousands Cheer* was a popular success and “transformed her into the highest paid woman on Broadway.”²⁵⁵ With *As Thousands Cheer* she became invested in portraying the tragic history of her race. Her subsequent performance in the musical revue *At Home Abroad* perpetuated this image in which she sang, “... a series of tunes reminiscent of her *As Thousands Cheer* melodies.”²⁵⁶ Waters not only drew Broadway audiences, but also commodified herself as a serious African American chanteuse.

The Heywards adapted the novel *Mamba’s Daughters* for the stage with Waters and her iconic stage presence in mind. The draft was completed in 1938, but they were unable to find a director until Guthrie McClintic and Katherine Cornell agreed to take a chance on Waters’ as the lead in her first straight play. Jerome Kern composed music for “Lonesome Walls”, an original

²⁵⁴ Waters, Ethel. *His Eye is on the Sparrow*. Charles Samuels, ed. Doubleday: Garden City, 1951. 222.

²⁵⁵ Bourne, Stephen. *Ethel Waters: Stormy Weather*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007. 41.

²⁵⁶ “The Theatre: New Plays in Manhattan.” *Time*. 30 Sept. 1935.

spiritual Heyward wrote for the play. A powerful collaboration was in place, but it hinged on Hagar.

A negress of awesome stature, of great physical strength, of emotional power; one racially conscious in the best sense of that often abused label and free of any of the veneers to be acquired in Harlem; and also blessed with a singing voice of natural eloquence and beauty—did not the Heywards... find such a person to play Hagar, then their proposed dramatization of “Mamba’s Daughters” might as well be written in water.”²⁵⁷

I underline the emphasis that this statement makes on the physical substantiation of Hagar. In discussing the possibility of playing the role of Hagar in 1933, Waters proclaimed an affinity to the character, stating that she saw Hagar as, “all Negro women lost and lonely in the white man’s antagonistic world.”²⁵⁸ Figure 19 shows Waters circa 1939, and reveals her powerful physical and emotional presence in this role.

²⁵⁷ Vandamm. “Daughter of Mamba.” *New York Times* 1 Jan 1939. 97.

²⁵⁸ Waters, 239.



Figure 19. Ethel Waters, circa 1939²⁵⁹

Waters' recollection of the rehearsal process and her transformation into Hagar supports a deeply personal identification with the character. Waters recounts, "Mamba's family was just like my own... Hagar had held me spellbound. ... I was no longer Ethel Waters, blues singer. I wasn't even Ethel Waters, actress. I had become Hagar."²⁶⁰ In her embodiment of Hagar, Waters added a layer to Frijda's commemorative process where, "... commemorating contributes to the sense that the lost people are in some manner there, among us and with us, and that emotional bonds with them are still in force. It would seem that creating or reviving that sense is one of the major functions of commemorations."²⁶¹

The personalization of Hagar, for both Waters and Heyward, undermined the political implications of the text and made the memorative territory a permanent fixture of the play.

²⁵⁹ Valente, Alfredo. "Ethel Waters, circa 1939." *National Portrait Gallery*. Smithsonian Institution. Web. 1 June 2009.

²⁶⁰ Waters, 239 and 241.

²⁶¹ Frijda, 113.

Heyward's text and Waters' performance served as a double commemoration. Heyward's tragic memorialization of Hagar, and the Gullah, served as a cautionary tale for racial identities crossing between the rural and the urban spheres. Waters' triumphant commemoration of Hagar brought her national attention and continued success, to the extent that she continued to embody Heyward's memorative construction.

Waters, in her role as Hagar, was the first African American woman to receive top billing in a Broadway play. On opening night of *Mamba's Daughters* she received seventeen curtain calls. An unfavorable review by Brook Atkinson was retracted as theatre luminaries took a full page advertisement out in the New York Times defending Waters' performance.²⁶² The production ran for 162 performances at the Empire Theatre in 1939, after which it toured before returning to the Broadway Theatre in 1940 for a two week reprise.

The production did not tour to Charleston. In fact, none of Heyward's plays were produced in Charleston until a 1970 staging of *Porgy and Bess*, but his novels were generally well received. In addition to the insurmountable hegemonic racism, the white elite were unprepared for African American casts competing with their self-conscious cultural production and commemoration.

There was also the lack of an appropriate performance venue. Thirty years after J.C. Hemphill attempted to bring a fixed venue to Charleston through the Exposition, there was no permanent auditorium. The Dock Street Theatre had been built in 1736 and maintained a theatrical season through 1749. The theatre was "rebuilt in 1754 after a fire," and in 1809 it was refitted to house the Planter's Hotel to "provide lodging for notable visitors to the city as well as

²⁶² Bourne, 45.

wealthy upcountry planters who brought their families and servants to Charleston for several weeks in February to take in the social season and attend horse races.”²⁶³ This points back to Chapter Two, and the legacy of Race Week, the Exposition, and Charleston’s contextual theatricality, but here, “race” takes on different significance. Before the site became a point of interest for the Preservation Society, it was used as an African American tenement.



Figure 20. Façade of the Dock Street Theatre,²⁶⁴

In 1925 Susan Pringle Frost appealed to the City for an ordinance protecting the Planter’s Hotel from demolition, citing the value of the iron and woodwork. While unsuccessful in this first attempt Frost was able to persuade the administration “to seal the buildings in their disrepair

²⁶³ Poston, Jonathan H. *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City’s Architecture*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997. 180.

²⁶⁴ Calder, Alexander. Dock Street Theatre, (1809). Clarence Ward Archive. National Gallery of Art. Department of Image Collections. ARTstor: NGA_WARD_1039589476.

to await a brighter day.”²⁶⁵ In 1935 restoration of the theater began through a Works Progress Administration program. The building maintained its antebellum façade, and the interior was retrofit for an eighteenth century style theatre.

The restoration received national attention and in 1937, the Charleston Evening Post reported, “The Dock Street Theatre-Planters Hotel project, representing the blending of a rich past with a cultural future, tomorrow night is being given the city of Charleston by the federal government as a civic and cultural center.”²⁶⁶ Harry L. Hopkins, the head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and an advocate for the restoration, presented the opening ceremonies, stating, “This city has escaped the ruthless march of the industrial system. Here a heritage of arts and culture is respected.”²⁶⁷ To honor that heritage local performers staged *The Recruiting Officer*, which was the first play performed in the original theatre. It was followed by a rousing performance by the Society of Preservation of Spirituals. Heyward served as the emcee for the evening and wrote a dedication for the opening night gala.

... furthermore, they happily assure you,
Your ancestors enjoyed it long before you.
So let your laughter ring- these walls are strong-

²⁶⁵ Bland, Sidney. *Preserving Charleston's Past, Shaping its Future: The Life and Times of Susan Pringle Frost*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999. 71.

²⁶⁶ “New Deal’s Gift to City Will Be Presented Friday Evening” *Charleston Evening Post* 23 Nov. 1937.

²⁶⁷ Collison, E.M. “Hopkins Speaks.” *Charleston Evening Post* 27 Nov. 1937.

Remembering that, though the years are long,
A Charleston ancestor could not be wrong.²⁶⁸

Stephanie Yuhl argues, “In many respects, the Dock Street’s 1937 opening represented the culmination of nearly two decades of self-conscious cultural production and historical performance in Charleston.²⁶⁹ The Heywards’ dramatic contribution to that cultural production would not be performed until 1970, to commemorate Charleston’s tercentennial. The Gaillard Municipal Auditorium hosted the production of *Porgy and Bess*, comprised of local talent. *Mamba’s Daughters* would not be performed in Charleston until the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. brought it to the Dock Street Theatre in 1999.

5.3 *MAMBA’S DAUGHTERS COMES HOME*

In 1998 the Target Margin Theatre Company made the decision to revive *Mamba’s Daughters* Off-Broadway. Director David Herskovits was drawn to the play, as he perceived it

²⁶⁸ Heyward, DuBose. “Prologue to ‘The Recruiting Officer.’” *In Commemoration and Rededication of the Dock Street Theatre, 1937*. Charleston Vertical Files. Charleston County Library. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

²⁶⁹ Yuhl, 190.

to be “completely timeless and human.”²⁷⁰ This denotes the cultural baggage the text accumulated in the dynamic racial politics in the interim since its production in 1940. No longer relegated solely to the nostalgic territory of Heyward and Waters, *Mamba’s Daughters* became available to multiple modes of theatrical playing.

Herskovits approached the Target Margin production by immersing it in a theatricalized atmosphere. A central component of the artistic vision of the Target Margin Theatre Company, of which Herskovits is artistic director, is its commitment to create, “works of art that return us to life’s truths most powerfully by virtue of the ways they diverge from strict illustration of reality.” The resulting production of *Mamba’s Daughters* was meta-theatrical in its overtly referential use of a range of theatrical techniques in the acting, direction, and design.

One production strategy through which Herskovits resisted the illustration of reality in *Mamba’s Daughters* was the treatment of the spoken text. The actors in the play chose precise moments in which to shift between the affectations of a Southern or Gullah dialect and their natural speaking patterns. What was created, in effect, was multivocality, allowing for the resonance of the spoken word to resist resolution in its initial reception. This also problematized the authenticity of the construction of the Gullah language, as performers shifted speech patterns. Other theatrical elements prevailed, as in the constructed interruptions of the action which initiated the replaying of key scenes from alternative perspectives.

The visual scheme of the stage design by Erika Belsey was another striking marker of the tension between realism and theatricality. Recalling the metaphorical world of the novel, the set

²⁷⁰ *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A., 1999*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

was composed in a prevailing color scheme of black and white. A single set was used to signify all of the spaces, marginalizing the importance of “place” to the narrative. The territory of Ediwander Island and Charleston were only signified by exposition and character, pointing to the constructedness of the locations. This corresponds directly to the text, wherein, as William H. Slavick describes, “What Heyward has to say is said here, in the tension between the races and the balancing of black and white plots.”²⁷¹

After its 1998 New York revival which earned an Obie Award for Heather Gillespie, and Obie citations for the production staff, *Mamba's Daughters* was brought to the Dock Street Theatre for inclusion in the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. This revival, as it dealt with the direct experience of this facet of the historical Charleston community, in the specific location of that experience, provided a unique opportunity for the play as a liminal experience between memory and history.

The festival had included racially charged productions in its past, particularly a *Black Medea* staged by Loyola University Theatre in the inaugural 1977 festival, and *Praise House* by the Urban Bush Women staged in the first festival after Hurricane Hugo in 1990. In 1998 it dedicated a series to the diasporic experience, *Echoes of Africa*. The series included theatre, music, and dance “from Brazil to the Caribbean to the U.S.”²⁷² In the festival program Nigel Redden described the series as “designed to celebrate the resilience of African culture in a new

²⁷¹ Slavick, 111.

²⁷² *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A., 1999*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

world setting”, and called it the “ ‘theme’ of this year’s festival.”²⁷³ The series featured the Georgia Sea Island Singers, the McIntosh County Shouters, and the Hallelujah Singers. It was as popular as well as critical success.

What makes *Mamba’s Daughters* a singular production for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is that it is not only the first play written by a Charlestonian to be performed at the Festival, but also the first production dealing with localized representations of race to be performed at the Dock Street Theatre. The Dock Street had been engaged by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. for its chamber music series, small scale operas, and increasingly under Redden’s direction, theatre pieces which explored formal territories. The homecoming of Heyward’s text presented the possibility of a culmination of Charleston’s playing culture, cultural context, contextual theatricality, and theatrical playing.

For some audience members, the theatrical event was undermined by the confusion between the historical *Mamba’s Daughters* and the historicized Target Margin production. While the press surrounding the production focused heavily on the biographical connections between the novel of Charleston and DuBose Heyward, the production itself worked against the assimilation of the old Charleston Renaissance image and the world of *Mamba’s Daughters*.

Not only was the minimalist set composed in black and white with multicolored tags placed on the racially integrated cast to indicate distinctions of race and class, but also it alluded to the openness of the single house porch, which is mirrored not only in the architecture of the theatre in which the performance was taking place, but also as a recognizable and celebrated

²⁷³ *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A., 1999*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

architectural element of the residences embedded in the Charleston historic district, which ultimately characterize the “old south.” Furthermore, the actors performed from a Brechtian standpoint, shifting through their identification as character and actor, presentation and representation, in precise moments of conflict. Rather than explore the fluid territory of memory, as Heyward and Waters had done, the Target Margin company took an historical approach informed by Brecht.

The actor must play the incidents as historical ones. Historical incidents are unique, transitory incidents associated with particular periods. The conduct of the persons involved in them is not fixed and ‘universally human’; it includes elements that have been or may be overtaken by the course of history, and is subject to criticism from the immediately following period’s point of view. The conduct of those born before us is alienated from us by an incessant evolution.²⁷⁴

The formalization of character was explored by placing Heather Gillespie, as Hagar, in over-exaggerated platform shoes. Towering over the ensemble, she literally “filled the shoes” of Ethel Waters and the cultural myth of the Negro woman as a testament to sacrifice. This strategy worked against the emotional milieu of the narrative, and was criticized by local reviewer, Robert Jones.

I watched Heather Gillespie raging and weeping, and all the time I was thinking, “What a marvelous actress up there, shouting and waving her arms in such carefully thought out angles, wearing foot-high platform shoes. This is

²⁷⁴ Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre*. Transl. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964. 140.

marvelous.” I shouldn’t have been thinking such things. I should have been weeping. *Instead, all I could do was admire David Herskovitz’s cleverness and how he had cut the heart out of the play and inserted a lesson in stage techniques in its place.*²⁷⁵(my emphasis)

By 1998 Jones had created a kind of curatorial voice for the Festival through his longevity as a reviewer at the *Post and Courier* and his subject expertise in opera, theatre, and chamber music. His comments point to the interference of the theatrical architecture and his horizon of expectation of an emotional response. They also underline the potential consequences to the formalization of sensitive historical narratives.

I emphasize Jones’s closing line because it points to his anxiety over what he expresses as the preconceived territory of Heyward’s text. “*In its place,*” refers not only to the emotional weight of the narrative, but also to the cultural territory that the text inhabited when Heyward created it and Waters embodied it. Both Charleston residents and tourists emerge as the stakeholders for this territory in the festival context of contemporary Charleston. Thus, this production navigated divergent attitudes towards that placedness.

To that end, Jones’s comments also provoke a question of the extent to which a festival context can render a site of placelessness, particularly in a theatre and text haunted with notions of place. The heightened theatricality of *Mamba’s Daughters* suggested that the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. was gaining momentum as an agent of touristic change. As Knowles asserts, the

²⁷⁵ Jones, Robert. “In Mamba’s Daughters Staging Overwhelms Story.” *Post and Courier*. 31 May 1999.

placelessness of the festival context it is signaled by its ability to transform “strong and culturally specific work into mere representation.”²⁷⁶

The postmodern strategies employed in production rendered Hagar unfamiliar, and the Charleston production was met with the same skepticism that Saint Wentworth expressed to Mamba and their shared lineage in Act One, Scene One of *Mamba's Daughters*. But like Wentworth, and Heyward, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. recognized that it was participating in a cultural shift. The theatrical playing that had earned Obie awards and nominations in New York confused the self-consciously nostalgic territory of the Dock Street Theatre in Charleston. In the end Target Margin's wish that Charleston would “greet the production like a family member it didn't know it had” was granted.

²⁷⁶ Knowles, Ric. *Reading the Material Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 182.

6.0 CHAPTER SIX: PLAYING THE FUTURE

International festivals are first and foremost marketplaces.
Ric Knowles

In Chapter Six I examine “theatrical playing” in the festival context of Memminger Auditorium and *The Peony Pavilion*. I engage Ric Knowles’s assertion that festivals are marketplaces, and point to the dynamic cultural flows of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. While previous chapters have focused on local exchange, here I examine broader intercultural territory. I examine the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.’s production of *The Peony Pavilion* through Knowles’s assertion that international productions in a festival context come to represent “a nationhood ‘unrecognizable’ to its home country.”²⁷⁷

However, throughout this study I have acknowledged the persistence of a local context, particularly as it relates to the site specific environment established through Charleston’s cultural milieu. Therefore, I align my argument with another of Knowles’s observations about the festival context.

²⁷⁷ Knowles, Ric. *Reading the Material Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 182.

...there *is no such place* as the international marketplace. Theatre festivals, however international, *take place* within local markets, and in doing so, as anyone who lives in a Festival city will argue, set up complex tensions between the local and the global that are not always or easily contained or controlled.²⁷⁸

I locate my investigation in these tensions between the local and global in the 2004 staging of *The Peony Pavilion* at Memminger Auditorium, and examine the strategies that the Festival employs in the increasingly festivalized context of the City of Charleston. By 2004 Charleston was hosting festivals and mega-events eleven months of the year including the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, the Cooper River Bridge Run, the Lowcountry Oyster Festival, Fall Home and Garden Tours, and the Sweetgrass Festival. As the city evolved into a continually festivalized space the need for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. to control the touristic frames and maintain visibility increased. This chapter examines two of the strategies that the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. has employed to remain a stakeholder in the festivalization of the city. The first is to intensify the touristic frames of festival performances. The second is to invest in the built environment of Charleston's performance spaces.

6.1 FESTIVAL MARKETPLACES

The conceptualization of the festival as a marketplace is a persistent feature of both festival and urban studies. Van Elderen asserts that festivalization is “the symbolic

²⁷⁸ Knowles, 188.

transformation of public space into a particular form of cultural consumption.”²⁷⁹ In their definitive work Stallybrass and White argue, “The fair is at the crossroads, situated at the intersection of economic and cultural forces, goods and travelers, commodities and commerce.”²⁸⁰ Stallybrass and White also articulate the dialectic inherent in a festival/marketplace.

How does one “think” a marketplace? At once a bounded enclosure and a site of open commerce, it is both the imagined centre of an urban community and its structural interconnection with the network of goods, commodities, markets, sites of commerce and places of production which sustain it. A marketplace is the epitome of local identity (often indeed it is what defined a place as more significant than surrounding communities) and the unsettling of that identity by the trade and traffic of goods from elsewhere. At the market centre of the polis we discover a commingling of categories usually kept separate and opposed: centre and periphery, inside and outside, stranger and local, commerce and festivity, high and low. In the marketplace pure and simple categories of thought

²⁷⁹ Van Elderen, P. Louis. *Suddenly One Summer: A Sociological Portrait of the Joensuu Festival*. Joensuu: Joensuu University Press, 1997. 106.

²⁸⁰ Stallybrass, Peter and Allon White. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. London: Methuen, 1986. 28-30.

find themselves perplexed and one-sided. Only hybrid notions are appropriate to such a hybrid place.²⁸¹

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. has come to fulfill many of the contradictions described by Stallybrass and White. It both constructs a self-contained economy and participates in the flows of the multiple exchanges of international arts organizations and local tourist industries. It takes place both on the contained space of the peninsula and inside theatres, auditoriums, churches, and found spaces that are subject to entry through invitations, tickets, and subscriptional modes of gaining access. The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is at once a representation of local character, and a participant in global cultural practices, but the defining hybrid notion for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is one of both place *and* placelessness. The 2004 staging of *The Peony Pavilion* at Charleston's Memminger Auditorium exemplifies this relationship between festival and marketplace.

6.2 A SENSE OF ANTIQUITY

Memminger Auditorium was dormant in the interim between Hurricane Hugo and its resurrection for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. 2000 Festival Concert, a performance of *Surrogate Cities*, conducted by long time Spoleto Festival U.S.A. affiliate Steven Sloane. The auditorium, serving the all-girl Memminger School and surrounding community, was constructed in 1939 by architect Albert Simons. Simons had strong ties to the preservation community and was

²⁸¹ Stallybrass and White, 27.

instrumental in the recuperation of early architectural features in Charleston buildings. He served on the City Planning and Zoning Commission and the original Board of Architectural review from its inception until 1975.

The auditorium was conceived as an homage to Simons's architectural mentor, Robert Mills. The neoclassicism that dominated Mills' designs, most apparent in the Washington Monument and the National Museum of American Art (formerly the United States Treasury and Patent Office), is expressed in the Doric columns and flanking stairs of the Memminger Auditorium design. These features echoed the larger preservation movement's attempts to weave national identity into the fabric of Charleston's urban landscape.

Memminger served as not only the school auditorium but also the primary civic space for peninsular Charleston from 1939 to 1968, when it was replaced by the Gaillard Civic Auditorium in the Ansonborough neighborhood. In its heyday, Memminger hosted the *Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo*, the *American Ballet Theatre*, the *Westminster Choir*, major American symphonies (Cincinnati, Minneapolis, and Pittsburgh), as well as the *Charleston Symphony* and *Charleston Ballet* company.

The location at 56 Beaufain Street, which crosses the peninsula horizontally in its lower section, placed the auditorium in a district long associated with the intellectual character of the city. The area is known locally as Harleston Village and contains the College of Charleston, founded in 1770. This area also has a rich antebellum history for the free blacks and mulatto elite population, and many black churches and the Avery Normal Institute, the first free secondary school for African Americans, were established in this region of the peninsula after the Civil War.

Memminger Auditorium and Memminger School were named for Christopher Memminger, founder of the Charleston public school system and a Secretary of the Treasury for the Confederacy. Constructed in 1858, the school continued its all female enrollment through 1950. The construction of the auditorium can be linked to the 1939 Robert Mills Manor project, also led by Albert Simons, which revitalized the housing opposite Memminger Auditorium in one of the direst slums of the peninsula.

The thirty-four-unit Manor Project was one of the first in the Charleston area...

The two-story gable-roofed brick structures were built in the form of those in other areas, but in their materials and detailings as well as scale they seem like dependencies behind old Charleston houses, arranged in a courtyard fashion.²⁸²

The African Americans who lived in this area were displaced to a cheaper development, northeast of Harleston Village, in Ansonborough. The Mills development was reserved for whites only.²⁸³

The juxtaposition of the neoclassic auditorium and the antebellum conceit of the Charleston residential plots points to the tensions in the urban text between the old and new, black and white, and national and local character. These tensions defined the interwar period, as

²⁸² Poston, Jonathan H. *The Buildings of Charleston*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina. 345.

²⁸³ *Yearbook, Charleston, SC., 1939*. Charleston, SC: News and Courier Book Presses. Charleston Archive. Charleston County Library. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A. Subsequent generations of these displaced African Americans would be displaced again with the construction of the Gaillard Municipal Auditorium in 1968, as mentioned in Chapter Three.

Charleston struggled to emerge as a cultural center. The municipal auditorium became a point of fixation for the Charleston Retail Merchants Association who argued for “a hall accessible to the business district and to the hotels” and asserted that there was “no issue being so vital to the future welfare and growth of Charleston.”²⁸⁴

Memminger Auditorium thrived in the next decade, but there is little documentation of its midcentury life. Memminger School was renovated and reopened in 1955 under the Charleston County District as the all white Memminger Elementary. By 1977 the Memminger School enrollment was entirely African American. After the opening of the Gaillard Municipal Auditorium in 1968 the auditorium fell into a general state of disrepair until Hurricane Hugo destroyed the roof and much of the interior in 1989. After minimal repair provided by the Charleston School District, the auditorium closed until its 2000 revival under the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

At the time of festival’s inaugural Memminger performance, the auditorium was considerably run down. In her architectural study, Nicole Adrienne Jacobsen notes, “A sense of antiquity accompanies assessment of the Memminger inside and out; cracking stucco, mildewing paint and missing details indicate decay and create an appealing patina.”²⁸⁵ Contributing to that patina were the numerous pigeons which had taken to roost in the eaves of the abandoned

²⁸⁴ “Merchants Seek Convention Hall,” *News and Courier* 1 June 1938.

²⁸⁵ Jacobsen, Adrienne Nicole. “Memory and the Evolution of Modern Performance Spaces: Preservation Approaches to Charleston’s Memminger Auditorium and Riviera Theater.” MA Thesis. Clemson University, 2006.

auditorium. The atmosphere in the derelict space was one of disorder, upheaval, and neglect. The repairs after Hugo had stripped the walls of their asbestos and paint, leaving naked brick and wood. The post-apocalyptic feel was heightened by the contemporary streetscape of the adjacent overgrown parking lot and the urban trappings of an underserved community.²⁸⁶

Jacobsen describes the architecture of Memminger as a “type of container.” She asserts, “Since the portico is partially sunken into the composition rather than being an extension of the structure, the resulting space can be seen as carved out; it is a room that is in some sense equally inside and outside. Tripartite massing of the Beaufain Street elevation balances the whole, with the continuous entablature unifying the building.”²⁸⁷

The first production staged in Memminger after Hurricane Hugo was the American premiere of Heiner Goebbels *Surrogate Cities*, a study of the aural landscape of a post-industrial society. In spite of the state of disrepair of the performance space, the Auditorium maintained its exceptional acoustics and provided what James R. Oestreich of the *New York Times* characterized as a “sheer exhilarating sonic assault.”²⁸⁸ The review emphasized the ragged textures of the highly percussive performance, and noted the “isolated moments of conventional beauty.” It referenced the spotlight which swept over the audience like a searchlight and the

²⁸⁶ By 2000 the Mills Project housing was occupied by a primarily low income African American population who utilized the Memminger Elementary school.

²⁸⁷ Jacobsen, 23.

²⁸⁸ Oestreich, James R. “Saluting Flexibility if Not the Flag, at Spoleto”. *New York Times*. 6 June 2000.

dissonance of the literary texts from Kafka and Paul Auster, concluding “Here was an opportunity for Charleston, so immersed in its ancient history (not to say heritage), to reconnect with its more recent history as well.”²⁸⁹

In 2002 the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. utilized Memminger Auditorium for a performance of composer Steve Reich’s *Three Tales* and a Wagner concert, and both events highlighted the need for a major restoration project. An essay, “Memminger Auditorium: The Life of Culture and Commodity,” appeared in the 2002 program which emphasized the associations of the auditorium with the historical Charleston renaissance and emphasized the possibility of “continual cultural renaissances” through festival performance. The essay argued, “It is fortunate that Spoleto’s cultural pre-eminence in this city has brought national attention to both the exceptional quality and preservation plight of Memminger, still owned by the school board, which has been unable to dedicate significant funds for restoration over the past two decades.”²⁹⁰ The 2004 staging of *The Peony Pavilion* continued to heighten that awareness.

²⁸⁹ Oestreich, James R. 6 June 2000.

²⁹⁰ Sokolitz, Roberta. “Memminger Auditorium: The Life of Culture and Community.” *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A., 2002*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

6.3 STAGING “THE MING RING”

In her introduction to Cyril Birch’s translation of *Mudan Ting* (*The Peony Pavilion*), scholar Catherine Swatek refers to Tang Xianzu’s opus as “The Ming Ring,” playing not only with Wagner’s *Gestamkunstwerk* but also invoking the Bayreuth Festival. The play entered festival discourses when a Shanghai production of it was approached by John Rockwell in 1996 for inclusion in the 1998 Lincoln Center Festival. Several factors contributed to the eventual cancellation of the Lincoln Center Festival production, but the play received other revivals in 1998-1999, in part to commemorate the play’s four hundredth anniversary. Judith T. Zeitlin describes the phenomena in her article, “My Year of *Peonies*,”²⁹¹ which documents productions by Peter Sellars, Chen Shi Zheng, and the Shanghai Kunju Company.

Kunqu (also transcribed as *kun* and *kunju*), is an elite opera form of Ming Drama (1368-1644). As Catherine Swatek describes, “*Chuanqui* ... refers to a type of drama that originated in the south of China before the Yuan dynasty (1260-1368) and came to be referred to by that name, c. 1400. By 1550 *Kun* opera was becoming the dominant musical style of *chuanqi*, and it would remain so until the emergence of Beijing opera in the eighteenth century.”²⁹² Swatek elaborates further on the art form’s aesthetics.

²⁹¹ Zeitlin, Judith T. “My Year of *Peonies*.” *Asian Theatre Journal*. 19.1 (2002): 124-133.

²⁹² Swatek, Catherine C. “Introduction.” *The Peony Pavilion-Mudan Ting*. Transl. Cyril Birch. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002. xxix.

Kun opera is elite opera, favored by scholar-officials and wealthy merchants who enjoyed performances of it in their homes and gardens. Its music is soft and melodious, anchored by the horizontal bamboo flute rather than the two-stringed fiddle featured in Beijing opera. Lyrics to the syncopated tempos of its arias are sung using melisma, a technique whereby single syllables are prolonged over several bars of music. This renders the words largely incomprehensible (unless one already knows them), but kunqu's slow tempos facilitate the use of mime and dance as accompaniment, expressing the meaning of the lyrics in other ways. Kun opera combines song, dance, dialogue, and, to a lesser degree, acrobatics, and for most of its history the first two elements were most prized, because of the precision and beauty of their synchronization.²⁹³

I elaborate on the particularities of this Chinese opera form in order to emphasize not only the complexity of the aesthetic variables but also the obstacles presented to a contemporary audience to appreciate its sophistication. *The Peony Pavilion*, a major text in the kunqu opera canon, was composed in fifty five scenes that are customarily performed in excerpts in the contemporary repertory of Chinese opera companies. The longevity of the performance practices and the centrality of the playwright to the literature of the Ming period have sustained

²⁹³ Swatek, xvii.

The Peony Pavilion's visibility for Chinese audiences; however, until a 1986 performance at the Edinburgh festival it had little exposure in the West.²⁹⁴

Sellars, Chen, and the Shanghai Kunju Company struggled over the contested territory of the classic texts. Each of the respective productions engaged issues of authenticity, cultural authority, and cultural commodification. Sellars employed his usual postmodern techniques and incorporated the text, stylized kunqu movements, and an original score for a staging at the Vienna Festival in 1998. He had been introduced to the play through the excerpts staged at the 1986 Edinburgh Festival, but applied his established aesthetic strategies of appropriation and pastiche.

Chen Shi Zheng, however, operating in a concept collaboratively created with John Rockwell, undertook what he described to be the first complete staging of the text through what he proposed to be historic practices. Through the course of rehearsal, previews, cancellations, and the ultimate staging at the Lincoln Center Festival it was defined by a dialectic of innovation and authenticity.

Chen Shi Zheng's project was rehearsed in Shanghai with formally trained kunqu artists. Chen was open about the objectives of his project of cultural reclamation and asserted that the formalized production style that had evolved around kunqu was not representative of the theatre traditions in operation when the text was composed. Swatek summarizes Chen's position.

Peony Pavilion was not written for performances as Kun opera but as a *chuanqui* opera, which is not at all the same thing. Kun opera is a particular *style* of

²⁹⁴ Jain, Susan Pertel. "Contemplating Peonies: A Symposium on Three Production of Tang Xianzu's *Peony Pavilion*." *Asian Theatre Journal* 19.1 (2002): 121-123.

chuanqui – the most elegant and formalized style in Tang’s day- and Chen had in mind a more expansive recreation of Ming’s theater, which would capture both the liveliness of early *chuanqui* and the social and cultural atmosphere of the time when it first became popular. ... What resulted was a production that showcased the earthy humor of Tang’s text and curtailed the stylized elegance favored in performances of Kun opera.²⁹⁵

Chen’s artistic vision is problematized by two factors. A native of Hunan, he had earned a B.F.A. in traditional opera at the Hunan Arts School in 1981. However, he emigrated to the United States and earned an M.F.A. in Performance Studies from the Tisch School of Arts and launched a career as a New York based director. His position as an expatriate complicated his identity as a cultural authority for the Chinese. Second, the capital for staging *The Peony Pavilion* was created in anticipation of its inclusion in The Lincoln Center Festival, the Festival d’Automne Paris, the Sydney Festival, and the Hong Kong Arts Festival. This defined the staging as a cultural export from the outset.

The hybridity of Chen’s inclusion of high and low art forms resulted in what Chinese authorities referred to as a “hodgepodge” and the exportation of the production was banned by Chinese authorities, who complained that the staging was “feudal, absurd, and pornographic in a way that is unacceptable to Chinese authorities.”²⁹⁶ The opera was cited as a national treasure,

²⁹⁵ Swatek,. xx.

²⁹⁶ Faison, Seth. “Despite Pressure, Chinese Continue to Block Opera Sets.” *The New York Times*. 21 June 1998.

and as such fell under the purview of the head of Shanghai's culture bureau, Ma Bomin. Permission for the sets and costumes was eventually granted, but even with massive political pressure from the United States and French governments, the actors were not permitted to travel abroad.

It is significant that the production was blocked through the censorship of the actor's bodies, which became the essential feature of the subsequent "authentic" Chinese production by the Shanghai Kunju Company, "marking the fiftieth anniversary of the People's Republic of China."²⁹⁷ Unlike Chen's production, the opera was staged in three successive evenings with a rotating cast, and some scenes were excluded.

Chen's production encompassed all fifty five scenes on an elaborate stage populated by New-York-based Chinese artists trained in *xiqu*, a derivative of kunqu. Its ultimate inclusion in the 1999 Lincoln Center Festival can be attributed to coordinated efforts across international cultural festivals with costs tripling the \$500,000 expense of the canceled Shanghai performance.²⁹⁸ The scope of the staging, which included three distinct playing areas, is best described by David Rolston.

The set included a central main stage with a non-scenic backdrop that could be raised, a small pavilion used as a secondary stage located stage right, and the orchestra platform. In front, separating audience from stage, was a fish pond with

²⁹⁷ Swatek, xv.

²⁹⁸ Rolston, David. Tradition and Innovation in Chen Shi-Zheng's Peony Pavilion. *Asian Theatre Journal* 19.1 (2002): 141.

ducks and over it songbirds in cages. The rest of the stage was open: large dressing tables and rows of costumes were visible, particularly in the upstage right corner. Scenes of spiky mountains... or full moons rising and setting, were projected onto a large screen positioned upstage.²⁹⁹

Chen's *Peony Pavilion* toured extensively after its inclusion in the 1999 Lincoln Center Festival. It subsequently performed at the Festival d'Automne Paris (1999), Caen Festival (1999), Milan Art Festival (1999), Perth Music Festival (2000), Aarhus International Art Festival (2000), Berlin Music Festival (2002), Singapore Biennial (2003), and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. (2004). The production's international journey points to the increasing development of circuits as local markets compete for expensive festival exports. Knowles notes that productions in this global context of economic flows are "often more notable for cultural cachet than popular appeal."³⁰⁰

In the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. production the traditional performance of the opera worked in opposition to the horizon of expectations of the Western audience. The 55 scenes were assembled into 6 episodes which were performed as follows in Table 4:

²⁹⁹ Rolston, 138.

³⁰⁰ Knowles, 183.

Table 4. *Spoletto Festival U.S.A. Schedule for The Peony Pavilion, June 3-June 13, 2004.*

Thursday, June 3, 2004 Thursday, June 10, 2004	PM	Episode One: The Interrupted Dream
Friday, June 4, 2004 Friday, June 11, 2004	PM	Episode Two: Pursuing the Dream
Saturday, June 5, 2004 Saturday, June 12, 2004	PM	Episode Three: Making Love with a Ghost
Saturday, June 5, 2004 Saturday, June 12, 2004	PM	Episode Four: Resurrection
Sunday, June 6, 2004 Sunday, June 13, 2004	PM	Episode Five: War Against the Bandits
Sunday, June 6, 2004 Sunday, June 13, 2004	PM	Episode Six: Reunion

Patrons could purchase individual tickets or subscribe to all six episodes. Subtitles were projected and a program insert was added outlining the basic action of all six episodes. Each episode lasted approximately 3 hours and seating was reserved. In spite of the proscenium stage and characterization of the production as an opera in the Festival program, director Chen Shi-Zheng sought to emphasize the meta-theatrical elements of the production.

The process of continual transformation being fundamental to Chinese opera performance, I have chosen to show certain activities usually unseen by the audience, such as actors applying makeup, changing costumes and interacting with the musicians, as well as how the props and scenery are manipulated. Until the early 20th century, Chinese opera was not performed in theaters with a proscenium stage but in marketplaces, gardens, and temples- places full of life and activity. I would like the audience to experience this open and lively

atmosphere, although unusual in the West, I encourage them to move about, eat, drink, talk, or even doze as the performance goes on.³⁰¹

Unfortunately, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. audience was reluctant to comply with the director's wishes. For local attendees past experiences in the proscenium theatre may have influenced their behaviors at *The Peony Pavilion*, evidenced in the local coverage which noted the audience's hesitancy to move about. Furthermore, the ticket price was prohibitive to engage in eating, drinking, talking, or dozing not only for an individual's experience but out of respect for the audience members in the adjacent reserved seating. This was true for the 1999 Lincoln Center performance as well, as David Rolston describes.

Not only did the Western-style seating make moving about very difficult, but I witnessed several audience members being righteously and even violently hushed when they tried to discuss what was happening on stage. Nor was there more success in getting the audience to change the way it interacted with the actors and orchestra in its timing of applause. At the performance I attended the audience

³⁰¹ Chen Shi-Zheng. "Director's Note: Making *The Peony Pavilion*." *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A., 2004*: 48. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

did not applaud during a scene (as opposed to the end of a scene) until an acrobatic performance took place....³⁰²

In many ways Chen's *Peony Pavilion* was phenomenologically overwhelmed. The frames through which to engage the performance were overly formalized, and many of the interpretive cues were confused. Chen described his urgent feeling about Chinese opera, and the "opportunity to rediscover the essence of the art form and recognize the greatness of the past ... and to provide a new reference for Chinese opera on the world stage into the 21st century."³⁰³ The program notes emphasize the traditional artistry and the extensive research invested in the production. Chen relates, "I consulted distinguished specialists and scholars ... invited some of China's finest artists and artisans to collaborate in creating the costumes, the stage, set and the scenery."³⁰⁴ He notes, "The sets and the onstage Chinese pavilion were built by 12 master carpenters, who used the techniques of classical Chinese architecture, wood carving and joinery."³⁰⁵ His discourse points to a production rooted in historical practices and invested in constructing a "truthful" representation of a cultural form.

³⁰² Rolston, David. "Tradition and Innovation in Chen Shi-Zheng's *Peony Pavilion*." *Asian Theatre Journal* 19.1 (2002): 138. Rolston articulates my own observations, having attended the final two episodes at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. June 13, 2004.

³⁰³ Chen, 48. See Appendix A.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Haiping Yan describes the theatricality of classical Chinese drama, “Chinese music-drama aims not only to pull audiences out of their regular state of mind but also move them to another sphere where surprises and wonders are registers for another kind of “truth,” deeply mediated by or buried in what is real.”³⁰⁶ This description not only denotes the intended liminal experience of the tourist audience, but also the meditative atmosphere of the aural landscape imposed in the stylized performance of *The Peony Pavilion*. This atmosphere is defined by its precluding “both the performers and audiences from forgetting that what they act and behold is consciously *made*.”³⁰⁷

The mapping of the identity of Chinese opera in Chen’s production at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. was coupled with the placement of a local “Chinese Food” vendor on the theatre’s perimeter. The shared context of *Mama Fu’s Noodle House*, an explicitly consumable cultural export and *The Peony Pavilion*, increased both the context of marketplace and the theatricalized frame. The palatability of both was peppered by Ric Knowles analysis of products in this festival context.

... the mechanics of “exchange” tend to be modeled more on international trade diplomacy, intercultural tourism, and transnational trade than on potentially disruptive or genuinely inter-discursive interculturalism. Cultural differences, in these contexts, tend either to be packaged for consumption as exotic or

³⁰⁶ Yan, Haiping. “Theatricality in Classical Chinese Drama.” *Theatricality* Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 76.

³⁰⁷ Yan, 68.

charming... or, as in high modernist formalism, to be treated as interesting and energizing but fundamentally incidental local variants on a (therefore more important, or essential) universalist or transcendent humanism.³⁰⁸

The placelessness of *The Peony Pavilion* was perturbed by the placedness of an adjacent visual arts installation. The Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s legacy of Charleston's *Places with a Past* persisted. *Water Table*, opened on the first day of the 2004 Festival and presented events across the festival calendar. The work was conceived of by a collaborative team of writer Kendra Hamilton, designer Walter Hood, conceptual artist Ernest Pool, and visual artist Francis Whitehead. It engaged the history of the rice culture in the Carolina Lowcountry and was staged in the courtyard of Memminger Elementary School next to Memminger Auditorium, the theatre which housed *The Peony Pavilion*.

And this auditorium, this massive building with its faded white façade, its padlocked entrance doors, remains significant as a boundary marker, a seam in the fabric of the city. For us artists, this is not a place to exercise the sanitizing nostalgia that is sometimes the filter for living in and loving the city of Charleston. Confronting this postcolonial staging of the local, our artist-group conceives of yet another temporality, which might allow us to comment on the

³⁰⁸ Knowles, 187.

conflicting histories and memories that we encounter here, while also envisioning the future.³⁰⁹

The installation, a huge raised platform containing a bed of 3,000 rice plants in earth and water, was accompanied by community events in conjunction with *education*Spoleto, the outreach arm of the Festival, Memminger Elementary School, and PublicCity. The PublicCity event projected “footage of Charleston on the wall of Memminger Auditorium followed by critical exchange.”³¹⁰

The unintentional juxtaposition of the Chinese opera, the Chinese restaurant, and the local rice exhibit in the same cultural space was at best an opportunity to underline broad histories of cultural exchange, commodity, and consumption. A 2009 Lowcountry travelogue reveals an anecdotal reference to Charleston’s rice industry in relation to China. “Even the emperor of China preferred our rice,” claims tour guide Frank Aula³¹¹. However, in the absence of an explicit connection, the strange convergence of cultural formations eluded potential discourse and produced a veritable chop suey of contextual confusion.

³⁰⁹ Hamilton, Kendra and Ernesto Pujó. “*Places With A Future: Site Specific Art and Community Conversations.*” *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A., 2004.* 126. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

³¹⁰ “Water Table.” *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A., 2004.* 55. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

³¹¹ Borns, Patricia. “An Economic Staple is Rich Fodder for Historical Exploration.” *The Boston Globe* 26 July 2009.

The public exhibit of *Water Table* and the reserved seat staging of *The Peony Pavilion* in the shared *Memminger* site bring us back to the Stallybrass and White definition of hybridity. The coexistence of “inside and outside” is emphasized by the privatization of the global cultural export and the inclusivity of the local installation. The immediate community can attend, interact, and engage the visual art installation, but the doors to Memminger Auditorium and *The Peony Pavilion* are padlocked (during the calendar year- the theatre was opened for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.). The “postcolonial staging of the local is free,” but the multi-million dollar staging of an imperial drama requires a ticket.

Through installations like the *Water Table* the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. continues to insist on its local context, while simultaneously engaging a supernational festival exchange of cultural import and export. Nigel Redden, the General Director of Spoleto Festival U.S.A. joined the Lincoln Center Festival as its director in 1998, and was instrumental in bringing *The Peony Pavilion* to the United States. Furthermore, Redden invited Chen Shi Zheng to the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in 2001 to direct a new production of Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*, and in 2002 to stage his kunqu production, *Ghost Lovers*, which had premiered at the Lincoln Center Institute. The franchisement of festival performances makes sound economic sense in a global economy but raises even more questions regarding culture, authenticity, and marketplaces.

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is not in a unique position as a performing arts festival navigating this territory. However, its devotion to the built environment of Charleston is worthy of further consideration. The staging of *The Peony Pavilion* at Memminger Auditorium highlighted the investment that the festival had made in the neglected performance space after Hurricane Hugo.

6.4 THE EDIFICE COMPLEX

Memminger Auditorium re-opened in 2008 after undergoing extensive renovation with funds raised largely by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. The Festival had staged the same production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in 2005 and 2006, and the theatre was dark in 2007. In the interim, the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. launched a \$27 million dollar capital campaign to rehabilitate both the Dock Street Theatre and Memminger Auditorium.

I title this section after Michael McKinnie, who traces the trend through Canadian theatre and concludes, “the edifice complex has involved not simply as a preoccupation with massive architecture but also a preoccupation with the difficult juncture between theatre space, built form, and property in a rapidly changing local real estate market.”³¹² The Spoleto Festival had shown consistent interest in the built environment of the peninsula since its inception, but in this case its intervention on behalf of the municipal space was more urgent.

In 2001 the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. celebrated its 25th Anniversary with a \$25 million campaign designed, among other objectives, “to ensure our continued presence in downtown

³¹² McKinnie, Michael. *City Stages: Theatre and Urban Space in a Global City*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. 20. McKinnie attributes the reference to John Juliani, Vancouver director, who observed that “regional theatres and other major arts institutions appeared to be more concerned with construction of grand buildings that testified to their own importance than to the vagaries of artistic development.”

Charleston through the acquisition and rehabilitation of our home on 14 George Street.”³¹³ The focus on the Festival Administrative offices of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. came in a year that the Festival used twelve performance sites on Charleston’s peninsula. Of these venues three were municipal theatres: the Gaillard Municipal Auditorium (1), the Dock Street Theatre (2), and the Garden Theater (3). (See Figure 21).



Figure 21. Performance Venues for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., 2001.

The Garden Theatre had been used by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. primarily for its dance and solo performance series, *Footprints in the Garden*. In September of 2002, after years of dispute with the corporate landlords, the City of Charleston elected not to renew its lease of the Garden Theatre displacing not only the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. but many local arts

³¹³ Hewett, William B. “From the Chairman of the Board.” *Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A., 2001*. 12. See Appendix A.

organizations. The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. hosted its final performance at The Garden Theatre in 2002, which included Chen Shi Zheng's *Ghost Lovers*. The Garden Theatre was closed to the public in 2003 and remained vacant until 2005 when it was acquired by Philadelphia-based retailer *Urban Outfitters*.

Architectural details, particularly the structure's façade, were preserved in the Garden Theatre's transformation from theatre to retail space.³¹⁴ But the loss of the performance space was significant, and revealed both the City and community's inability to compete financially with outside corporate interests. The ease with which the historic theatre became subsumed into the retail landscape signaled a shift in the festival's role in arousing interest and investment in the City's built environment.

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. acted quickly in launching its *Inspiring Community Voices Campaign* to renovate both Memminger Auditorium and the Dock Street Theatre with support from the City of Charleston and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Funds were acquired not only to bring both spaces up to code for audiences, but also to secure the buildings structurally for the onset of natural disasters.

In Memminger Auditorium the proscenium theatre was re-imagined as a flexible black box space. The renovations included increasing the seating capacity, leveling of interior floor, new and larger public restrooms, a new western entrance on street level (partly to make it handicap-accessible), creation of an outdoor garden-urban stage and a 3,400 square foot addition to store scenery and props.

³¹⁴ Fossi, Caroline. "New Cast Joining Garden Theater: Urban Outfitters to Locate Store in Historic King Street Building." *Post and Courier* 25 February 2005. 12B.

The renovation altered the reading of the auditorium as part of the urban text of the City. It had erased the eyesores of the adjacent vacant lot and brought the auditorium into aesthetic harmony with the adjacent restaurant and shopping complexes. However, the housing development remained across the street. On the boundary of these two spaces, Memminger Auditorium has been absorbed into the touristic landscape when it once participated in the built environment of the historical space.

The 2004 *Water Table* installation notes referred to Memminger as a “seam in the fabric of the city” and engaged what they referred to as a “postcolonial staging of the local.” After the renovation Memminger was all but concealed from its former urban landscape. Charleston’s *Post and Courier* reported, “Those with a ticket also can get inside by following a slightly raised plaza to an entry underneath the green scrim, or metal lattice, covered in star jessamine. The vegetation eventually will cover the 40 foot tall lattice designed to screen a 3,400 addition for Beaufain Street.”³¹⁵

This early description of the renovated auditorium as a place excluded to non-ticket holders marks a change in the inclusive discourse which had previously surrounded the public space, and problematizes the funding initiative as a community venture. Architect Mario Gooden states, “Our intention was to play up the contrast between the modern and the historic if you will:”³¹⁶ however, the architecture also emphasizes the public and the private. In addition to

³¹⁵ Behre, Robert. “Memminger Theater to Have Dramatic Rebirth.” *Post and Courier*, 14 April 2008.

³¹⁶ Gooden in Behre, 14 April 2008.

the lobby and auditorium the renovated complex also contains an interior vestibule which blocks the lobby's lights from the theatre's interior. Adjacent to the theatre is an outdoor area, which Gooden describes alternatively as, "the urban room, the garden lobby, the outdoor lobby or the public room."³¹⁷ The division between the privatized interior space and the public urban space iterated in the juxtaposition of *The Peony Pavilion* and *Water Table* becomes a permanent fixture of the Memminger Auditorium.

6.5 STAGING THE SLAVE TRIANGLE

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s intervention on behalf of the built environment of Charleston's historic theatres is a culmination of its efforts in the City to participate in touristic strategies, map the City as a festivalized environment, and envelop the tourist audience. But throughout its shared history with the city of Charleston it has also attempted to engage features of the antebellum past. Throughout this study I have argued that the theatrical playing employed in that engagement has become increasingly metatheatrical and touristic. I conclude this investigation with an analysis of the premiere operatic performance of Memminger Auditorium in 2008, the staging of Anthony Davis's *Amistad* which reveals this emergent touristic territory.

Amistad premiered in 1997 at the Lyric Opera in Chicago in a production directed by George C. Wolfe. The lengthy and cumbersome production received mixed reviews. It was revised for its inclusion in the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. As Davis describes, "The action is much

³¹⁷ Gooden in Behre, Robert, 14 April 2008.

more focused and interesting in terms of the power relationships. ... I think what the audience will be seeing is something that's at once grand– and intimate.”³¹⁸

The audience also experienced the newly designed interior of the Memminger Auditorium for the first time. The theatre accommodated an oval stage invoking the berth of a ship set in the center of the house in a thrust configuration. The opera staged the narrative of the slave ship *Amistad*, whose inhabitants revolted in 1839 and in the course of their navigation back to Africa were misguided to the Northeastern United States. A public debate ensued and the case was pleaded before the Supreme Court by John Quincy Adams, who won the captives' freedom and their return home.

Discourse surrounding the production noted its historical “placedness” in Charleston, since the city had once been a major participant in the Atlantic slave trade. Furthermore, Anthony Davis linked Charleston to the roots of American opera through *Porgy and Bess*.

Porgy and Bess is such an important piece- it's really the beginning of American opera defining itself in relation to our own music. And when I think about Gershwin's contribution to bringing jazz and the music of the Sea Islands into the idiom – well it was revolutionary and its reception prefigures a classic American struggle, the fact that we are so immersed in and dominated by popular culture that there's this impulse in opera to keep itself separated, and yet that very impulse can paralyze the music, cut us off from the richness that is there. I never want to cut myself off from the richness, so the thought of coming to the city

³¹⁸ Quoted in Hamilton, Kendra. “Grand and Intimate: An Opera Reborn: A Theatre Reclaimed” *Festival Program/Spoletto Festival U.S.A., 2008*. 17. See Appendix A.

where it first entered the operatic canon? That I'm very much looking forward to...³¹⁹

In addition to embracing the historical frame, the festival openly attempted to point to contemporary racial dynamics. "Festival director Nigel Redden told the Associated Press this staging sends a clear message to the "mixed" neighborhood around Memminger that "theater is for everyone."³²⁰ However, it is likely that the ticket price presented an obstacle to the local community- \$25 to \$115; \$150 for opening night.

The eventness of the production and its touristic frames were intensified by collateral events which included artist talks and interviews at both the College of Charleston and the Avery Research Center for African American History. Furthermore, the Charleston County Public Library sponsored a film series, free to the public, that featured films related to the historical narrative of *Amistad*. Walking tours were scheduled to increase the interpretative opportunities for audiences. These embarked from the Old Slave Mart Museum.

Charleston was the principal port of entry for African slaves, and dominated the domestic slave trade after importation of slaves was banned in 1808. The Old Slave Mart was constructed in 1859 and served as the centralized location for privatized sales in the domestic slave trade through 1863. The Old Slave Mart changed hands many times throughout the next century.

³¹⁹ *Festival Program/Spoletto Festival U.S.A., 2008*. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

³²⁰ Stoehr, John. "No More Mumm Memminger." *Charleston City Paper*. 5 Jan. 2008.

In 1938 Miriam B. Wilson acquired the property and established a privately owned museum of African American history.³²¹ In 1949 the property was acquired by Archibald Furtwangler, who opened a Southern confectionary on the first floor, specializing in a coconut candy known as “monkey meat.” Furtwangler maintained a museum space on the second floor to feature African American handicrafts, sweetgrass baskets, wood carving and metal work also available for retail.³²²

The City of Charleston acquired the property in 1987 and after sustaining considerable damage from Hurricane Hugo it remained largely overlooked until 2001 when Mayor Riley announced a new initiative to engage the history of the slave trade. Riley proposed two museum sites, that he explicitly relates to Charleston’s tourist driven economy. The Old Slave Mart was to be rehabilitated to focus on the domestic slave trade, and a second museum would go into construction at the waterfront complex that would “go beyond emancipation to about 1900, covering the period of Jim Crow in the South, the search for economic opportunity and the transition of a people from slavery to freedom in that time.”³²³

Riley’s 2001 initiative coincided with the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.’s *Evoking History* series discussed in Chapter Four. This suggests not only that the escalating efforts of the City of Charleston and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. to frame a touristic experience were becoming

³²¹ Poston, 64.

³²² “News of Food: Old Slave Market in Charleston, S.C. Turned into Shop for Making Delicacies.” *New York Times* 6 Sept. 1950.

³²³ Kinzer, Stephanie. “Leading Charleston to its Past.” *New York Times* 14 Aug. 2001.

coordinated but also that re-staging of histories marginalized in the antebellum worldview was becoming profitable by tapping into larger ethnic and international tourist markets.

The 2008 staging of *Amistad* followed the re-opening of the renovated Old Slave Mart Museum in October 2007. The new facility holds a permanent exhibit on the first floor which traces the domestic slave trade and contains an architectural section examining the building's history. The second floor exhibit space holds a rotating exhibit. In 2007 thru 2008 this exhibit was *Lest We Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery*, "an enlightening exhibition that offers an inspiring look at the cultural, political, economic and social practices enslaved Africans developed while enduring the dehumanizing conditions of slavery."³²⁴

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s staging of *Amistad*, in conjunction with the first spring season of the museum underlines the mutual touristification ongoing in Charleston. Tourists arriving in Charleston could engage versions of the narrative through a variety of phenomenological and performative frames. The most astonishing of these was the scheduling of a tour of a replica of the *Freedom Schooner Amistad*, which had undertaken a fourteen month transatlantic journey with its first scheduled stop at Charleston for the *Amistad* premiere.

The *Amistad* experience was a result of the coordinated efforts of several national organizations including the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and UNESCO who sponsored both *Lest We Forget* and the *Amistad Schooner Project*. It underlines a culmination of strategies engaged by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. to formalize its relationship to the historicification of Charleston— walking through the built environment, formalizing tourist experiences, and linking local history to global discourses. The opportunity to layer frames of

³²⁴ City of Charleston Special Facilities: Old Slave Mart Museum. Web. 1 Aug. 2009.

history, historical memory, phenomenological experience, and theatre combined to create a signature performance for the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. by invoking a placelessness inhabited by place.

7.0 CONCLUSION: FINALE(S)

A festival is a marriage between a place and an event.
Nigel Redden³²⁵

Addressing the cultural territory of a contemporary festival is a difficult task. This study has been a dual attempt to document the specific relationship between the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. and the City of Charleston, and to link both to larger discourses of memory, place, and festivalization. Throughout this investigation a symbiotic relationship has been revealed. As the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. continues to be perceived and presented as a feature of Charleston, the City of Charleston comes to be conceived and presented as a festivalized space in an annual cycle of recuperation of the past, refashioning of the present, and negotiating the spaces where the two commingle.

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. has become a powerful agent in activating the power of memory and the permanence of place in Charleston, South Carolina. This is a result of its spatial practices such as engaging tourist sites, restoring municipal theatres, and infiltrating community spaces. The festivalized peninsula invites audiences to move with them through the past and the present through multiple rhythms of temporality and spatiality, just as the Spoleto Festival

³²⁵ Sellar, Tom. "The Summer of my German Epic: A Conversation with Lincoln Center Festival Artistic Director Nigel Redden." *The Village Voice* 10 July 2007.

U.S.A. moves the festival audience through the geographic and memorative space of Charleston each year.

Throughout the history of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. visitors have been welcomed to the city's peninsula, invited to walk between venues, and engage the city as well as festival events. These visitors are pilgrims, not only as they travel from their points of origin but also as they move through the geography of memory produced in Charleston. As pilgrims, tourists have engaged the playing culture of Charleston since its inception as an urban site. The first manifestation of Charleston's tourist bubble can be traced as far back to its origins as a walled city.

That enclosure is mapped repetitively in the built environment of the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition, the Historic District of Charleston, and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s walking tour of *Places with a Past*. As "history" continues to accumulate in Charleston through the march of time, the reclamation of marginalized narratives, and the diversification of the tourist demographic, the contextual theatricality of the festival emerges as the prominent mode of engaging that history.

For the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. the marriage of place and event suggested by Nigel Redden is based in peninsular Charleston and the festival schedule. The Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s reliance on Charleston's municipal venues is apparent in the multimillion dollar renovations that it has partnered in undertaking for the Memminger Auditorium and the Dock Street Theatre. This speaks not only to the centrality of the built environment of Charleston to any cultural undertaking but also to the power implicit in the control of performance space.

One of the most persistent features of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is its Festival Finale at Middleton Place Plantation, 14 miles northwest of the Peninsula. For the finale, the festival

shifts its audience off of the peninsula, relinquishing control over the urban geography of the City of Charleston, if only for a brief time. The vacuum created by its absence is rapidly filled with the other festival manifestations that populate the City's calendar in an almost continuous cycle of festivalization of Charleston's urban space.

Middleton Place Plantation has hosted the Festival Finale since 1977. The historic landmark features the "Oldest Landscape Gardens in America" created by Henry Middleton (1717-1784), one of the wealthiest rice planters in Charleston. The site serves as a microcosm for the cultural shifts outlined in Charleston throughout this study. The rice plantation was devastated by the earthquake of 1886, restored by a Middleton cousin, J.J. Pringle Smith (a relative to preservation pioneer Susan Pringle Frost), and marketed through garden tours in the 1920s.³²⁶ Alice Ravenel Huger Smith produced watercolors of the gardens in souvenir postcards in 1926 and published a visual study of Middleton Place, *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties*, in 1936. It became a National Historic landmark in 1972, suffered tremendously in the tidal surge of Hurricane Hugo in 1989, and was populated by site specific art through the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s *Human/Nature* in 1997.

In many ways the festival's off-site finale celebrates many of the traditional features of the Festival impulse. The gala concert takes place outdoors, and is marked by significant local attendance. It has a communal feel as the audience of tourists and locals claim their space via picnic blankets and folding chairs. It engages the features that Falassi has identified as festival

³²⁶ Sokolitz, Roberta. Middleton Place: Art in the Home and Garden. *Festival Programs/Spoleto Festival Programs, 2000*. 119. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina. See Appendix A.

rites, such as conspicuous display in the formal Southern attire worn by audience members; conspicuous consumption in the elaborate picnics that incite fierce rivalries among annual attendees; and the performance of the Festival orchestra. The Festival Finale concludes with an extraordinary display of fireworks over the Ashley River, which points back to the Fireworks Park that concluded the suggested route of the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition. The audience gives itself over to “general jollification” and engages the playing culture of Charleston persistent since the antebellum Race Week.

In other ways the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is an entirely contemporary construct. Although rooted in modern festival formations like Bayreuth, the evolutions of tourism, historiography, and performance studies have produced a potential template for new areas in festival discourse. The idea of community has become problematized by tourist identity formation. Festival “placelessness” must now engage “touristic space.” Furthermore, global exchanges negotiate local interests as corporate and philanthropic sponsorship influence festival circuits.

The Spoleto Festival U.S.A. is more than a contemporary “plausible scheme, mostly of a plausible nature.” Its persistence in Charleston underlines the agency of the festival impulse, in whatever manifestation, to transform space and time. It also underlines the theatrical and performative strategies undertaken by Charleston to stage itself as a site for tourist consumption. As the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. continues to engage material culture and memorative places in Charleston, the city persists in its reliance on the festival’s placelessness. To commemorate the opening of the newly renovated Dock Street Theatre in 2010 the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. has planned a production of *Flora*, the first opera staged in Charleston. The revival of the 17th

century opera in the restored historic theatre demonstrates the mutual intention of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. and the City of Charleston to continue to renew their vows.

APPENDIX A

SPECIAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS, BY REPOSITORY

A.1 ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

The following is a list of repositories at which research was conducted in the course of this investigation. Individual collections are noted using the archival description standards of each repository.

A.1.1 The Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina.

907.457 OFFICIAL *Official Guide : the South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition, Charleston, S.C. and surroundings: 1901-1902.* Charleston: Lucan-Richardson, [1901?].

725.820288 JACOBSEN Jacobsen, Adrienne Nicole. *Memory and the Evolution of Modern Performance Spaces: Preservation Approaches to Charleston's Memminger Auditorium and Riviera Theater.* MA Thesis. Clemson University, 2006.

Charleston Vertical Files.

Records of the Azalea Festival Committee, 1934-1953.

Yearbook, Charleston, SC. 1880-1952. Charleston, SC: News and Courier Book Presses.

A.1.2 South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

1253.00 *Albert Simons Papers, 1864-1979.*

1177.00 *Dock Street Theatre Collection, 1934-1958.*

A.1.3 South Carolina History Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina.

782.253 CAROLINA *The Carolina Low Country.* Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, 1931.

782.253 GULLAH *Gullah Lyrics to Carolina Low Country Spirituals.* Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, 2007.

782.253 SPIRITUA *Spiritual Society Field Recordings, 1936-1939.* Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, 2004.

South Carolina Vertical Files.

A.1.4 Special Collections, Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina.

Festival Program/Spoleto Festival U.S.A. 1977-2006. Charleston, SC: Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Marketing and Public Relations Department, 1977- .

**A.1.5 Spoleto Festival Archives, 1956-1989. Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library.
College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina.**

1. *Organizational Documents*: Box 1-1.
 2. *Festival Foundation*: Box 2.1-Box 2.16.
 3. *Grant Requests*: Box 3.1 - Box 3-7.
 4. *Spoleto Festival U.S.A.: Board and General Manager*: Box 4.1- Box 4.2.
 5. *Program Files and General Administration*: Box 5-2, Box 5-5, Box 5-16-Box 5-17, Box 5-20, Box 5-21 – Box 5-23.
 6. *Finance*: Box 6-61.
 8. *Media Files*: Box 8-16, Box 8-17.
 9. *Publicity, News Releases, Clippings, Scrapbooks, etc.*: Box 9-1, Box 9-6, Box 9-24, Box 9-25, Box 9-26, Box 9-30, Box 9-34.
 10. *Photographs*: Box 10-7, Box 10-8, Box 10-15.
 12. *Publications*: Box 12.
 13. *Scene Shop*: Box 13-1, Box 13-32.
 14. *Miscellaneous*: Box 14-1.
- Oversize*: A16b

A.2 DIGITAL IMAGE COLLECTIONS

A.2.1 Special Collections, Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library. College of Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina.

Samuel Lord Hyde Photographs, Special Collections, College of Charleston.

A.2.2 ART ON FILE

- Burden, Chris. *Three Ghost Ships; Overview of Installation*, 1991. Gibbes Museum of Art. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-04-03-02.
- Conwill, Houston, Estella Conwill Majoso, and Joseph DePace. *The New Charleston: Overview of Installation, 1991*. Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, 1991. Art on File: TP-05-04-02.
- Ericson, Kate and Mel Ziegler. *Camouflaged History*, 1991. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-06-03003.
- Gormley, Anthony. *Untitled, Detail of Two Lead Figures, 1991*. Old City Jail. Charleston, SC. Art on File TP-09-15-12.
- Hamilton, Ann. *Indigo Blue: Mound of Indigo Shirts, 1991*. 45 Pinckney Street. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-10-08-02.
- Hammons, David. *America Street: House of the Future, 1991*. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-11-07-02.
- Jubelin, Narelle. *Foreign Affairs, 1991*. U.S. Custom House. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-13.04-01.
- Newman, Elizabeth. *Honey in the Rock (Got to Feed God Children), 'Great Room' with Seven Stools*. Middleton-Pinckney House. Charleston, SC ART on FILE: TP-15-15-10
- Newman, Elizabeth. *Honey in the Rock (Got to Feed God Children), Detail of Doll on Tightrope, 1991*. Middleton-Pinckney House. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-15-15-12.
- Scott, Joyce. *Believe I've Been Sanctified: Overview of Cannon Park, 1991*. Cannon Park. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-16-02-01.
- Simpson, Lorna. *Five Rooms: Room with Jars of Rice, 1991*. Governor Bennett House. Charleston, SC. ART on FILE: TP-18-08-05.

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