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**Arts Learning Residency With The Mark Morris Dance Group
Kicks Off Unprecedented Partnership**

- *FirstWorks and American Dance Legacy Initiative, in collaboration with Artists and Scientists as Partners, Brown University, and Mark Morris Dance Group present “Widening the Circle: Intersections of Art, Science and Community” –*
 - Kicking off today through March 8, 2014 –

PROVIDENCE, RI – FirstWorks and American Dance Legacy Initiative, in collaboration with Artists and Scientists as Partners, Brown University, and Mark Morris Dance Group, have formed a partnership to present *Widening the Circle: Intersections of Art, Science and Community*. The series kicks off today and includes master classes, lecture demonstrations, performances, and seminars that provide unique opportunities for investigation.

Widening the Circle is anchored by American Dance Legacy Initiative's Mini-Fest on February 26 – March 2 at Brown University, and FirstWorks' presentation of an exhilarating evening of live music and dance with the Mark Morris Dance Group, one of the world's leading dance companies, at The Vets on March 8.

Today, *Widening the Circle* kicks off with a Salon presented by the Providence Athenaeum. Join Peter Bramante, managing director of FirstWorks; Julie Strandberg, co-founder/artistic director of American Dance Legacy Initiative and co-founder/co-director of Artists and Scientists as Partners, and founding director of dance at Brown University; and Rachel Balaban, co-director of Artists and Scientists as Partners and Dance for PD® (Parkinson's disease) instructor. Free and open to the public. Friday, February 21, 5-7pm, Providence Athenaeum, 251 Benefit Street, Providence.

Next, FirstWorks presents a conversation with Mark Morris Dance Group founder and artistic director Mark Morris on his body of work and thoughts on building community through the arts. The conversation will be moderated by Debra Cash, senior critic for ArtsFuse.org, scholar-in-residence at the Bates Dance Festival and former scholar at Jacob's Pillow. Free and open to the public, pre-registration is recommended. Wednesday, February 26, 5-6pm at Brown University's Granoff Center for the Creative Arts, 154 Angell Street, Providence.

FirstWorks invites you to participate in this bold collaboration between organizations. Catch an Artist-Up-Close conversation, take a master class, explore the Mini-Fest and Symposium events; and join FirstWorks for Mark Morris Dance Group's landmark performance at The Vets on March 8. Visit the *Widening the Circle* portal site for the full series schedule at wideningthecircle.weebly.com.

About FirstWorks

FirstWorks is a non-profit arts organization that builds the cultural, educational, and economic vitality of our community through world-class performing arts and education programs. Since 2004, FirstWorks has offered Rhode Islanders access to some of the most exciting artists of our time including Yo-Yo Ma & the Silk Road Ensemble, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Wynton Marsalis, Joffrey Ballet, and the master artists of Pakistan through the Caravanserai project (2011-12). Beginning with an unprecedented collaboration with Providence's Department of Art, Culture + Tourism, FirstWorks has produced 22 groundbreaking arts festivals, attracted more than 155,000 participants, presented over 361 international artists and innovators, engaged more than 100 nonprofit community organizations and schools, and grown into a multidimensional arts organization recognized with 15 National Endowment for the Arts grants. In fall 2012, FirstWorks partnered with the City of Providence to present the inaugural FirstWorks Festival: On the Plaza, leading a consortium of 18 organizations to create an event that drew 40,000 people into downtown Providence. In July 2013, the City of Providence and FirstWorks were named recipients of a second NEA Our Town grant to support a community design effort to create a cultural corridor in downtown Providence along Washington Street, and to establish the FirstWorks Festival: On the Plaza as a biennial signature event in Providence. Visit www.firstworks.org to learn more.

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