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## **FirstWorks Marks 10 Years Of Artistic And Community Partnerships**

*City of Providence collaborates to cap anniversary weekend events with free celebration downtown  
featuring artists from Australia, Morocco, Italy, and Providence*

PROVIDENCE, RI – FirstWorks, a non-profit arts organization, today announced the **FirstWorks Decade Bash**: a weekend of events to celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of connecting world-class arts with audiences of all ages throughout the region. Taking place from September 18-21, 2014, the anniversary celebration features stellar performers from Australia, Italy, Morocco, and Rhode Island – and includes the **FirstWorks 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala** on September 18, a free **FirstWorks Urban Carnevale** downtown on September 20, and in-depth arts-learning workshops in the community on September 19 and 21. The FirstWorks Decade Bash officially kicks off FirstWorks' 2014-15 season, a year of arts programming which concludes in June 2015 with the next FirstWorks Festival On The Plaza, co-presented with the City of Providence.

"Ten years of connecting audiences with artistic firsts is an exhilarating milestone and a time to appreciate how the Rhode Island community has embraced the FirstWorks mission. We're delighted that the City of Providence has partnered to make this weekend possible for everyone to enjoy. FirstWorks is proud to be building the future of Providence as The Creative Capital," said Kathleen Pletcher, Executive Artistic Director, FirstWorks. Ms. Pletcher established FirstWorks in 2004 as a turn-around of the 18-year old, New Year's Eve festival, First Night.

The **FirstWorks 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala** promises an unforgettable evening of gourmet fare, cocktails, music and spectacle. The evening's events will honor founding FirstWorks board chair Fred Butler and benefit the arts education programs he helped to launch. The event takes place at Providence Biltmore Hotel at 11 Dorrance Street, Providence on Thursday, September 18, 2014 from 6:00-9:00 PM. Tickets are \$110 and can be reserved at [first-works.org](http://first-works.org) or by calling 401-421-4278.

On Saturday, September 20, 2014 FirstWorks and the City of Providence present the **FirstWorks Urban Carnevale**, a jam-packed evening of music, spectacle, and food in the heart of Providence. This free, public celebration takes place in downtown Providence's City Center, Kennedy Plaza, starting at 6:00 PM.

"The City of Providence is proud to celebrate 10 years of partnership with FirstWorks, a leading arts organization in our state," said Providence Mayor Angel Taveras. "This celebration kicks off a year-long effort that will culminate in the FirstWorks Festival On The Plaza 2015, made possible by a NEA Our Town grant that recognizes Providence's arts community as a national leader."

Using the FirstWorks 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary events to build momentum for the 'Our Town' grant-funded Washington Street cultural corridor project in downtown Providence and its June 2015 culminating event, the FirstWorks Festival On The Plaza, a **Community Design Day** charrette engaging community stakeholders will be held in coordination with DESIGNxRI's Design Week RI, taking place during the week of September 22, 2014.

The **FirstWorks Urban Carnevale** introduces FirstWorks artists from around the globe and here in Rhode Island through performances and encounters that provide inside access to firsts from Providence's cultural community. With updates to come, the diverse international and local artists include:

### **Australia's Strange Fruit – aerial performances of *Spheres***

Australia's Strange Fruit fuses theater, dance and circus in performances that have amazed over 5 million people at prestigious events in more than 50 countries around the world, including the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games. Suspended above the crowd on 15-foot poles, the artists in *Spheres* become celestial beings, emerging from and rising above giant, illuminated globes in a cosmic, whimsical, and awe-inspiring performance. Unlike anything you've ever seen before, this 25-minute nighttime performance features four daredevils telling a spectacular story of creation, life, the universe, and freedom as they bend and sway to seemingly impossible angles, creating a hypnotizing aerial dance.

### **Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino – trance-inducing folk traditions of Southern Italy.**

Exploding with energy, passion, rhythm, and mystery, the seven-piece band Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino is Italy's top act on the international world music circuit. These new-generation masters bring 21st-century life to the beautiful folk music of Italy's past, passionately performing both tender love songs and the frenzied dance, *pizzica tarantata* – hurtling six-beat rhythms and songs that were used in ancient, ecstatic healing rituals to cure the bite of the tarantula.

### **Morocco's Ribab Fusion**

Joyful and magnetic, the Ribab Fusion ensemble celebrates Morocco's *Amazigh* (Berber) culture – flying from '70s-style funk to Afropop dance vibes, from slow jams to high-energy call-and-responses choruses. The *ribab*, a one-stringed bowed instrument, weaves this madcap sonic diversity together with sounds that are sometimes gritty, and sometimes soothing as a well-played saxophone. Enjoy FirstWorks' 10th anniversary with Ribab Fusion's technically superb jazzy mix and sounds from another world.

This presentation of Ribab Fusion is part of Center Stage, a public-private cultural exchange by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and produced by the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) in cooperation with the U.S. Regional Arts Organizations, with additional support from the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation and the Asian Cultural Council. General Management for Center Stage is provided by Lisa Booth Management, Inc. [www.centerstageUS.org](http://www.centerstageUS.org).

### **RI-Sounding Voices – Creating a Statewide Chorus and New Work**

RPM Voices will lead and direct RI-Sounding Voices, a statewide chorus that joins together choruses from across the Ocean State – and Rhode Islanders who just like to sing – in a unique musical melting pot of voices. RPM Voices will preview ONE VOICE, a new work to be premiered at the June festival, together as one choral unit that embodies the state's vast diversity. ONE VOICE by RI-Sounding Voices is written and directed by Dr. Clarice LaVerne Thompson (Composer & Artistic Director), Shaunne N. Thomas (Producer & Moderator) and Cheryl S. Lopes (Managing Administrative Director), all of RPM Voices of Rhode Island.

Throughout the anniversary weekend, FirstWorks featured artists will also engage with students and community members from around the state through in-depth arts-learning workshops, performances and demonstrations.

Through their growing Arts Learning program, FirstWorks partners with over 30 schools across Rhode Island to provide students with unprecedented creative opportunities, challenges and possibilities - including performances and interactions with high-caliber artists. Annually, FirstWorks helps over 2,600 low-income students to build connections between art, academic subjects, and their lives, fostering critical thinking, imagination, and collaborative learning.

The FirstWorks Decade Bash kick off event for the FirstWorks Festival On the Plaza in 2015 is made possible with seed support from The City of Providence, Department of Art, Culture + Tourism, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Rhode Island Foundation.

### **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 160,000 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 17 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.first-works.org](http://www.first-works.org) to learn more.

### **About The Providence Department of Art, Culture + Tourism**

The Providence Department of Art, Culture + Tourism ensures the continued development of a vibrant and creative city by integrating arts and culture into community life while showcasing Providence as an international cultural destination. Since its establishment in 2003, the Department of Art, Culture + Tourism has worked to enhance Providence's civic life and promote creative placemaking by forging strong working relationships with other city departments, partner agencies, and the local creative community. AC+T aims to provide arts and cultural experiences for all through a broad range of public programming serving all city residents. The Department also coordinates creative development strategies in Providence and spearheads research studies that support investments, policies, and initiatives employing the arts as a social and economic development tool.

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