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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 8, 2015

## **FirstWorks Brings the Myth, Mystery and Laughter of MUMMENSCHANZ to Providence on January 22**

*Family-friendly event kicks off the FirstWorks 2015 “Artistic Icons” series*

*Artist Up-Close talk with Local Puppetry Master Erminio Pinque to follow Performance*

PROVIDENCE, RI – **MUMMENSCHANZ**, the legendary Swiss mask troupe that revolutionized wordless theatrical entertainment, will be in Providence this month to thrill audiences of all ages with its famously uproarious performances and to kick off the FirstWorks 2015 “Artistic Icons” series. MUMMENSCHANZ will delight Rhode Island audiences with classic favorites and brilliant new works on **Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 7:00 P.M. at Veterans Memorial Auditorium (The Vets)**. Immediately following the show, MUMMENSCHANZ founder Floriana Frassetto will be joined by Erminio Pinque, founder and director of Providence’s BIG NAZO Puppets for an Artist Up-Close talk. MUMMENSCHANZ is the first of three FirstWorks 2015 “Artistic Icons” series performances, highlighting artists whose work has dramatically influenced fields of music, dance, and theater. ***Tickets to the MUMMENSCHANZ evening performance start at \$28 and are available at first-works.org or 401-421-ARTS. For this unique, family-friendly event, FirstWorks is offering a 20% discount on friends and family ticket 4-packs with the promo code MASK4 (restrictions apply).***

**“The beauty of a MUMMENSCHANZ performance is its silent simplicity, through which a dazzling story about ourselves and our lives is told,”** said FirstWorks’ Executive Artistic Director Kathleen Pletcher. “MUMMENSCHANZ is a unique performance art troupe that completely transcends your experience as an audience member – taking you on a mesmerizing journey without saying a word or playing a tune.”

MUMMENSCHANZ reinvented the art of white-faced, narrative pantomime decades ago. By cloaking the human

form in black and combining the arts of classical dance, comedy and masks, the troupe creates characters and illusions that draw audience members from ages 2 to 92 into witty and playful stories. MUMMENSCHANZ's pioneering work in visual theater is known to have set the stage for groups like Blue Man Group. The troupe took Broadway by storm in the late 1970s, and in its rise to fame became a regular guest act on network television hits *The Tonight Show starring Johnny Carson* and *The Muppet Show*. MUMMENSCHANZ has since performed on five continents and continues to be Switzerland's mainstay theatrical troupe, with acts that capture human idiosyncrasies and poke fun at everyday occurrences.

Immediately following the performance, Ms. Frassetto, an award-winning performance pioneer and the co-founder and inventor of MUMMENSCHANZ, will share thoughts and insights as part of a FirstWorks Artist Up-Close talk. Since founding the experimental practice with two fellow inventors in 1972, Ms. Frassetto has been part of each and every performance of MUMMENSCHANZ, including creating costumes, choreographing and staging scenes, and writing the artistic content that is the foundation of MUMMENSCHANZ's fame. She will be joined by Erminio Pinque, the founder and director of BIG NAZO, an international performance group of visual artists, puppet performers, and masked musicians who unite to create bizarre and hilarious larger-than-life sized characters, environments, and spectacles based in Providence, RI. BIG NAZO performers will also participate in a FirstWorks' "Jumpstart" with an interactive "creature happening" in unexpected places at The Vets before the MUMMENSCHANZ performance between 6:15 – 6:50 P.M.

FirstWorks' Artist Up-Close talks provide an intimate forum for audience members to get closer to the artists and their work through an informal exchange from the stage. Audience members are invited to move down to the front of the auditorium following the performance to participate in the exchange.

The FirstWorks 2015 "Artistic Icons" series brings artists who have significantly impacted their artistic fields to Providence. "This is a curated series filled with legends. These artists not only devote their lives to answering the question of how art shifts them individually, but how their art shifts the outside world," explained Pletcher.

After the MUMMENSCHANZ “kick-off” performance, the FirstWorks “Artistic Icons” series will continue with *An Evening of Chamber Music* featuring **legendary composer Philip Glass** and violinist Tim Fain on February 25, 2015 at 7:30 P.M. (tickets start at \$38). The series concludes with an electrifying flamenco music and dance performance by Soledad Barrio and Noche Flamenca on March 27, 2015 at 8:00 P.M. (tickets start at \$23). All three shows take place at Veterans Memorial Auditorium (The Vets) at One Avenue of the Arts in Providence, RI.

Finally, in addition to the evening performance and Artist Up-Close event, MUMMENSCHANZ will also perform a multi-school, educational show on January 22 at 10:00 A.M. at The Vets as part of FirstWorks’ Arts Learning program. Students from pre-K through high-school age coming from public, private, charter school, and homeschool groups from across Rhode Island will attend the event. Educators interested in having their school groups participate may contact Kathleen McAreevey, FirstWorks’ Education and Community Coordinator, at 401-421-4278.

For more information on MUMMENSCHANZ’S visit, the FirstWorks Artistic Icons series, or to purchase tickets visit [www.first-works.org](http://www.first-works.org) or call The Vets box office at 401-421-ARTS.

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#### **About FirstWorks**

FirstWorks brings exceptional world-class performing arts experiences to Rhode Island, impacting the cultural, educational, and economic vitality of the community. Curating fully immersive programs since 2004, FirstWorks has offered Rhode Islanders unprecedented access some of the most exciting artists of this time, including Yo-Yo Ma & the Silk Road Ensemble, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Wynton Marsalis, Joffrey Ballet, and international masters from the Middle East, Asia, Australia, and Europe. FirstWorks programming includes arts learning residencies in area public schools and intimate conversations with artists. FirstWorks presents the biennial FirstWorks Festival on the Plaza, Providence’s signature arts event bringing thousands into downtown Providence. The June 2015 Festival, a multistage spectacle of music, art, theatre and dance, is produced in collaboration with the City of Providence and partners from art, tourism, business, and education. Visit [www.first-works.org](http://www.first-works.org) to learn more.