

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Lisa Carnevale  
lisa@myrandagroup.com  
401-954-1135



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FirstWorks Awarded Prestigious National Grant from DANCE/USA  
As an Engaging Dance Audiences Grantee, FirstWorks Receives \$58,000**

PROVIDENCE, RI – FirstWorks announces that DANCE/USA has selected the organization for a prestigious Engaging Dance Audiences Grant. This is the first time that FirstWorks, a Rhode Island-based organization that brings world-class performing arts experiences to the area, has been awarded this highly selective national grant which provides \$58,000 in funding.

Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance, funds programs that focus on implementing, refining and expanding dance audiences. This year there are only 23 recipients of Engaging Dance Audiences which is administered by Dance/USA and made possible with generous funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

FirstWorks is creating a series of master classes, lecture demonstrations, programs at local dance clubs, jazz dance performances, and seminars building up to the performance of Urban Bush Women, an all-female African-American dance troupe with a 30-year history of community engagement. Urban Bush Women will be presenting their New England premiere of “Walking with 'Trane”, inspired by the life of John Coltrane and by his seminal jazz suite A Love Supreme, in February 2015.

“We are delighted to support FirstWorks engagement with Urban Bush Women. Together they have a proven success in expanding local dance audiences and developing community experiences for all types of diverse art forms,” said Amy Fitterer, Dance/USA Executive Director.

FirstWorks will develop this project with partners: American Dance Legacy Initiative, dedicated to America's large dance heritage, and Rites and Reason Theater, one of the oldest continuously producing Black Theatre's in the nation and a host of other collaborators including Jazz at Lincoln Center.

"This is an exciting year for FirstWorks. As we go into the second decade of our organization, we are honored to be recognized by Dance/USA as a premier dance presenter in our region," said Kathleen Pletcher, Executive Director of FirstWorks. "Our objective is to help engage our local community with a wide range of artists and art forms, whether they are locally-grown or nationally-recognized artists. We have forged over 90 local partnerships and involve over 3,000 students to bring these artists engagements to life."

FirstWorks is currently producing the upcoming Rhode Island **PROVIDENCE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL** along with the City of Providence. This first-ever signature event will take place on **June 11-14, 2015** and will feature world-class arts, sculpture, music, food and spectacle in the heart of the city's downtown.

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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. Launched in 2004, as a turn-around of First Night Providence, FirstWorks has since produced 23 groundbreaking arts festivals and programs that attracted more than 175,000 participants, and presented over 60 premiere performances.

FirstWorks has offered Rhode Islanders unprecedented access to 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.

The FirstWorks Arts Learning Program works with over 30 public and charter schools across Rhode Island to provide students, particularly those from underserved communities, direct connection with world-class performing artists and creative thinkers. Visit [www.first-works.org](http://www.first-works.org) to learn more.