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The PROVIDENCE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL Extensive Artist Roster Announced

*New signature Festival to use buildings as canvases and musical instruments,
and showcase local, national and international artists*

PROVIDENCE, RI – Today, Mayor Jorge O. Elorza and FirstWorks Executive Artistic Director Kathleen Pletcher announced the artist roster of the **PROVIDENCE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL** set for **June 13th, 2015**, with **extended events taking place June 11th-14th**. In this first-ever signature event, arts and culture stage a friendly takeover of the city with **500 artists, 30 public art installations, 15 stages, 18 participating venues, 6 outdoor bars, 3 jaw dropping spectacles, and much more**. The dramatic scale and scope of this marquee Festival in the “Creative Capital” of Rhode Island is due to the public-private partnership forged between the City’s Department of Art, Culture + Tourism and FirstWorks, a Providence-based non-profit organization dedicated to building community through the arts. Festival lead sponsors include the National Endowment for the Arts, Providence Tourism Council, the Rhode Island Foundation, along with key support from IGT (formerly GTECH), and The Avenue Concept. All main Festival events are **free** and open to the public.

Radiating out from the heart of the downtown, **Saturday, June 13th Festival** will showcase **a bounty of local, national, and international artists** - from Benin, Brazil, Cuba, Mali, Poland, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, and more; use entire buildings as public art canvases; create a remarkable cultural corridor; and light up the evening sky with extraordinary spectacles. As the main hub, Kennedy Plaza becomes a **multistage pedestrian piazza** with performances, art, and celebration. Washington Street offers an opportunity to stroll and experience surprising art installations, street arts, the diversity of Providence’s cultural community, and more. **WaterFire** activates the downtown rivers with a **full lighting** and dynamic sounds. A colorful **procession and opening ceremony** converges at the FirstWorks Plaza Stage.

"The first ever Providence International Arts Festival will showcase all that Providence has to offer using the city as a stage," Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza said. "We are the Creative Capital and this Festival is an opportunity to celebrate the arts and to support our artists. I invite everyone to join us."

Propelled by Mayor Elorza’s vision for a destination arts festival and building on the 10-year collaboration between FirstWorks and Providence’s Department of Art, Culture + Tourism, the partners have created the inaugural PROVIDENCE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL. The City and FirstWorks have co-led the curation and production of the Festival, connecting international acts with local talent and engaging Rhode Islanders.

“Visitors and residents alike will experience the power of the arts to transform our city,” stated Kathleen Pletcher, Executive Artistic Director of FirstWorks. “FirstWorks has drawn in international artists to join Providence’s world-class talent for this remarkable event. Festivalgoers will see the familiar anew, as parking lots become lounges and building facades are used as painting surfaces. Equally exciting is the passion our visiting artists have for connecting with communities and students across the state.”

Kennedy Plaza anchors the Festival with six stages, a Buy Local RI marketplace, art and performance inside City Hall, and two satellite art spaces:

- The FirstWorks Plaza Stage features world-music powerhouse and “undisputed Queen of African Music,” Benin exile **Angélique Kidjo**; the **Pedrito Martinez Group**, writing a new chapter in Cuban music history; Brassy afro-beat orchestra **BIXIGA 70**, named after their neighborhood in São Paulo, Brazil; Opening Ceremonies premiering a Festival commission by **RPM Voices’s RI-Sounding Voices**, performed by a statewide chorus; plus the **RI Philharmonic Orchestra and Music School Jazz Ensemble**, and **Jazz at Lincoln Center** performing with FirstWorks Arts Learning students.
- Grammy Award-winning Malian superstar **Oumou Sangaré**, with local master drummer **Sidy Maiga**; Providence-based band **Arc Iris**, featuring Jocie Adams (formerly of The Low Anthem) in an eclectic mix of Björk and Joni Mitchell; **RI Philharmonic Brass Quintet** playing music of Leonard Bernstein; local Cape Verdean superstar **Chachi de Carvahlo**; and **Salsa y Gaitas** getting everyone dancing at Alex and Ani City Center Stage.
- Music and spoken word ensemble **Aurea** performs *Melville and the Great White Whale* in the City Council Chambers. Photographer **Mary Beth Meehan** displays additional portraits of Providence residents from her *Seen/Unseen* series in the Gallery at City Hall.
- Patrons will enjoy culinary treats from local food trucks and vendors.
- A **Buy Local RI marketplace** of local artisans, retail shops and purveyors of fine, locally sourced goods and services will run in Burnside Park. Families will enjoy interactive programming presented by the Downtown Providence Parks Conservancy in collaboration with the Partnership for Providence Parks.
- Street spectacles on Kennedy Plaza grounds will include:
 - **The Earth Harp Collective** installs and performs three concerts on the world’s largest stringed instrument stretching between the center of the plaza and to 111 Westminster Street, known locally as “the Superman Building.” Use of this iconic building is provided by David Sweetser and

High Rock Development.

- Stunning physical and aerial theater by **Wise Fool New Mexico**, a collective that uses the visual and performing arts of circus and puppetry for social engagement.
- Multimedia, site-specific, air-powered **Squonk Opera** using blowers of all kinds to make a 40-foot tall *Lady Pneumatica*.
- The Columbus Theatre and Imaginary Company create a satellite stage against the **Arcade façade** (43 Weybosset Street) and present Providence-area bands including **The Low Anthem, Gym Shorts, And the Kids** (North Hampton, MA), and others.
- A second satellite space at 180 Westminster Street will feature an exhibition by **The Providence Biennial for Contemporary Art**. *Winter King Hawthorn* is a sculptural installation of color and light developed by Providence-based artist **Lynne Harlow**.

Washington Street becomes an arts corridor with temporary public art installations and pop-up performances including:

- Ephemeral and permanent murals by Festival Creative Partner **The Avenue Concept** and international street artists **Etam Cru** and **Natalia Rak**, and Providence-based **Tape Art**.
- **The Coastway Community Stage** hosts 18 cultural groups celebrating traditions from Colombia, Laos, the Middle East, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and more.
- The Dean Hotel and The Avenue Concept creates an **Interactive Skate Park and Sculpture Lounge**, featuring local DJs and food on the parking lot located between Washington St. and Fountain St.
- The Department of Art, Culture + Tourism, RI State Council on the Arts, RI Council on the Humanities, and PopUp Providence presenting “Providence Portraits,” by public artist and photographer **Mary Beth Meehan** of the city’s people in the public sphere.
- Adrian Hall Way is animated by two **DownCity Design** commissioned installations: unveiling their PopUp Providence lighting project- *Leave Your Trace*- and youth-designed and built *Skate Bench*. **Trinity Rep performs** on their mobile wagon stage, custom designed by Tony Award-winning set designer Eugene Lee. Live music sets the stage for a Festival hang-out.
- Street performances, music, and puppetry featuring **Big Nazo** and **ERB (Extraordinary Rendition Band)**.

Theatrical works, in the streets and in the city’s treasured theater spaces, by the brightest lights of the theater world, will be staged throughout the weekend:

- The world premiere of *Melancholy Play: A Chamber Musical* by distinguished playwright and MacArthur Fellow **Sarah Ruhl** at Trinity Repertory Company (ticketed event).
- The premiere of the play **Baggage** by Frank V. Toti, Jr. at the URI Providence campus.
- *Freedom Project*, a multimedia physical theater piece by **Everett Company** at the Roger Williams National Memorial.

- Street theatre by a group of “Time Travelers” produced by **OUTLOUD Theatre**.

Not to be missed are exhibits at URI Providence, Paperworks, and the Providence Public Library; Providence Children’s Film Festival; sidewalk sales, local artists in stores, and food trucks along Hope Street between Rochambeau Library and Fifth Street; the Providence Preservation Society’s Festival of Historic Houses, which showcases contemporary living in historic homes in the Fox Point neighborhood; and WaterFire, which will light up the river on Saturday night. On Sunday, close out the weekend with Fire Camp at the industrial and creative arts facility The Steel Yard, where there will be hands-on activities for all ages.

Many venues around town will join in the fun and let attendees choose their own adventure, be it karaoke (The Boombox), jamming to the WBRU Summer Kick-off with live music by Matt and Kim and The Kooks (Lupo’s Heartbreak Hotel), getting a groove on at The Sweatshop Dance Party with DJ Andy Morris (the Salon), laughing along with Gina Brillon (The Comedy Connection), listening to Poetry in Public Places (Cafe S.O.U.L. and Christopher Johnson), or checking out RI’s beauties at a drag queen show (The Dark Lady).

The Festival is funded with lead support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Providence Tourism Council, The Rhode Island Foundation, IGT (formerly GTECH) and The Avenue Concept. Additional support is was provided by Amica, Textron, Bank of America, Citizen’s Bank, Coastway Bank, Cornish and the Biltmore Garage, Alex and Ani, CVS Health, Waterson/ProvPort, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts and University Orthopedics.

Up-to-the-minute information can be found at www.pvdfestival.com. Contact FirstWorks at 401-421-4278 or info@first-works.org. Full festival schedule will be available June 1, 2015.

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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.

The “festival’ concept is built into every FirstWorks performances, from pre-show student showcases, artists up close conversations and other ways to engage the audience and build a sense of community. Visit www.first-works.org to learn more.

About Providence’s Department of Art, Culture and Tourism

Established in 2003, the Providence Department of Art, Culture + Tourism (AC+T) 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. Visit providenceri.com/ArtCultureTourism.