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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 8, 2015

**Inaugural Providence International Arts Festival Blends International and Local Talent to Showcase a Truly Creative Capital**

*City of Providence and FirstWorks Unite to Bring Visual Performing Arts Center Stage*

Providence, RI – June 8, 2015 – Providence, which prides itself on being the “Creative Capital,” will certainly live up to its name June 11-14, as it hosts the inaugural Providence International Arts Festival. The Festival will spotlight both local and international artists and the ties between the two.

"We are the Creative Capital and I'm so happy that we'll be celebrating all of the great arts and culture that we have in Providence." said Mayor Jorge O. Elorza. "My vision for this festival is for it to grow into a phenomenon and become an international attraction for artists and visitors alike."

The City's Department of Art, Culture & Tourism is partnering with FirstWorks, a highly-regarded local arts organization that has been developing culturally and artistically enriching programming for the benefit of the community for more than a decade.

"A major tenet of FirstWorks' philosophy is to shine a spotlight on diverse artists whose strong viewpoints ultimately benefit our community," said Kathleen Pletcher, FirstWorks Executive Artistic Director. "Our close partnership with Mayor Elorza's team has enabled us to present a wide landscape of artists from around the corner and around the world that both educates and more importantly entertains."

The first signs of the event are already evident in the city, with murals commissioned by The Avenue Concept, a local organization that champions and promotes street art, as well as large portrait banners by Mary Beth Meehan, and work by the Providence collective Tape Art.

Other highlights include:

### **Thursday, June 11**

- Group show ***The State of the Arts*** and **Eric J. Auger's *New Life*** at URI/ASFCCE
- Photographer **Mary Beth Meehan's *Seen/Unseen: Providence*** at the Gallery at City Hall
- **Public conversation and panel with Mary Beth Meehan** at RISD's Chace Center at 4 p.m.
- New works by painters Claudine Metrick and Robyn Thomas at **AS220 Main Gallery**
- Artist Aaron Peterman and new works in the **AS220 Project Space**, and musician Reba Mitchel/Red House with a sound art performance residency in the **Reading Room**.
- ***Stimuleye*** by Janet Croog & Dan Cogan at Providence Optical
- ***Winter King Hawthorn*** by Lynne Harlow, Gallery A, at 180 Westminster Street
- **iCityArts!/Providence Youth Arts Collaborative Lounge**, Gallery B at 180 Westminster Street

Also Thursday evening, there is an Opening Night Party at the Providence Biltmore, as well as events at local theaters and performance spaces.

### **Friday, June 12**

- Trinity Rep hosts **Lunch & Learn: *Melancholy Play: A Chamber Musical*** at noon giving community members a rare chance to hear firsthand how this stunning play took shape.
- From 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., festival headliner and noted humanitarian **Angélique Kidjo** is joined by Mali's great diva **Oumou Sangaré** for a salon, **Arts Activating Community**, organized by FirstWorks and the Providence Athenaeum at the Peerless Building Atrium.
- From 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., the City of Providence presents a **Faith-based concert** in Burnside Park.

And Friday night highlights more of Providence's nightlife, with:

- **DJ May dance party** at The Salon at 9 p.m.
- Musical performances by **The Powers, Heidemann, APPEARANCES, Blevin Blectum** at Aurora
- Live local rock from **Math the Band, Ask the Dead and Gertrude Atherton** at AS220 Main Stage, 9 p.m.
- Sets by **Gina Brillon** and **Hardcore Comedy** at the Comedy Connection

among other events.

*Some venue-based events are ticketed, or charge a cover.*

The focal point of the Festival will be **Saturday, June 13**, with arts and cultural events spanning the entire downtown area and beyond, with more than 15 stages around the city. Daytime activities include the West Side Block Party, the Providence Public Library's Rock 'n' Roll Yard Sale and the Providence Preservation Society's Festival of Historic Houses. After a procession at 5 p.m., Mayor Elorza and Pletcher will kick off the evening activities. Highlights include:

- A Festival commission by **RPM Voices's RI-Sounding Voices**, performed by a statewide chorus at 5:30 p.m.
- **Lee Fields & the Expressions, The Low Anthem, Gym Shorts, and And the Kids** as part of **One Providence Experience**
- The **Earth Harp** taking over the "Superman Building" at 111 Westminster Street, Providence's tallest building
- **Wise Fool New Mexico** performing *Flexion*
- Headliner and Grammy winner **Angélique Kidjo** on the FirstWorks Plaza Stage at 9 p.m.
- The **Extraordinary Rendition Band**
- **Salsa y Gaitas**
- **Bixiga 70**
- **Pedrito Martinez Group**
- **Aurea Ensemble**
- **Chachi Carvahlo**
- **Arc Iris**
- **Mad Satta**
- **Oumou Sangaré** and Providence-based drummer **Sidy Maiga** will close out the night with a performance at 11 p.m.

There will also be a WaterFire beginning at 8:46 p.m. The weekend wraps up on **Sunday, June 14** with the Providence Flea and a Fire Camp at the Steel Yard.

This first-annual Festival truly contains multitudes. For the complete lineup, schedule, and maps as well as up-to-the-minute information, please visit [www.first-works.org](http://www.first-works.org), and look for more details at <http://pvdfestival.tumblr.com>. Contact FirstWorks at 401-421-4278 or [info@first-works.org](mailto:info@first-works.org).

The Festival is funded with lead support from the Providence Tourism Council, Rhode Island Foundation, NEA/ArtWorks, City of Providence, IGT, MOO, National Grid, and The Avenue Concept. Additional support is provided by Amica, Coastway Community Bank, Textron, Alex and Ani, ProvPort/Watson terminals, RIPTA, Citizens Bank, University Orthopedics, Verizon, RI State Council on the Arts, Cornish Associates, the Biltmore Garage, Bank of America, CVS/Health, Fidelity, High Rock Development, Paolino Properties, Delta Dental, Scott Volkswagen, Dimeo, Civic Center Garage, Neighborhood Health Plan of RI, Cox Communications, CFO Partners, Brown University, RI School of Design, Roberts, Carroll, Feldstein and Pierce, Narragansett Beer, and the RI Committee on the Humanities. Official media sponsors are RI NPR, NBC10, Get, Lite Rock 105, Gravity Labs, and CW28. Additional sponsors appear on the festival website.

### **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 turnaround 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. In 2012, FirstWorks and the City of Providence hosted their pilot FirstWorks Festival on the Plaza, which attracted 40,000 visitors and generated \$1.4 million in economic impact. This June, FirstWorks is expanding its 10-year partnership with the City to host the Providence International Arts Festival, transforming the newly renovated hub of the city into an exciting four-day performing arts experience. Visit [www.first-works.org](http://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 <http://providenceri.com/ArtCultureTourism>.