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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FirstWorks Presents**  
**URBAN BUSH WOMEN IN RHODE ISLAND: ART ACTIVATING COMMUNITY**  
**A series of special events celebrating African diaspora culture capped by the New England premiere of *WALKING WITH 'TRANE***

**PROVIDENCE, R.I.** – **FirstWorks** announces a month of programs with the critically acclaimed dance company **Urban Bush Women** for **Urban Bush Women in Rhode Island: Art Activating Community** in Providence beginning February 10th. The artist residency includes a series of exciting and illuminating events leading up to the **FirstWorks Artistic Icon Series** production of "**WALKING WITH 'TRANE**", a live music and dance salute to jazz great John Coltrane at The Vets on February 27, 2016. For tickets and more information on Urban Bush Women in Providence, please visit [www.first-works.org](http://www.first-works.org).

"We are thrilled that Urban Bush Women can share their extraordinary talent and knowledge with Rhode Island audiences," said FirstWorks Executive Artistic Director Kathleen Pletcher. "Through creating a consortium of arts partnerships, with American Dance Legacy Initiative (ADLI), Rites and Reason Theatre, Artists and Scientists as Partners (ASaP) and the Rhythm of Change Festival, we are able to focus an entire month on performances, salons and other activities that celebrate the culture of the African diaspora and its influence in the United States."

The spirit of the Urban Bush Women, the first major, all-female African American dance company, comes to life throughout the city with a full month of events during their residency in Providence. Hailed as an "unstoppable force in American dance," their hands-on workshops, profound conversations, community renewal events, as well as an interactive dance party heat up the chilly month of February.

**Urban Bush Women in Rhode Island: Art Activating Community** listing of events:

**February 10, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.**

**BUILDING TRUST THROUGH PROCESS**

Free

Reservations required (space is limited): [annette@first-works.org](mailto:annette@first-works.org)

FirstWorks at Rites and Reason Theatre—155 Angell Street, Providence

Learn to turn creativity into action! Members of Urban Bush Women, lead by company founder Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, facilitate trust-building exercises through artistic creation based on themes that emerge from the group. With an emphasis on dance, song, and the creative assets of the participants, various artistic genres—including creative writing and visual arts—are used to process, synthesize, and communicate. Participants will create an artistic product reflecting both their learning and their vision for community.

**February 11, 6:30 – 8 p.m.**

**HOW WE GOT TO THE FUNK A Soundscape Through Time**

Free

Reservations required: [annette@first-works.org](mailto:annette@first-works.org)

FirstWorks at Aurora—276 Westminster Street, Providence

**HOW WE GOT TO THE FUNK** is a 90-minute interactive dance party, emceed by Urban Bush Women's Founder, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. **HOW WE GOT TO THE FUNK** traces the history of African American social dances from 1955 to the present. Jawole teaches the dance styles that spanned her youth in Kansas City to her coming of age in New York. Come prepared to move!

**February 12, 5 – 7 p.m.**

**PROVIDENCE ATHENAEUM SALON**

Free

FirstWorks at the Providence Athenaeum—251 Benefit Street, Providence

Join Sylvia Ann Soares (niece of the late, great jazz pianist Eddie Soares) and psychology professor and jazz aficionado Ferdinand Jones (co-editor of the anthology of essays *The Triumph of the Soul: Cultural and Psychological Aspects of African American Music*) for a fascinating discussion about the role of jazz in Rhode Island history and culture.

**February 24, 6 – 9 p.m. (with dinner); 7 – 9 p.m. (without dinner)**

**Community Renewal Event with Urban Bush Women—featuring a performance of "dark swan"**

Performance only: \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door

Performance and dinner: \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door

Purchase tickets at [First-Works.org](http://First-Works.org) or call 401-421-4281

FirstWorks at the Southside Cultural Center—393 Broad Street, Providence

A social evening including food, conversation and local performances, capped by Urban Bush Women performing Zimbabwean-born choreographer Nora Chipaumire's "dark swan". Chipaumire created this 25-minute work as a black and African response to Russian choreographer Michel Fokine's classic ballet solo "The Dying Swan." "dark swan" explores the presentation and representation of the African female body, and celebrates the "African/black women who refuse to wither away and die or die beautifully." Local featured artists include Sidy Maiga, an excerpt from "WAR Stories", directed by Melodie Thompson and featuring Heavenly Praise Dance Company, under the direction of Claude Michelle Aubourg, Christopher Johnson, Becky Bass, Rose Weaver, Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, and Rod Luther. The evening's Emcee is Valerie Tutson of Rhode Island Black Storytellers.

**February 27, 3:30 – 5 p.m.**

**Talking the Walk: Black Dance and Social Justice**

Free

Reservations required: [annette@first-works.org](mailto:annette@first-works.org)

FirstWorks at the RISD Auditorium—7 Canal Walk, Providence

Urban Bush Women founder Jawole Willa Jo Zollar joins Professor Thomas DeFrantz (MIT, Duke University) for a vital conversation about "Walking with 'Trane", Black Dance in its varied contemporary manifestations, #BlackLivesMatter, and the long histories of dance in African American social justice advocacy.

**February 27, 8 p.m.**

(Doors open at 7 p.m. for two JumpStart performances featuring Edgar Vilorio's Thr3e Live Dance Company inside the theater and two-time Duke Ellington Award-winning jazz saxophonist, Leland Baker with his 4tet)

**FirstWorks Artistic Icon Series**

## **Urban Bush Women's "WALKING WITH 'TRANE"**

Tickets: \$38-\$75: Visit [www.first-works.org](http://www.first-works.org) or call 401-421-ARTS (2787)

FirstWorks at The Vets—1 Avenue of the Arts, Providence

The New England premiere of Urban Bush Women's stunning tribute to the legendary jazz saxophonist John Coltrane and his seminal jazz suite, "A Love Supreme." Set to a Coltrane-inspired score that features Grammy Award-winning pianist George Caldwell playing live, "**Walking with 'Trane**" is an ethereal investigation fusing Urban Bush Women's inventive movement with Coltrane's evolutionary, post-bop spirit that has audiences erupting with "audible gasp(s) of joy" (Brooklyn Magazine).

**February 28, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

### **JAZZ BRUNCH WITH URBAN BUSH WOMEN**

Advance tickets: \$25; Available at [first-works.org](http://first-works.org) or call 401-421-4281

FirstWorks at The Dorrance—60 Dorrance Street, Providence

Members of Urban Bush Women wrap up their Providence residency with a body and soul-nourishing jazz brunch at The Dorrance, featuring live music by Rhode Island's own Travis Colby Band.

FirstWorks' **Art Activating Community: Urban Bush Women in RI** is made possible with lead support from Dance USA/The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, Brown University Creative Arts Council, RISD CSI, Carter Family Charitable Trust, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Project is presented as a Widening the Circle initiative, a partnership with the American Dance Legacy Initiative and Rites and Reason Theatre, with support from Brown's Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies. Additional partners include Artists and Scientists as Partners and The Rhythm of Change Festival.

### **About Urban Bush Women**

Urban Bush Women was founded by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar in 1984 when it burst onto the scene as the first major all-female African American dance company. Hailed as an "unstoppable force in American dance", Urban Bush Women's powerful moves shake theaters and inspire communities, as they showcase the energy, vitality and boldness of the African American community.

### **About FirstWorks**

FirstWorks' purpose is to build the cultural, educational, and economic vitality of our community by engaging audiences with world-class performing arts and education programs. Launched in 2004, FirstWorks festivals and programs have attracted more than 288,000 participants. 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.

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