

MEDIA CONTACT: Karen Greco
karen@kgrecopr.com
212-560-9868
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**FirstWorks Presents Aurea Ensemble's
"CHROMATIC FANTASY: THE WORLD OF ČIURLIONIS"**

World Premiere by Rhode Island's Boundary-Breaking Performance Ensemble

Providence, R.I. — **FirstWorks' 2015/16 Frontier Series** concludes with the world premiere of an arresting new work by the Rhode Island-based **Aurea Ensemble**, a performance group with a superb string quartet at its heart. Aurea's "**CHROMATIC FANTASY: THE WORLD OF ČIURLIONIS**" will debut on **Sunday, April 24 at 4 p.m. at the RISD Auditorium** (7 Canal Walk, Providence River Greenway). Tickets are **\$20** in advance or **\$25** at the door and are available online at first-works.org and by phone at 401-421-4281.

Part of **FirstWorks' Frontier Series**, which gives Rhode Island audiences a first look at groundbreaking performances, "**CHROMATIC FANTASY**" focuses on the fascinating, synesthetic work of Lithuanian composer, artist and writer Mikalojus Čiurlionis (1875-1911), a unique figure in the history of European arts. This new program interposes some of Čiurlionis' vast output for piano, string quartet, and voices with writings and projections of his highly imaginative, symbolic artwork, which is recognized for its contribution to art nouveau and symbolism. Čiurlionis lived only to the age of 36—and like painter Vincent van Gogh, a fellow artist with whom many parallels are drawn—he had a tremendous creative output in his tragically short lifetime. Judging by the breadth of his artistic activities and diverse interests, Čiurlionis can be seen as a true "Renaissance Man," with nearly 400 musical compositions and an equal number of paintings attributed to him.

"Connecting art with audiences, especially a new creation, is at the heart of FirstWorks," said Kathleen Pletcher, Executive Artistic Director of FirstWorks. "This is the sixth premiere we've presented by Aurea and we are proud that many of these 'first works' have gone on to be seen on national stages such as the Chicago Humanities Festival and New York's Skirball Center. Aurea's performance promises to be a feast for the eyes, the ears and the soul."

Aurea Ensemble's lush fusion of classical music, visuals, and spoken word is focused on the intense cross-pollination of art, poetry and music at the turn of the 20th century. In the multi-layered "**CHROMATIC FANTASY**," the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, Olivier Messiaen, Igor Stravinsky, and Estonian composer Arvo Pärt will further highlight the striking vibrancy of Čiurlionis' unique vision and create a context both past and present for his work.

The premiere of "**CHROMATIC FANTASY**" will feature founding Aurea Ensemble members **Consuelo Sherba**, viola (Rhode Island Philharmonic, Boston Pops, Pell Award-winner); **Nigel Gore**, spoken word (Trinity Rep, "Women of Will" at Shakespeare & Company); and **Chris Turner**, spoken word and harmonica (Rhode Island Philharmonic, Ocean State Chamber Orchestra, Trinity Rep) plus an expanded ensemble including **Katherine Winterstein**, violin (Rhode Island Philharmonic, the Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Baroque); **Megumi Stohs**, violin (Landmarks Orchestra, Sapporo Philharmonic); **Emmanuel Feldman**, cello (Carnegie Hall, Boston Pops, Boston Philharmonic); and **Schola Cantorum of Boston members Fred Jodry**, piano and baritone; **Elise Groves**, soprano; **Sophie Michaud**, alto; and **Adam Simon**, tenor. Noted art historian and Čiurlionis scholar **Stasys Gostautas** will introduce the program with a short discussion Čiurlionis' artistic impact and relevance at the turn of the 20th century.

About Aurea Ensemble

Aurea takes its name from Catena Aurea Homeri, or the Golden Chain of Homer, a symbol of 18th century esoteric alchemy, which strove for the refinement of the human condition. That alchemy—combining disparate elements into a divine new element—defines every Aurea event.

The mission of Aurea is to investigate and invigorate the relationship between music and the spoken word. Aurea aspires to unify the humanities and fine arts in dynamic, accessible and engaging ways through performance and educational outreach. Aurea's concerts combine poetry with classical, folk and contemporary music to create performances that sweep from intimate chamber settings to major theatrical venues.

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 290,000 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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