

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Karen Greco  
karen@kgrecoopr.com  
212-560-9868  
[High-resolution images available](#)



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
April 6, 2016

## **FirstWorks Frontier Series comes to a close with Aurea Ensemble's "CHROMATIC FANTASY: THE WORLD OF ČIURLIONIS"**

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

Providence, R.I. — **FirstWorks** concludes its 2015/2016 **Frontier Series** with a groundbreaking new work by the Rhode Island-based **Aurea Ensemble**, a performance group with a superb string quartet at its heart. "**CHROMATIC FANTASY: THE WORLD OF ČIURLIONIS**" will have its world premiere 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 [firstworks.org](http://firstworks.org) and by phone at 401-421-4281.

The fascinating, synesthetic work of Lithuanian composer, artist and writer Mikalojus Čiurlionis (1875-1911), a unique figure in the history of European arts, is on display in "**CHROMATIC FANTASY: THE WORLD OF ČIURLIONIS**". Čiurlionis' Eastern European, folk-infused chamber and choral music is juxtaposed with projections of his mystical artwork, recognized for its contribution to art nouveau and symbolism. His powerful letters and diary entries are layered into the work, creating a lush fusion of music, visuals and spoken word.

Aurea Ensemble links the intense cross-pollination of art, poetry, and music at the turn of the 20th century—the time Čiurlionis was creating—with the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, Olivier Messiaen, Igor Stravinsky, and Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. By placing him in the context of his contemporaries, Čiurlionis' vibrant and unique vision is magnified.

Čiurlionis spent the bulk of his adult life in a psychiatric hospital for bi-polar disorder. His manic episodes contributed to his vast creative output of nearly 400 musical compositions and an equal number of paintings. His life was cut tragically short by pneumonia when he was only 36, just as his artistic endeavors were being recognized in his native Lithuania. Aurea Ensemble's "**CHROMATIC FANTASY: THE WORLD OF ČIURLIONIS**" honors the life of this brilliant artist.

“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 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) are joined for the first time by an expanded ensemble of guest artists 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 of 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 is a non-profit based in Providence, Rhode Island whose purpose is to build the cultural, educational and economic vitality of its community by engaging audiences with world-class performing arts and education programs. Since its launch in 2004, FirstWorks festivals, performances 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. The FirstWorks Artistic Icons Series at The Vets connects genre-defining artists like Philip Glass, Rosanne Cash and Wynton Marsalis to Providence audiences, FirstWorks Arts Learning students, and the wider community. In September 2012, FirstWorks and the City of Providence hosted their pilot FirstWorks Festival on the Plaza, an event which attracted 40,000 visitors and generated \$1.4 million in economic impact. In June 2015, FirstWorks co-produced the

inaugural Providence International Arts Festival with the City of Providence. The four-day showcase turned the Washington Street Corridor and Kennedy Plaza into a world-class spectacle of arts and music featuring 700 local, national and international artists and 30 public art installations. Visit [www.first-works.org](http://www.first-works.org) to learn more.

###