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The Music Traditions of the Far East and the West Collide in Aurea Ensemble's Newest Concert Program "Crossings"

World-renowned pipa player Yang Wei from Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble joins forces with Rhode Island's celebrated music/spoken-word performance group

PROVIDENCE, RI – **FirstWorks**, a Rhode Island non-profit dedicated to connecting art with audiences, presents **Aurea Ensemble** in "**Crossings**" on **Sunday, April 23, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.** at **St. Martin's Church** (50 Orchard Street, Providence). Tickets for the performance, part of the **FirstWorks Frontier Series** offering Rhode Island audiences a first look at groundbreaking new works, are \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door. Advance tickets are available at first-works.org and **401-421-4281**. Student and senior citizen discounts are available.

Aurea is a Rhode Island-based performance ensemble with a superb string quartet at its heart. Aurea's newest concert program, "**Crossings**" celebrates the deep and surprising connections between Eastern and Western cultures, from ancient times through the present, through a rich tapestry of readings and music.

Special guest artists performing in this concert program include **Yang Wei**, an internationally acclaimed “pipa” virtuoso and a member of Yo-Yo Ma’s famed Silk Road Ensemble and **Lois Shapiro**, a renowned pianist, chamber music collaborator, and member of the Boston-based Triple Helix Piano Trio. The “pipa” is a four-stringed Chinese musical instrument, often likened to the Western lute or guitar, and has a heritage dating back over 2,000 years.

This cross-cultural concert collaboration features world and New England premieres of musical compositions for “pipa” and string quartet by Pulitzer prize-winning Chinese American composer Zhou Long, Chinese composer Zhu-Jian’er, and the early 20th century Chinese composer Liu Tianhua (1895-1932), alongside works by historic Western composers Maurice Ravel (French, 1875-1937), John Dowland (English, 1563-1626) and Lou Harrison (American, 1917-2003).

While “**Crossings**” is the first collaboration between **Aurea** and Yang Wei, **FirstWorks** invited the Chinese-born pipa player to Rhode Island in 2009 to conduct workshops in area schools as part of its Season of the Silk Road, which culminated in a world premiere by the acclaimed Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma.

“FirstWorks is thrilled to welcome Yang Wei back to Providence for a deep-reaching collaboration with this truly innovative music ensemble,” said Kathleen Pletcher,

Executive Artistic Director of FirstWorks. “This will be the seventh world premiere concert that we have presented with Aurea Ensemble, who never fail to amaze our audiences with their intense exploration of the intersections where art, history, spoken word and music collide.”

“**Crossings**” is the seventh world premiere concert program from **Aurea** presented by **FirstWorks**. Prior programs debuted through **FirstWorks Frontier Series** went on to be seen nationally at the Chicago Humanities Festival and New York's Skirball Center.

The core members of **Aurea Ensemble** are Consuelo Sherba (Artistic Director and viola), Nigel Gore (spoken word), Chris Turner (spoken word and harmonica), Katherine Winterstein (violin), and Emmanuel Feldman (cello). They are joined by Angelia Cho (violin).

Aurea Ensemble “Crossings” is made possible, in part, with funding from the Aaron Roitman Chamber Music Fund, administered by the Rhode Island Foundation.

About Aurea

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.

Their eclectic humanities-based repertoire, featuring an extraordinary string ensemble, is built on a strong musical framework of original or previously composed music with eloquent spoken word including poetry, journals, and prose; laced together with soaring harmonica improvisations. **Aurea** collaborating guest artists have included musicians, actors, puppeteers, dancers and visual artists.

Aurea approaches cross-cultural themes in their programming believing the arts inform our understanding of these issues. Serving a broad audience, **Aurea** reaches national festivals including the Chicago Humanities Festival, the NYU Humanities Festival, Maverick Concerts, Providence International Arts Festival, FirstWorks, university concerts, an annual concert series and educational outreach.

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 2004, **FirstWorks** festivals, performances and programs have attracted more than 366,000 participants. The **FirstWorks Arts Learning Program** reaches over 4,000 students from public and charter schools across Rhode Island with transformative arts-based learning experiences. **FirstWorks** is Founding Creative Partner for PVDfest, partnering with the City of Providence to produce an international arts celebration held each June in downtown Providence. The 2016 PVDfest drew over 75,000 to experience music, art and spectacle. Visit <http://first-works.org> to learn more.

Listings Information:

WHO: **FirstWorks Frontier Series presents Aurea Ensemble “Crossings”**

WHAT: A cross-cultural concert of string quartet and pipa music plus spoken word celebrating the rich connections between Eastern and Western cultures.

WHEN: **Sunday, April 23, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.**

WHERE: **St. Martin’s Church** (50 Orchard Street, Providence)

TICKETS: **\$25 advance / \$30 at door** (senior citizens \$20 advance / \$25 at door, student tickets \$10)

PURCHASE: Tickets are available at <http://first-works.org> and 401-421-4281

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