

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



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 1, 2017

FirstWorks Artistic Icons Series Celebrates a Titan of the Jazz Age with 'American Rhapsody: The Gershwin Songbook' on February 22, 2018

17-Piece Big Band of World-Class Musicians Assembled by the Gershwin Foundation

PROVIDENCE, RI – **FirstWorks**, a Rhode Island non-profit dedicated to building community through world-class arts, continues the jazz theme of its **2017/2018 Artistic Icons Series** with **"American Rhapsody: The Gershwin Songbook"** on Thursday, February 22, 7:30 p.m. at The VETS (1 Avenue of the Arts, Providence). A sizzling big band celebrates the defining rhythms of indelible American composer George Gershwin with a concert program that transports audiences back in time to the style and fanfare of Broadway and Hollywood during the Jazz Age. Tickets range from \$28-\$88 and are on sale now at <http://first-works.org/> and 401-421-ARTS (2787), and at The VETS Box Office at 220 Weybosset Street, Providence.

Nearly a century after the songs were composed, George Gershwin's music remains as fresh and irresistible as it did during the Jazz Age. His poetic melodies and eclectic oeuvre of everything including Broadway, Hollywood, opera and classic American standards have left a legacy that audiences love to hear again and again. The 17-piece Gershwin Big Band is led by the charismatic vocalist and bandleader Michael Andrew, hailed as "the next Harry Connick Jr." by The New York Post. Together, they bring beloved Gershwin standards like "I Got

Rhythm,” “Someone to Watch O’er Me,” “The Man I Love” and many more to life in this inspirational new program produced and created by members of the Gershwin family.

“Throughout my life I have enjoyed countless Gershwin concerts throughout the world, and I can truly say that Michael Andrew is one the most talented entertainers I have ever seen,” says Todd Gershwin, great-nephew of George and Ira Gershwin and caretaker of the family’s musical legacy. “His ability to interpret the music of George Gershwin is extraordinary.”

The Gershwin Big Band is comprised of world class jazz musicians with an incredible dynamic range and proclivity for swing and improvisation. The traditional big band configuration is ideal for presenting the works of the Gershwins, who influenced American music at a time when big band was becoming the definitive sound of pop.

“The **FirstWorks Artistic Icons Series** connects audiences with the great artists and ‘first’ works that inform our culture,” says Kathleen Pletcher, Executive Artistic Director of FirstWorks. “We look forward to inviting audience members young and old to celebrate the music of Gershwin and the exciting time in history that informed his work that still resonates so profoundly today.”

FirstWorks offers audiences of all ages ways to get into the swing of Gershwin’s Jazz Age era on February 22. As part of FirstWorks Arts Learning program, K-12 students from Rhode Island schools have the opportunity to attend a student matinee of “**American Rhapsody: The Gershwin Songbook**” from 10:30-11:30 a.m. at The VETS. Student matinee tickets are \$8.50 and are available by calling FirstWorks Education and Community Outreach Manager Kathleen McAreavey at 401-868-1149 or email kathleenm@first-works.org. Participating schools will

receive an accompanying FirstWorks Arts Learning curriculum guide. More information on the FirstWorks Arts Learning program can be found at <http://first-works.org/archive/arts-learning-matinees>.

Premium ticketholders to “**American Rhapsody: The Gershwin Songbook**” evening performance receive admission to a pre-show cocktail Speakeasy in The VETS Loft at 6:00 p.m. where they can relive the Roaring Twenties with live music, swing dancing and signature prohibition-era libations. Premium tickets are \$88 and are available at first-works.org and at The VETS Box Office at 401-421-ARTS (2787) and 220 Weybosset Street, Providence.

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 400,000 participants. The **FirstWorks Arts Learning Program** reaches more than 4,000 students from public and charter schools across Rhode Island with transformative arts-based learning experiences. **FirstWorks** is Founding Partner for PVDfest, partnering with the City of Providence to produce an international arts celebration held each June that draws tens of thousands of visitors to Providence to experience music, art and spectacular performances. Visit <http://first-works.org> to learn more.

Listings Information:

WHO: **FirstWorks Artistic Icons Series presents American Rhapsody: The Gershwin Songbook**

WHAT: A glorious evening of iconic jazz age music by George Gershwin, brought to life by the 17-piece Gershwin Big Band.

WHEN: **Thursday, February 22, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.**

WHERE: **FirstWorks at The Vets** (1 Avenue of the Arts, Providence)

TICKETS: **\$28-\$88** (includes a \$3 restoration fee). Premium ticket includes admission to pre-show cocktail Speakeasy at 6:00 p.m.

PURCHASE: Tickets are available at <http://first-works.org> and at the Vets Box Office: **401-421-ARTS (2787)**, 220 Weybosset Street, Providence

Listings Information:

WHO: **FirstWorks Arts Learning Matinee: American Rhapsody: The Gershwin Songbook**

WHAT: A special daytime performance of iconic jazz age music by George Gershwin, brought to life by the 17-piece Gershwin Big Band.

WHEN: **Thursday, February 22, 2018 from 10:30-11:30 a.m.**

WHERE: **FirstWorks at The Vets** (1 Avenue of the Arts, Providence)

TICKETS: **\$8.50 student tickets.** Teacher chaperones receive free admission with every 20 student tickets. Contact Kathleen McAreavey at 401-868-1149 / kathleenm@first-works.org.

###