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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FirstWorks Frontier Series Performances and Residency Highlight Female-Powered Artistry from Central Asia and Venezuela

Performances and programs at RISD feature epic narratives from Uzbek filmmaker Saodat Ismailova and “The Voice of Venezuela” Betsayda Machado with her band

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – **FirstWorks**, a Rhode Island non-profit dedicated to building community through world-class arts, announces **FirstWorks Frontier Series** performances at **Rhode Island School of Design** from internationally acclaimed female artists curated from around the globe. The spring 2018 series features stories of women's strength and resilience through concert performances, panel talk and arts learning opportunities. Tickets are on sale now at <http://firstworks.org> and 401-401-4281 starting at \$25 advance general admission, \$15 for students.

The **FirstWorks Frontier Series** kicks off on **Wednesday, March 14, 7:30 p.m.** at RISD Auditorium (17 Canal Walk, Providence) with “**Qyrq Qyz/Forty Girls**,” an epic story of the Central Asian Amazons told through bardic music and poetry performed live against a lush backdrop of contemporary film shot on the steppes of Uzbekistan. A cutting-edge collaboration between acclaimed Uzbek filmmaker Saodat Ismailova and composer Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky, “Qyrq Qyz/Forty Girls” tells a centuries-old story of Gulayim and her 40 women warriors who defend their land against Persian invaders and establish a rule of justice and compassion. This

international production from the Aga Khan Music Initiative makes its Providence premiere with FirstWorks in partnership with the Rhode Island School of Design Provost's Office.

As part of this FirstWorks residency, Saodat Ismailova will participate in a free panel discussion titled **The Inspiration of Tradition: Central Asian Cool** on Sunday, March 11 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at RISD Tap Room, 226 Benefit Street Providence. Joined by panelists Ted Levin, Dartmouth College Professor of Music; Shahzad Bashir, Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Humanities and Religious Studies at Brown University; and Katie Freeze, ethnomusicology graduate student at Brown University, Ismailova will discuss her epic journey to bring the Central Asian steppes to the screen and stage, The talk will be followed by a community dinner with the panelists and Aga Khan Music Initiative artists of "Qyrq Qyz/Forty Girls." Seating is very limited and by reservation only by calling Holly Taylor at 401-421-4278.

The **FirstWorks Frontier Series** continues at RISD Auditorium on **Sunday, March 18 at 7:00 p.m.** with a soul-shaking concert and dance party with **"The Voice of Venezuela" Betsayda Machado** and her multigenerational band of musicians and dancers, **La Parranda El Clavo**. Translated from Spanish, the word *parranda* means party, and represents a tradition of street performance with Afro-Indigenous roots found across Latin America.

Machado and her band have accumulated accolades on their crowdfunded first worldwide tour away from the tiny Venezuelan village of El Clavo in the region of Barlovento, where their music has been igniting parties in the town square for over 30 years. The band's debut appearance at WOMEX, Europe's largest annual world music exposition in October 2017 called new global attention to *tambor*, a genre of Venezuelan Afro-Soul music said to make

dancers float. They will perform songs from their 2017 release “Loé Loá - Rural Recordings Under the Mango Tree.” Doors open at 6:00 p.m. for a special **FirstWorks JumpStart** drum and dance lesson with the artists in the venue lobby. The performance is presented in partnership with RISD Division of Liberal Arts.

“Through our spring 2018 FirstWorks Frontier Series, we are thrilled to not only introduce diverse audiences to a global treat for the senses from innovative creators taking the performance world by storm, but to ignite a celebration of the feminine strength that powers history and infuses our shared humanity,” said Kathleen Pletcher, Executive Artistic Director of FirstWorks.

Daytime student matinees at RISD Auditorium and in-school workshops with the artists are also planned as part of the FirstWorks Arts Learning program serving grades K-12. On Wednesday, March 14 from 10:00-11:00 a.m, over 300 students from Providence, Pawtucket, Warwick and Jamestown, R.I. will attend a daytime matinee of “**Qyrq Qyz/Forty Girls.**” The ensemble will also lead in-school workshops at Highlander Charter School, Providence College, and Sophia Academy in Providence, R.I., and Jacqueline M. Walsh School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Pawtucket, R.I.

Betsayda Machado and La Parranda El Clavo will perform at a sold-out matinee for over 575 students from Central Falls, Providence, Pawtucket and Newport, R.I. on Monday, April 19 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. School representatives may contact Kathleen McAreavey, FirstWorks Education and Community Manager at 401-421-4278 for more information on FirstWorks Arts Learning opportunities.

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, collaborating 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 Frontier Series presents “Qyraq Qyz/Forty Girls”**

WHAT: An epic story of Central Asian Amazons told through music, poetry and contemporary film.

WHEN: **Wednesday, March 14, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.**

WHERE: **RISD Auditorium** (17 Canal Walk, Providence)

TICKETS: \$25 advance general admission / \$30 at door / \$15 students / FREE to RISD community with ID

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

Listings Information:

WHO: Uzbek filmmaker Saodat Ismailova and the Aga Khan Music Initiative artists of Qyraq Qyz/Forty Girls

WHAT: **The Inspiration of Tradition: Central Asian Cool Panel Talk and Community Dinner**

WHEN: **Sunday, March 11, 2018 at 5:30-7:30 p.m.**

WHERE: **RISD Tap Room** (226 Benefit Street, Providence)

TICKETS: FREE – limited seating by reservation only. Call Holly Taylor at 401-421-4278

Listings Information:

WHO: **FirstWorks Frontier Series presents Betsayda “The Voice of Venezuela”**

WHAT: A spirit-shaking percussion and voice fiesta, said to make dancers float!

WHEN: **Sunday, March 18, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.**

WHERE: **RISD Auditorium** (17 Canal Walk, Providence)

TICKETS: \$25 advance general admission / \$30 at door / \$15 students / FREE to RISD community with ID

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

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