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FirstWorks to Receive its 21st Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

New Art Works grant provides funding for FirstWorks new season of programming and community engagements

PROVIDENCE, RI – FirstWorks, a Rhode Island non-profit dedicated to building community through world-class arts, has received an Art Works grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). This marks the 21st time FirstWorks has been awarded funding from the federal government to engage Rhode Islanders with world-class performing arts and educational programs that promote understanding of our shared world through the arts.

“We were thrilled when Chairman Chu announced we had been selected during her visit to Rhode Island,” said Kathleen Pletcher, Founder and Executive Artistic Director of FirstWorks. “We are deeply grateful for her stewardship of the NEA and the opportunities that the NEA and the RI US Congressional Delegation have given FirstWorks to flourish in this state.”

At an event jointly hosted by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts and Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, FirstWorks and other local arts organizations heard they had been awarded Arts Works grants by Jane Chu, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts. The RI US Congressional Delegation was also on hand to discuss the role of the arts and its beneficial impact on the community.

FirstWorks' year-round seasons have included over 30 groundbreaking arts festivals and performances and engage more than 90,000 participants annually. Through inspirational projects featuring some of the leading artists of our time, from Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project to last year's unique multidisciplinary project honoring "Greatest Living American Choreographer" Paul Taylor, FirstWorks has become a catalyst for the arts in Providence. A key strategy of FirstWorks is collaborating with 90 organizations across arts, business, civic, education and tourism sectors to foster new participation in significant cultural work and strengthen the cultural fabric of the state.

"The variety and quality of these projects speaks to the wealth of creativity and diversity in our country," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Through the work of organizations such as FirstWorks in Providence, NEA funding invests in local communities, helping people celebrate the arts wherever they are."

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than \$80 million in grants as part of the NEA's second major funding announcement for fiscal year 2018. The Art Works category is the NEA's largest funding category and supports projects that focus on the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art,

lifelong learning in the arts, and the strengthening of communities through the arts.

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.

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