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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FirstWorks Kicks Off 2020 Performance Season with Aurea Ensemble's
"Of Nature Composed"**

Concert performance, artist's talk and student workshop strike a timely chord as they explore humanity's relationship with the environment

Providence, RI – Performing arts non-profit **FirstWorks** launches its 2020 programming with Rhode Island's own world-class performance collaborative, **Aurea Ensemble**. A public concert on January 26 of the ensemble's newest work, featuring Pulitzer Prize-winning works by American composers and writers, will be followed by a conversation with the artists. Community engagement programming in Providence schools takes place the following day.

FirstWorks presents Aurea's "**Of Nature Composed**" on **Sunday, January 26, 2020 at 4 p.m. at The First Unitarian Church of Providence**, 1 Benevolent Street, Providence. Arranged by Aurea's Artistic Director Consuelo Sherba, "Of Nature Composed" features works by some of America's most eloquent composers, poets and writers. A FirstWorks Artist-Up-Close conversation will follow the performance from 5:15-5:45 p.m. Tickets are \$30 advance, \$35 at the door, and are available at the FirstWorks box office by phone at (401) 421-4278, or online at first-works.org.

"A long-time collaborator with FirstWorks, Aurea is unparalleled in their delicate consideration of poetry and music as parts of a larger whole," said Kathleen Pletcher, Founder and Executive Artistic Director of FirstWorks. "Their newest work speaks to the focus of FirstWorks' Earth First programming, asking us, through art, to examine our relationships with the natural world at a time when climate change and sustainability have become critical international pivot points."

A performance collective with a superb string quartet at its core, Aurea Ensemble breaks the boundaries between words and music. “Of Nature Composed” features spoken word performed by Nigel Gore, Chris Turner on harmonica and spoken word, Alexey Shabalin and Mina Lavcheva on violins, Consuelo Sherba performing viola and Emmanuel Feldman on cello.

The concert program “Of Nature Composed” bridges music and the spoken word, guiding the audience to a deeper understanding of the natural world. Aurea Ensemble weaves together music by Pulitzer Prize winning musician John Luther Adams, composers Charles Griffes, John Cage, Lou Harrison and Charles Ives, with verses of Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Galway Kinnell and former U.S Poet Laureate Ted Kooser along with words of authors and naturalists Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. “Of Nature Composed” premiered in 2016, commissioned by the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (RICH) to celebrate the centennial of the Pulitzer Prize through an exploration of nature, science, the arts, and humanities.

The artists of Aurea will offer a post-performance Artist-Up-Close conversation on “Of Nature Composed.” Moderated by Elizabeth Francis, Executive Director of RICH, the conversation will consider artistic explorations of human relationships with the environment.

In its continued commitment to community engagement and youth programming, FirstWorks has invited members of Aurea Ensemble to conduct a performance workshop at Alvarez High School in Providence on Monday, January 28, 2020 joined by NOAA scientist and Regional Program Manager Catalina Martinez. Aurea Ensemble will perform excerpts from “Of Nature Composed” for 150 11th grade science students, followed by a group discussion on the relationship between scientific inquiry, the arts, and the environment.

Aurea Ensemble's residency is part of FirstWorks' Earth First programming. Special thanks to FirstWorks' Earth First Supporters National Grid Foundation, CDQ Trust and Nordson Corporation Foundation, and to the City of Providence's Department of Art, Culture + Tourism for making this program possible.

For more information on FirstWorks' 2020 season, visit first-works.org. Educator and student discounts are available by calling 401-421-4278.

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 & 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 diverse audiences with world-class performing arts and education programs. Since 2004, FirstWorks festivals, performances and programs have attracted more than 600,000 participants. Last season, FirstWorks arts education programs reached over 5,500 students from public and charter schools across Rhode Island with transformative, arts-based learning experiences. FirstWorks is the founding partner of PVDfest, collaborating with the City of Providence to produce the City's free signature arts celebration held each June. In 2019 PVDfest drew 130,000 visitors to Providence to experience music, art and spectacular performances. Embracing collaboration, FirstWorks has fostered over 90 community partnerships across business, social service, government, arts, and education sectors. Sustained collaborations with higher education include ambitious programming with Brown Arts Initiative at Brown University, artist workshops at Providence College, and lectures at Rhode Island School of Design. Visit first-works.org to learn more.

Listings Information:

WHO: Aurea Ensemble: Of Nature Composed

WHAT: A fusion of spoken word and music meditating on humans and nature

WHEN: Sunday, January 26, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

WHERE: First Unitarian Church, 1 Benevolent St., Providence

TICKETS: \$30 advanced, \$35 at the door; tickets available online at first-works.org; student and educator discounts are available by calling 401-421-4278

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