



#### **For Immediate Release**

Media Contact: Shahara Anderson-Davis  
[shahara@bridgepark.org](mailto:shahara@bridgepark.org)  
202.889.5901 X9207

Amanda Sweet/Bucklesweet Media  
[amanda@bucklesweetmedia.com](mailto:amanda@bucklesweetmedia.com)  
202.636.3507

### **11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park and Washington Performing Arts Receive ArtPlace America Award**

Washington, D.C. – 11th Street Bridge Park and Washington Performing Arts are thrilled to announce that they are among 38 recipients (from an applicant pool of nearly 1,300) to receive a prestigious grant from ArtPlace America’s 2015 National Grants Program. Their winning proposal, “Bridging DC: Arts and Civic Interventions at the 11th Street Bridge Park,” was awarded \$250,000 from ArtPlace, one of the nation’s largest and most celebrated philanthropies dedicated to creative placemaking, which seeks to strengthen the social, physical and economic fabric of a community through arts and culture. This grant is an investment in a unique collaboration jointly designed by 11th Street Bridge Park and Washington Performing Arts to support customized, community-driven arts programming east of the Anacostia River and the continued work of transforming an old freeway that spans the River into a new civic space, thereby uniting and revitalizing the surrounding neighborhoods.

Over the next 18 months, this grant will enable the partners to engage sites and serve constituents across Ward 8 with live performances, workshops and other community-based activities at local schools, arts venues and parks. “We are honored to receive this support from ArtPlace America,” said Scott Kratz, Director of the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park, a project of the East of the River non-profit Building Bridges Across the River at THEARC. “The Anacostia River has long divided Washington, D.C., both culturally and physically, and this collaborative programming will share the talents, gifts and abilities of Ward 8 artists with the rest of the city.”

“Creative placemaking is in the DNA of Washington Performing Arts, and indeed something we take to heart when we say ‘The City Is Our Stage,’” commented Jenny Bilfield, President & CEO of Washington Performing Arts. “With ArtPlace’s generous grant, we can deepen our role and impact as arts presenters and educators in connecting people, creativity and physical location, and make further strides in helping to realize the vision of a united city that has been embraced by so many civic, business and community leaders and constituents.”

The ArtPlace partnership builds on the rich resources and networks of two essential D.C. organizations. With the ongoing capital project to launch the city’s first elevated park and revitalize the riverfront, the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park draws on its extensive community outreach and consultative process, anchored

by more than 500 stakeholder meetings for design development and impact. Washington Performing Arts will leverage its long-term Ward 8 arts education programs rooted in the DC Public Schools; its robust collaborations with national and local partners including THEARC; and its innovative artist-centered Mars Urban Arts Initiative, which engages local communities and cultivates artistic talent. Program content will be collaboratively developed with the community of artists and residents and may include public performances, school concerts and public storytelling workshops. Ultimately, this partnership strives to provide a comprehensive and varied platform to create and showcase arts and cultural programming for and by Ward 8 that will authentically reflect its robust neighborhoods, its singular identity and its diverse residents.

“Investing in and supporting the arts have a profound impact on the social, physical and economic futures of communities,” said ArtPlace Executive Director Jamie L. Bennett. “Projects like these demonstrate how imaginative and committed people are when it comes to enhancing their communities with creative interventions and thoughtful practices.”

#### **About ArtPlace America**

ArtPlace America (ArtPlace) is a ten-year collaboration of foundations, banks and federal agencies that exists to position art and culture as a core sector of comprehensive community planning and development in order to help strengthen the social, physical and economic fabric of communities. Visit [www.artplaceamerica.org](http://www.artplaceamerica.org) for more information.

#### **About the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park, a project of Building Bridges Across the River at THEARC**

As the old 11<sup>th</sup> Street traffic bridges that connect Washington, D.C.’s Capitol Hill and historic Anacostia neighborhoods have aged out, a local non-profit Building Bridges Across the River at THEARC – and the District government are transforming this old infrastructure into the city’s first elevated park: a new venue for healthy recreation, environmental education and the arts.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park will be a place unlike any other in Washington, D.C. – one that supports the community’s physical, environmental, cultural and economic health. After a seven-month design competition informed by more than 500 community meetings, the design team of OMA+OLIN was selected in October 2014. With the design in place, Bridge Park staff has launched a capital campaign to construct this new civic space, securing more than \$10 million to date. For more information and to see the OMA+OLIN renderings, visit [www.bridgepark.org](http://www.bridgepark.org).

The Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus (THEARC) is a \$27 million, 110,000 square-foot campus located east of the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C.’s Ward 8. The mission of THEARC is to improve the quality of life for residents of Washington, D.C.’s East of the River community, a key goal of the future 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park.

#### **About Washington Performing Arts**

Washington Performing Arts is one of the nation’s leading arts presenters and the city’s largest arts education partner, with long-established relationships with DC Public Schools (DCPS), especially in Ward

8. As Washington Performing Arts approaches its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016-17, this collaborative initiative with the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park leverages the organization's momentum and longtime expertise in arts programming and presenting as well as civic engagement and public service. This initiative will further nurture relationships with Ward 8 artists and stakeholders to lead dialogue on community change, collaborate on arts programs and capture storytelling with local resonance.

Since 1965, Washington Performing Arts has had a foundational role in the arts in our nation's capital, creating profound opportunities that connect community and artists, in both education and performance. Through live events in 11 venues that crisscross the D.C. metropolitan area, the careers of emerging artists are launched and nurtured, and established artists return to develop closer relationships with Washington Performing Arts' audiences and creative partners.

As one of the leading presenters in the country, Washington Performing Arts embraces a broad spectrum of the performing arts, including classical and contemporary music, jazz, gospel, dance, international music and art forms, spoken word and multi-media work. Dynamic education programs in the public schools and beyond are hallmarks of Washington Performing Arts, as are the Embassy Adoption Program (a collaboration with DCPS), two resident gospel choirs and the launch of emerging artists and newly commissioned works.

In the 2012–13 season, Washington Performing Arts was twice honored for its work at the intersection of arts presenting and education: by President Barack Obama with a National Medal of Arts (becoming only the fourth D.C.-based arts group and the first art arts presenter of its kind to be so honored), and with the Mayor's Arts Award for Excellence in Service to the Arts.

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