

Laura Schandelmeier dancer/choreographer

Mount Rainier, MD

and

Joe's Movement Emporium

Mount Rainier, MD

Washington, DC native Laura Schandelmeier grew up next door to celebrated Polish-born dance artist Pola Nirenska, who mentored her from an early age. "I decided to stop dancing when I was in seventh grade, and that lasted three months," says Schandelmeier. "That's been the longest I've ever not danced."

Joe's Movement Emporium (Joe's) received a \$10,000 grant to partner with Schandelmeier. The grant will support the creation of *Portals*, a new dance work in collaboration with Stephen Clapp. *Portals* explores the five rites of passage: birth, adolescence, leaving home, marriage, and death. "Everyone goes through these things-- it's part of what makes us human ... and they can be taken literally or figuratively," she explains. The grant will enable Schandelmeier to pay herself, Clapp, and a costume designer as well as for studio space and other production needs. The finished work will premiere at Dance Place in summer 2007.

Sixth-graders from Mount Rainier Elementary School will participate in a workshop to develop their own creative ideas around the project's central theme. "We'll have movement-based explorations, and we're also going to find out how the kids are interested in expressing themselves," says Schandelmeier. "There may be kids who are more comfortable with drawing and writing and painting as part of the exploration process." She will also present a free performance at the school.

Community residents will be invited to free "Open Door" workshops to discuss the work with the artists and participate in movement explorations. For many years, Schandelmeier's studio was in a storefront. "I would be rehearsing and people would come in off the street and start asking me questions about what I was doing or about the

"[The grant] ... allows us to reach further into the community, embracing and providing opportunities for those interested in coming through our door."



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studio. It was this great gift," she recalls. "It made what was happening on the street and in the community and what was happening in the studio merge in a very organic way.... It's the way we've grown to function and operate, and the workshops will preserve that."

Joe's promotes participation and practice in dance, movement, and diverse performance traditions as a way to revitalize community. Programs include an afterschool arts program, summer arts camps, adult and master classes and community productions. Joe's also provides scholarships for underserved youth and affordable workspace, administrative services, and capacity-building workshops for artists.

