

Dance professor wins 2 national grants

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Written by Diane Daniel

Eric Kupers Eric Kupers, an assistant professor of theatre and dance at California State University, East Bay, was presented with both a Princess Grace Fellowship worth \$10,000 and a Multi-Arts Production grant worth \$15,000 during a recent trip to New York City.

Kupers will use the proceeds from both awards toward producing the unconventional contemporary dance performance programs of his company--Dandelion Dancetheater--for the San Francisco International Arts Festival that takes place May 9 through May 25 at CELLspace. CELLspace is a 10,000-square foot San Francisco-based warehouse that contains performance space, adult art classes, artist studios, and a fine arts gallery. Dandelion Dancetheater will share the stage with Company Y of Madrid, Spain and Mayday Dance Company of Montreal, Canada.

This is the first time a Cal State East Bay faculty member has received either of the two national honors, according to Thomas Hird, chair of the university's Department of Theatre and Dance.

"These awards are a sign that Kupers is on track for earlier success than we ever expected," said Hird.

"I'm honored," said Kupers, of the awards. "Now the work begins."

Kupers, a resident of Oakland, believes in the power of dance for every person, regardless of their size, shape, body type, or physical ability. His "Dance for All Bodies and Abilities" class, now in its second year at CSUEB, welcomes all-comers, even those individuals confined to a wheelchair.

Kupers is a longtime collaborator with Axis Dance Company, the world pioneer of accessible contemporary dance programs. He has dreamed of someday spearheading the nation's first undergraduate degree program for physically-integrated dance at Cal State East Bay.

Now in his second year at the university, Kupers is creating a partnership with Cabrillo College, in Aptos, that bridges that community college's adaptive physical education and dance program with related upper division academic work at CSUEB.

The Princes Grace Award, plus money from the Zellerbach Family Fund and various CSUEB faculty grants, have helped him to create "Spinal Fluid," an unconventional dance program by Kupers that features cast members of widely diverse ability and disability levels. In addition to Cal State East Bay's Hayward campus, Kupers hopes his new dance programs can be performed in Los Angeles during the summer of 2008 and in both Canada and Spain in 2009.