

AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND MEMORIAL

'Emotional expression'



Nathan Moyer and Janelle Abbott Staley of Neoteric Dance Collaborative perform a site specific dance at the African Burying Ground Memorial Thursday night as a preview to Friday's program, "Blank Page Poetry- Words & Shadows," that will be presented at 3S Artspace. PHOTOS BY IOANNA RAPTIS/SEACOASTONLINE

Residents get a preview of interpretive dance performance

By Karen Dandurant
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PORTSMOUTH — The second event in the "Blank Page Poetry - Words & Shadows: Truths That Arise Remembered" series took place with a seven minute preview interpretive dance and a poem by Portsmouth Poet Laureate Kate Leigh at the African Burial Ground Memorial Park Thursday evening.

Thursday's event was a segment of a three-part series. Jerome Meadows of Savannah, Georgia, the designer of the African

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Go to Seacoastonline.com to see a video from Thursday's performance at the African Burial Ground.

Burial Ground Memorial said he was delighted to be back in Portsmouth.

"When I designed the memorial over four years ago, there was such a tremendous amount of history and information that came out," said Meadows. "I think coming back here now offers a



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good pause for emotional expression. I was so taken by the fact that when city workers uncovered the graves, they did not ignore them. They stopped work and the result is this memorial.”

Meadows said that Leigh contacted him recently and asked if she could use the poem at the memorial for some classes she was doing with the schools.

“I said of course you can use it,” said Meadows. “It is your poem now. It belongs to the city. We came together to bring this series to Portsmouth. We are very proud of what have done here. I hope a lot of people come out to see this, and to honor the memories.”

The choreographer for the event came from Savannah with Meadows. Brea Cali was on hand with her two dancers, Janelle Abbott Staley and Nathan Moyer.

Nancy Pearson of Artspeak helped produce the three-day series. She said she worked with Meadows and Leigh over the summer to plan the program

The dance happened along the three main segments of the memorial. At each, Leigh read part of her poem titled



Portsmouth Poet Laureate Kate Leigh, right, combines her poem with the movement and performance of Neoteric Dance Collaborative dancer, Janelle Abbott Staley during the preview at the African Burying Ground Memorial on Thursday night. IOANNA RAPTIS/SEACOASTONLINE

“Praises.” In it she spoke of the discovered slaves and said it was everyone’s responsibility to speak for them because they could only “haunt our words.”

The first piece was on Sunday, Oct. 18 at the Portsmouth Music and Arts Center at which Blank Page Poetry director Meadows and choreographer Cali gave a talk.

The culminating program, “Blank Page Poetry – Words & Shadows,” is a unique, multi-disciplinary performance at 3S Artspace on Friday, Oct. 23 at 7:30 p.m. The performance will combine poetry, digital projections and dance movement.

As many as 11 local poets, including Leigh, will present their original works

interspersed with dance segments incorporating performers from the Neoteric Dance Collaborative. All of the performers will be seen only in shadow, their images cast upon a sheet of white paper that encloses the stage. Admission is free but patrons are asked to reserve tickets in advance at www.3sarts.org.