

# Trinity Faculty Member Wins National Endowment Grant

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**T**rinity professor of theater and dance Judy Dworin has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to help fund a new production by her nonprofit organization, the Judy Dworin Performance Project (JDPP). The production will be based on the historical significance of a house in an African-American neighborhood in New London.

The piece, which Dworin will work on during the spring 2010 semester, is called "In This House," and will look at the issue of race through the interior spaces of an historic structure that has stood for

generations. Built in 1678, the Joshua Hempsted House is run by Connecticut Landmarks.

"In This House" will be a multi-arts collaborative performance project that will probe "the generational shifts in race relations exemplified by the Hempsted household and its surrounding community." The collaboration will be led by Dworin but will also involve Leslie Bird, musical director of Women of the Cross, a group of a cappella gospel singers.

Dworin founded the JDPP in 1989 based on her belief that the arts play an important role in challenging and creating change in the universe. Through her artistic vision, the JDPP provides cutting-edge performances that address issues of social justice.

Dworin said she is "extremely pleased" to have received the NEA funding for a project

that acknowledges its historic significance, as well as the significance of the region and "the broader community of people." "Our goals are to reach underserved populations, address a somewhat divisive issue and to look at race through changing generational lenses," she said.

"In This House" will premiere at the Charter Oak Cultural Center in Hartford in April 2011. It's expected there will be three evening performances and two for middle and high school students. Dworin said she is also hoping to take the company on tour and stage "In This House" in New London.

The relationship of the Joshua Hempsted House to people of color began with the purchase of Adam Jackson as a slave, bought by the second Joshua Hempstead in 1727. Hempsted kept a diary for 47 years, which logged not only his responsibilities as a single parent of nine children, but gave

a sense of his life with Jackson, who was thought to have roomed in the attic with Hempsted's older sons.

Jackson was freed after Hempsted's death in 1758. In the 19th century, the Hempsted family became active abolitionists, supportive of developing an African-American community on their land. They started a school in the frame house that included students of color, became active agents in the freeing of the kidnapped Africans on the Amistad, and helped to publish an anti-slavery newspaper.

Dworin said she hopes to interview some elderly African-American women and children who live in the area. "I'm interested in real stories and how they connect us to the past, present and future," she said. "The challenge is to move history into the present moment in a way that's vital and energizing."