ASHFIELD — Double Edge Theatre’s founder and artistic director, Stacy Klein, has received the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s 2013 Artist Award, presented to “20 of America’s most vital artists working in the fields of contemporary dance, jazz and theatre.”

Klein is the only Massachusetts artist chosen by the New York-based foundation to receive the $225,000, multi-year unrestricted grant, presented by the foundation “to empower, invest...
in and celebrate artists who have demonstrated thrilling, vibrant work that affects both audiences and the larger performing arts field.”

The award, which follows a $125,000 New England Foundation for the Arts grant to Double Edge — now in its 30th year — to support development of its “Grand Parade of the 20th Century” work, recognizes Klein’s vision and transformation of the field of theater, both in the evolution of its aesthetic and in the ways in which an artist relates to her community. Klein intends to use the award to create the next phase of the Chagall performance cycle through 2015, while further developing the theater company’s Ashfield farm as a rural performance center and school.

The farm — it has housing for ensemble members, resident artists and apprentices and up to 30 students and guests from around the world, as well as a multi-function pavilion, two rehearsal and performance spaces and out-buildings — has been the setting for year-round trainings, conferences and summer spectacles that combine theater, dance, music and acrobatics.

“The Grand Parade of the 20th Century,” which had its world premiere in February at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., followed by its Russian premiere in Moscow in March, depicts major events of the 20th century in a theatrical style inspired by Russian painter Chagall’s “kaleidoscopic vision of humanity at play, at war, and at rest. Trapeze, circus, dance, projections, and popular culture fill the height and breadth of the stage in a spectacle of history populated by people and animals in acts of grace and destruction,” according to the Double Edge website.

“This award’s flexibility, enabling each artist to decide how it will be used, opens up myriad possibilities and options,” said Klein, who in 1994 moved the theater company from Boston to Ashfield to create a permanent center for performance, training, research and exchange.

Klein has led Double Edge for 31 years, creating and developing a small resident company that is now widely acknowledged as one of America’s foremost laboratory theaters. She is the recipient of the OTTO award for Political Theater in 2006, and her work with Double Edge has received grants from NEFA National Theater Project, Arts Presenters Ensemble Theatre Collaborations, and Multi-Arts Production (MAP) Fund.

Double Edge grew out of Klein’s experience of doing an all-women’s production of “The Bacchae,” while she was teaching theater at Tufts University.

The staging of the classic Greek play at Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Arts brought opposition from some in the women’s movement because it portrayed women oppressing women.

“Always, Double Edge has been theater and art,” says Klein, who earned a doctorate in theater history and criticism at Tufts.
In 2002, she began directing a Double Edge annual summer spectacle series: indoor/outdoor performances that take place around the 105-acre farm property. The spectacles have been based on adaptations of Don Quixote, “The Odyssey” and other classical literature.

Double Edge’s 2013 production, “Shahrazad,” will run from July 24 to Aug. 19.

Throughout the year, Double Edge offers immersion training for emerging actors, internships, workshops, public conversations, concerts and other programs. The theater company tours nationally and internationally, most recently in Washington, D.C., and Moscow. It also works closely with local schools, businesses, artists, farmers and hundreds of community volunteers to bring Klein’s vision of “living culture” to the region.

www.DoubleEdgeTheatre.org

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