

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, July 10, 2008

JOURNEY ACROSS BORDERS

Santa Fe, N.M.—Michelle Vest’s upcoming Philadelphia and New York performances of *Sole Survivors* are Wednesday, September 10, 7 p.m. and Thursday, September 11, 9 p.m. at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival and Friday, October 17, 8 p.m. and Thursday, October 23, 8 p.m. at Stage Left Studio in New York City.

Written by Vest and directed by Tanya Taylor Rubinstein, Vest produces and acts in this ambitious solo performance tackling the tough issues of immigration. The play will challenge and entertain the audience.

Sole Survivors is a contemporary portrait of one American and three immigrants who put their lives on the line to seek—and realize—not only the American Dream, but their own, more personal and deeply felt dreams of freedom. Vest presents each character, telling each story in the form of an intimate monologue.

Drawn from interviews of documented and undocumented workers and Vest’s interpersonal relationships, “I wanted to look beneath the usual stereotypes and assumptions, and explore the far more enlivening truths that exist there,” says Vest. *Sole Survivors* treats all of the ups and downs of life with Chaplinesque humor and hard social commentary.

The *Sole Survivors* characters are named Juan, Rosalita, Jesus and Maria after the people Woody Guthrie’s song “Plane Wreck at Los Gatos (Deportee),” a protest song with detailing the crash of a plane near Los Gatos Canyon in California in 1948. Guthrie considered the racist mistreatment of the passengers before and after the accident. The crash resulted in the deaths of four Americans and 28 illegal immigrant farm workers who were being deported from California back to Mexico.

“The four immigrants in *Sole Survivors* are composite characters based on extensive interviews I conducted with both documented and undocumented workers from Mexico and El Salvador,” says Vest.



The first character in *Sole Survivors* is Maria, the 40-year old daughter of an Arizona rancher. Her family traces its heritage and land ownership back to when Arizona was still Mexico. One day while driving around the remotest part of the ranch, she stumbles upon footprints near the U.S./Mexico border. She tells her father what she discovered, and learns from him the migration history of people across her family's land. After her initial meetings with lost and starving migrants, she decides to make a business driving migrants across the southern most border of her ranch, revealing her character's transformation from altruist to hardened capitalist.

The second character is Rosa, an undocumented Mexican immigrant who describes the first time she crossed the Mexico/U.S. border. She is a spirited character who talks about life growing up in a small Mexican village, marrying and divorcing at a young age, leaving her son behind to come to the U.S. and work, dating in the U.S. and the death of her beloved "Abuelita."

Juan, another undocumented worker from Mexico, is a hard-working but unlucky young man. He is in his 20s, and has worked primarily on ranches. Juan delivers a hard-hitting monologue describing a morning on the street where he accidentally kills a man who is trying to take his job.

The fourth and final character is Jesus. Jesus is from El Salvador. In his mid-40s, Jesus fled El Salvador during the civil war of the 1980s. Jesus is sincere, gracious and humble. He reveals the struggles and triumphs of his life as a professor living and working in San Salvador during violent protests and brutal interrogations, leaving his family for political asylum in the U.S., and being reunited with his family after 11 years of separation.

Vest is a talented painter, dancer, performance artist and commercial photographer. She has lived in Santa Fe, N.M., for the past 10 years, and resides with her husband and son. Her goal is to inspire others to find, cultivate and express truths creatively and in a way that leads to personal and spiritual freedom. People that love theater that is demanding and powerful will enjoy *Sole Survivors* and will find Vest relevant and inclusive.

LISTINGS INFORMATION

WHAT: *Sole Survivors*

WHERE: Philly Fringe Festival: Second Stage at the Adrienne, 2030 Sansom Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 www.pafringe.com

Women at Work Festival in New York City, Stage Left Studio, 438 West 37th Street 5A, 10018, New York, NY www.stageleftstudio.com

WHEN: Philadelphia: September 10, 7 p.m., September 11, 9 p.m.;

New York City: Friday, October 17, 8 p.m.; Thursday, October 23, 8 p.m.

TICKETS: **Philadelphia:** \$15, purchase at the door or through the Live Arts and Philly Fringe Box Office. 215-413-1318

New York: To reserve, contact Cheryl King at: cherylking3@verizon.net. \$15; Tickets will be available on www.smarttix.com by September. 212 -868-4444

FESTIVAL INFORMATION:

The Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe run from August 29- September 13, 2008. Tickets prices range from free to \$25, and can be purchased online at www.liveartsfringe.org or by calling 215.413.1318.

Women at Work Festival runs October 16 -26, 2008 and is The Festival of Shows by and/or about Women. <http://www.stageleftstudio.com/#/womenatwork08/4529621037>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

...about Sole Survivors, visit www.solesurvivorstheplay.com

...about Second Stage at the Adrienne, visit www.adriennelive.org

...about The Philadelphia Fringe Festival, visit www.pafringe.com

....about Stage Left, visit www.stageleftstudio.com

INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**Contact:**

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PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"This is a bold and relevant work addressing some of the most crucial issues of our times. Michelle Vest's work shows courage, artistic depth and commitment."

Molly Sturges, artistic director, Littlelobe

Productions

"I was moved, entertained and drawn in as if I were living within the stories themselves through Michelle's full embodiment of her characters both male and female. The stories are compelling and intense, bringing life and awareness to a world lying just under the surface of what most of us call reality, forcing us to take a closer look at who we really are."

Jeff English, Santa Fe

"Each vignette in Michelle's performance got right to the heart of each character; their stories are so pertinent to what we all face every day, yet they are beautifully realized. Each portrait is a gem."

Melissa J. White, Whitespace Creative

"Michelle Vest's one-woman show is extremely poignant in her ability to put voice to and embody the stories and personae of one American and three Latin immigrant characters, down to every detail of their separate nuances, walks, voices, histories and personalities. The extent to which she empathized with each character displayed her commitment to these fictional yet all-too-real individuals and their shared condition and pride. The transitions between the characters was also beautifully orchestrated, using the performance of costume-change to allow the audience a pause for reflection and a clear understanding that it was witness to literal character embodiments, symbolized by Ms. Vest's physically stepping into the shoes of each character. Ms. Vest has proven herself to be a great storyteller, in word and performance, and I eagerly look forward to her next piece."

Erika Kyte, San Diego

www.solesurvivorstheplay.com