

Launchpad *from page 1*

to \$20 per hour. Spring-loaded Harlequin dance floors — the same type of resilient floor used by the San Francisco Ballet and New York's Martha Graham dance company — underlay both spaces.

The Open Studio, situated in an area formerly occupied by the children's section, is a 1,150-square-foot, sun-washed space that invites runs and spins. Overhead, a soaring ceiling punctuated by skylights overarches running leaps and will hold multi-story dangling silks for use by aerial performers and circus classes.

Oh yes, you can come watch! True to its name, the Open Studio will be open to the public, both during dance rehearsals and also for large-scale painting and sculpture exhibitions.

The Launchpad, a collaboration between the Dance Initiative and the Carbondale Council on Arts and Humanities (CCAH), is designed to draw in visitors perusing Carbondale's main creative district on Main Street. In addition to the dance studios, the Launchpad will hold CCAH's art galleries and offices, and a boutique gift store called Artique. Next year, an outdoor sculpture garden will be added.

"In the last 40 years, CCAH has been known for bringing music, dance and theatre to town," said CCAH Executive Director Amy Kimberly. "We had a beautiful gallery at the Third Street Center, but we didn't have enough foot traffic. This puts us where we can put our arms around all the arts."

"We need a space that is set up for dance and theatre," said Dance Initiative founder Peter Gilbert. After backers of a James Surls art center cancelled their plans for the former library, Kimberly approached Gilbert about a partnership.

"We brainstormed. We talked to an architect and a structural engineer," said Gilbert. "And we learned that it was possible to remove the interior columns and put up that beam." He gestured toward a massive, golden glulam header that spans the Open Studio. "I was intrigued by the plans — but I had no idea that it would be this beautiful!"

Dana Ganssle Ellis, the Rowland and Broughton architect who redesigned the space, understood the need to open up the large gallery. She's a dancer, an aficionado of modern and African dance, and also serves

on the Dance Initiative's board.

Gilbert says that starting the Dance Initiative in 2009 was the realization of a long-deferred adolescent dream of his, and he wants the Launchpad to serve as a creative incubator for young dancers. He has already arranged for nationally renowned choreographer Melissa Fenley to dance and teach here next year.

"With CCAH going along with this, we are not charging a premium rate. We are subsidizing the performing arts so that dancers, teachers, musicians and artists can use the space for classes and rehearsals," Gilbert explained. "My dream is not just that Carbondale becomes known as a creative district, but also as a place where people come to create. I want artists to be able to choreograph work here and perform in it New York. Then it gets put in galleries and theatres across the whole country."

The Crystal River Ballet, DanceLAB/CoMotion, Integrated Yoga and African Drum & Dancing already have plans for the new studios, and reservations are being taken at <http://www.launchpadcarbondale.com>.

Both Dance Initiative and CCAH have



Jeni Ptacek and Peter Gilbert (above left) practice some dance moves before the Launchpad officially opened this week. Ptacek's Crystal River Ballet, plus DanceLAB/CoMotion, Integrated Yoga and African Drum & Dancing have already signed up to use the dance spaces. And speaking of space, check out the top window (above). Don't the windows look like a rocket ready for launch? Photos by Jane Bachrach

slated gala opening events. The opening reception for CCAH's SWAN show (Support Women Artists Now) will be Oct. 9. Dance Initiative will be offering workshops all day Saturday; dance classes begin on Monday.

The Dance Initiative's third annual Spectrum

Dance Festival is slated for Oct. 18-20, and will feature workshops and performances by nationally known dance artists Patrick Mueller of Control Group Productions and King Charles, who has been featured on "America's Got Talent" and "America's Best Dance Crew."

