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Beverly Hills News -USC Kaufman School Of Dance Debuts This Week



LET'S DANCE – USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance Dean Robert A. Cutietta, USC Trustee and founder of The Gloria Kaufman Dance Foundation Gloria Kaufman, USC President C.L. Max Nikias, and USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance Vice Dean and Director Jodie Gates cut the ribbon of the new school on Wednesday.

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By Laura Coleman

There are times in life when words are insufficient and only pure artistic expression can communicate meaning. Such was the case at Tuesday evening's opening night soiree for the Gloria Kaufman International Dance Center at USC when Kaufman waltzed with William Forsythe to kick-off the evening's performance and welcome attendees to USC's first new school in almost four decades.

"Everybody had their own inspiration and we just collaborated in a beautiful way," said Kaufman, who provided the money that made it possible for the university to establish a dance school and program.

For Kaufman, a Beverly Hills philanthropist who reinvigorated dance at the L.A. Music Center in 2003 following a \$20 million donation, dance has always been a part of her life and a conduit for joy. For the students at USC's first dedicated dance school, which began taking students last year, the opportunity to perform and study in a state-of-the-art facility, taught by renowned instructors, and dancing alongside fellow students from diverse backgrounds who are passionate to be part of the program, is the chance of a lifetime.

The 54,000-square-foot building, with two stories and a mezzanine, houses a studio performance space, five medium and small dance studios, a dance wellness center, dressing rooms, a training and fitness zone, space for future classrooms, and offices for faculty and administrators. A large collaborative space for dance majors is on the top floor.

"There's no other space like this," extolled Jodie Gates, vice-dean and director of USC Kaufman and a former prima ballerina with Joffrey Ballet. "Students will receive unprecedented, innovative curriculum."

The hallmark of USC Kaufman is the development of new movement models for dance where intersecting techniques create hybrid forms to be expressed in new media, scholarship, studio practice and choreography.

USC Kaufman also provides students with opportunities to work and collaborate with world-renowned artists and to study in a range of dance styles, from ballet to hip-hop, contemporary and ballroom.

The program had 400 students audition for its first class of 33 students; this year, 350 auditioned for 18 spaces.

"If they're this good now, can you image them in three more years?" proffered Kaufman following several performances put on by USC Kaufman sophomores.