

# DANCE DISH WITH KRISTYN BURTT

## How USC Is Making Its Mark On The Next Generation Of Dancers

October 5, 2016 | Kristyn Burtt



Photo credit: USC Kaufman

When you think of major dance conservatory programs, names like Juilliard, New York University, The University of the Arts and Point Park University come to mind. They've been established for decades and they are all on the East Coast.

One West Coast university is changing all of that by creating a dance conservatory program for the modern age. University of Southern California was the recipient of a generous gift from Gloria Kaufman, a philanthropist with long-standing ties to the dance community.



Photo credit: USC Kaufman

This is the first new school in almost four decades at USC, so its introduction is an important one for the growing campus. The new state-of-the-art USC Gloria Kaufman International Dance Center is home to 54,000 square feet of five dance studios, a performance studio for 140 audience members and an assortment of classrooms. The cost for the development was \$46 million.

This is no ordinary dance program, though. USC Kaufman is taking on the motto of "The New Movement" to lead the next generation of artists into a synergistic confluence of concert dance, commercial dance and new media.

The dance department is hoping to utilize the five other art schools on campus — School of Cinematic Arts, Thornton School of Music, Roski School of Art and Design, School of Dramatic Arts and School of Architecture — to share ideas and create projects together. It's not a university program to just develop professional dancers, the Kaufman School is hoping to deliver the next-generation of choreographers, dance business entrepreneurs and "hybrid artists."



Photo credit: USC Kaufman

"We want to give [the students] a career in dance, not just a short lifetime in dance," says Dean Robert Cutietta in a *Dance Dish* exclusive interview. "We aren't training dancers, we are making dance makers."

To keep those dance careers flourishing, the school is offering a diverse curriculum. All students are required to take ballet, modern/contemporary and hip-hop, but the classroom endeavors showcase the new direction of dance — they focus on everything from World Perspectives on Dance Performance to an Introduction to Dance for the Camera.

The Kaufman School has also attracted an impressive list of teachers and choreographers to join their faculty, most notably William Forsythe from Ballet Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. He's joined the staff as the school's Artistic Advisor, USC Choreographic Institute.



Photo credit: Dominik Mentzos

Forsythe's presence also makes it a great draw for showcasing his work in the LA area. USC, The Music Center and Los Angeles County Museum of Art are doing a month-long celebration of his work called Fall for Forsythe. The honor will culminate in a performance of "Celebrate Forsythe" with Houston Ballet and Pacific Northwest Ballet all participating during the weekend of Oct. 21-23.

With such incredible resources at their fingertips and a blossoming LA dance scene, USC Kaufman students are part of an elite group. The goal is to keep each incoming class capped at 18 students so the school can mentor and shape the careers of these budding artists.

"What's going to be fun for all of us is to see that first class graduate in 2019," shares Vice Dean and Director Jodie Gates. "No matter what they end up doing, they are getting a phenomenal education and they will be talented individuals. I can not wait to watch them and see them teach their students one day. They are a force to reckon with — they are powerful people."

The Gloria Kaufman International Dance Center officially opens on Oct. 5.