

# USC celebrates the opening of a building for dance



USC's Glorya Kaufman International Dance Center, four years in the making, debuted Oct. 5. (Carolyn DiLoreto/USC)

By **Deborah Vankin**

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**I**t was a good day to be a dancing Trojan.

Several hundred USC dance faculty and students, university trustees, professional dancers and choreographers gathered Wednesday afternoon to celebrate the opening of the \$46-million Glorya Kaufman International Dance Center, the university's first on-campus building dedicated to dance study.

When the USC Trojan Marching Band showed up and cut through the crowd, a flurry of iPhones — along with fingers forming the football team's V-for-victory sign — shot into the air, accentuated by hooting and hollering. But the biggest cheers came as arts philanthropist and USC's **grande dame of dance**, Glorya Kaufman, showed up, strolling behind the marching band in a royal blue pants suit.

"This is the culminating moment, this feels wonderful," dance school Dean Robert A. Cutietta said, standing in front of the new building, described as Italian Collegiate Gothic. He met Kaufman, he said, five years ago almost to the day. "To go from that to this in five years — not just creating the building itself, but everything in the building, like faculty, staff, the students — is phenomenal."

Kaufman made her gift, the amount of which the university declined to reveal, in 2012. Groundbreaking took place in 2014. The dance school welcomed its first class in fall 2015, with 33 students collaborating with dance professionals while studying styles including ballet, ballroom and hip-hop. Classes were held in a temporary facility on campus, then moved into the new 54,000-square-foot building in August.

The two-story center, with its arched windows and thin red brick exterior, was designed by Pfeiffer Partners Architects. It includes dance studios and a performance space along with a "dance wellness center," a training and fitness space, dressing rooms, classrooms and faculty offices.

"This is all because one woman had a dream, a dream with joy running through it," USC President C.L. Max Nikias said, presenting Kaufman flowers and a black and white lithograph of a dancer *en pointe*. "The USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance is her dream, that along the way became our dream — and it's a dream come true."

Her voice breaking up, Kaufman told the crowd that she couldn't fully express her joy. "I'm getting a little emotional here."

Kaufman's voice further broke up as she talked about "the person who really made this happen," her late husband, developer Donald Bruce Kaufman, to whom the afternoon was dedicated. "I find it bittersweet that the first class performance is called 'The Emergence: Works in Progress,' because that's what Don was, a work in progress," she said. He would have applauded the dance school's interdisciplinary approach, she added.

Kaufman fondly remembered dancing in nightclubs as a teenager in Detroit.

"Where young people of all colors and hues came together, and we had fun dancing the rumba and jitterbug," she said. "What's tremendously important to me today is that this marvelous new center will become all forms of dance in a multicultural environment where diverse young people will come together to boldly engage in innovative artistic expression."

Among those in attendance were choreographer William Forsythe, "So You Think You Can Dance" judge Nigel Lythgoe, Complexions Contemporary Ballet co-founder Desmond Richardson and Los Angeles Music Center President Rachel Moore.

"It's unbelievable, it's state of the art," Forsythe said of the new building, where he teaches choreography. "It makes everything in the professional world look shabby. It's the most perfectly designed building — the acoustics, the floor, the sound system, the lighting, everything is perfectly balanced. You don't get tired in the building, because the interior is all curves."

Before tours of the new building got underway, the posture-perfect crowd mingled in front of the building, and one last round of victory signs swept through the air as confetti canons shot red and gold streamers into the sky.