

ARTS & CULTURE

Glorya Kaufman brings dance to USC

DEC 20, 2012 By [Anna Scott](#)



Rob Cutietta and Glorya Kaufman

USC's Glorya Kaufman School of Dance will train aspiring dancers and choreographers, and is being funded by LA philanthropist Glorya Kaufman. But ballerinas don't usually go to college. While most young adults spend their college years switching majors, drinking beer and generally figuring out what to do with their lives, this is a prime professional time for dancers. So why is USC spending millions of dollars to add a brand new, four-year dance school to its campus? What kinds of dancers will the school attract? And what kinds of careers can they expect to have after graduating?

Rob Cutietta is the dean of USC's music school, and he'll also head the new dance school. He says "one of the really fun parts of this is, I can't answer all those questions, because we're having the joy of building something from scratch." While many questions about the curriculum and structure remain to be answered, Cutietta does know a few things about how the school will operate.

"We know that we will admit our first students in the fall of 2015. We know it's going to be a very focused and very select school, so we don't anticipate large numbers of students ... it will be based in classical, contemporary ballet. It's not going to be commercial dance," he says.

Glorya Kaufman, the philanthropist funding USC's new dance school, won't reveal exactly how much money she's putting into it. "That's not the important part. The important part is what it's doing ... that's why I'm withholding that amount," she says. But whatever the pricetag, it's large enough to pay for a brand new building and at least part of the faculty hiring and curriculum.

So who is Glorya Kaufman? She is the widow of Donald Bruce Kaufman, one of the founders of the home building company now known as KB Homes, who has given tens of millions of dollars to dance programs in and outside of L.A in recent years, including a \$20 million gift to downtown's Music Center to host dance companies from around the world. She's also given \$6 million to [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#) and \$3.5 million to the [Juilliard School](#) in New York.

In 1999, Kaufman gave UCLA \$18 million to renovate its dance building. She says she's since been disappointed in UCLA's dance program — an interdisciplinary one that's combined with the World Arts and Cultures Department — and in how the school has used the building.

She says she won't be involved in the day-to-day decision-making as her namesake school takes shape, but she hopes it will help to raise L.A.'s national profile as a place for quality dance, and to make dance more popular within the city. Ironically, Kaufman says, she believes dance has a unique ability to reach wide audiences partly because 'you don't need a college degree to appreciate it.'