

# Glorya Kaufman gives USC millions to build a dance school

*The arts patron's groundbreaking gift for the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance will establish the first new endowment-funded school at the university in 40 years.*

By **Deborah Vankin**

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In the arts world, they call her “the dancing philanthropist.” And now, with her latest and largest endowment to date, Glorya Kaufman has a new dance partner in the University of Southern California.

Her groundbreaking gift for the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance will establish the first new endowment-funded school at the university in 40 years. (The last was the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, which opened in 1973 with a gift from Walter H. Annenberg.) Robert Cutietta, dean of USC's music school, who will head the new dance school, calls the gift one of the largest donations in the history of dance.

Kaufman won't reveal the dollar amount of the gift — suffice to say it will surpass by far the \$20 million she gave Los Angeles' Music Center in 2009 to bring major dance companies to L.A. with her Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance.

But on Friday morning, in the midst of moving from the sprawling Brentwood ranch house where she raised her four children to a much smaller Italian villa-style home in Beverly Hills — “I'm downsizing,” she says — Kaufman is relaxed and open about other aspects of the gift.

“I was disappointed in UCLA. They don't have a dance school. It was all talk,” she says when asked why she chose USC after she'd given \$18 million to UCLA in 1999 to help renovate the School of the Arts and Architecture's dance building. “And USC can connect with the Music Center, which is also downtown.”

Kaufman has been an arts philanthropist since the early 1980s, after the death of her husband, Donald Bruce Kaufman — of the home construction and financing firm Kaufman & Broad, now KB Homes. In addition to her Music Center and UCLA gifts, she's given \$6 million to New York's Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and \$3.5 million to the Juilliard School.

USC currently doesn't have a dance school — or even a dance major. It does offer individual dance classes, such as ballroom, hip-hop, tango and tap, through its theater school. Kaufman's donation will help develop all aspects of the new dance school, from designing a contemporary and classical dance curriculum to hiring faculty and constructing a brand-new building, the Glorya Kaufman International Dance Center.

Cutietta, who served as dean of University of Arizona's School of Music and Dance before moving to Los Angeles 11 years ago, says the hope is to hire an architect by early spring 2013 and break ground in early 2014 in the space that was the student health center near the Thornton school of Music. If all goes according to plan, the Kaufman School will open in the fall of 2015. The endowment will also fund dance scholarships for students.

“We have so much [dance] talent here in L.A.,” Kaufman said a few hours before the official Friday night announcement of the gift, “and there's no place for them to go. We want to get the best students, the best teachers, and the kids, when they graduate, will be able to make a living right away.”

Kaufman has been working closely with Cutietta over the last year to conceptualize the school's identity. The new dance school will be small and very selective, Cutietta says, with 60 to 80 students. He and Kaufman envision a three-pronged curriculum with dance instruction at its core. But the program will also focus on dancer wellness and the business side of dance, to help extend dancers' all-too-short careers.

“My vision is for the students to leave and go into dance and the business of dance,” Kaufman says, “to do whatever they want because they'll be that talented and prepared.”

“This new school is going to put us [Los Angeles] on the map,” says Bonnie Oda Homsey, director of the Los Angeles Dance Foundation. “It raises the quality of training and therefore, the quality of artists we're sending into the professional workforce.”

Southern California, she notes, has become an important “creative laboratory” for the arts, specifically dance. “Dance needs physical space — to train and rehearse and create. And we have that. Los Angeles is really poised to become a more forward-thinking dance mecca.”

The genesis of the new school came out of a casual conversation between Kaufman and Cutietta. They met at a USC dance performance last November and hit it off immediately, Cutietta says. That night Kaufman asked him, out of the blue: “What if I wanted to start a dance school here? What would it take?”

“I was shocked,” Cutietta says.

“The next morning I made an appointment with the provost [Elizabeth Garrett] and said, ‘Can we start a school from scratch?’ She said, ‘I don't see why not!’”