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Leonardo Barrionuevo and Miriam Lariol tango at the USC gala for the Kaufman School; inset: Gloria Kaufman and Desmond Richardson.



Building the Future

Gloria Kaufman funds a brand-new dance school at USC.

BY RACHEL RIZZUTO

This past November, dance patron Gloria Kaufman donated a large, undisclosed amount to launch from scratch the **University of Southern California's Gloria Kaufman School of Dance** in Los Angeles. It will admit its first class of BFA students in fall 2015 and join USC's five other arts schools, which operate as stand-alone units from revenue and hiring standpoints but under the umbrella of USC. The university currently has a vibrant, albeit small, dance minor program, offering classes from ballroom to hip hop. Approximately 1,000 students each year take a dance class there.

Construction of the school's new building will begin in 2014. Robert Cutietta, the dean of the USC Thornton School of Music, will also serve as the inaugural dean of the Kaufman School of Dance.

Cutietta met Kaufman by chance, through a mutual friend, when they both attended a dinner before a dance concert on campus. When Cutietta wistfully remarked that USC had such wonderful arts schools but no dance BFA, Kaufman asked him why. He said he really didn't know the reason, to which she proposed: "What if we started a dance school?"

"Walking Ms. Kaufman to her car later that night," says Cutietta, "I asked her, 'Are you serious about all of this?' And she told me that she'd love to discuss it. I called her the next day, we met for lunch a week later and she was very serious. She was looking for something big to do."

It's estimated Kaufman's unnamed gift to the dance program is her largest to date (she previously donated \$18 million to UCLA in 1999, and \$20

million to The Music Center in Los Angeles in 2009). This school is the first to be established at USC via an endowment in almost 40 years.

In January of this year, Cutietta hired consultants to interview and explore other respected dance schools to gather ideas when creating the new USC curriculum. Once the consultation period is finished, he will work with the team to write the curriculum, hopefully over this summer and early fall.

The school will have a classical and modern base curriculum and a very selective audition process. Cutietta's best guess for its enrollment is 15–20 students per class, with six full-time faculty members.

"L.A. has a unique art scene," says Cutietta, "but very little in dance. USC hopes to become, since we're right here in downtown L.A., the glue for other dance organizations. We want to be the unifying force."

For more: kaufman.usc.edu **DT**

Rachel Rizzuto is a freelance writer and dancer in New York City.