

News Release



International Choreographer William Forsythe to Join USC Kaufman School of Dance Faculty

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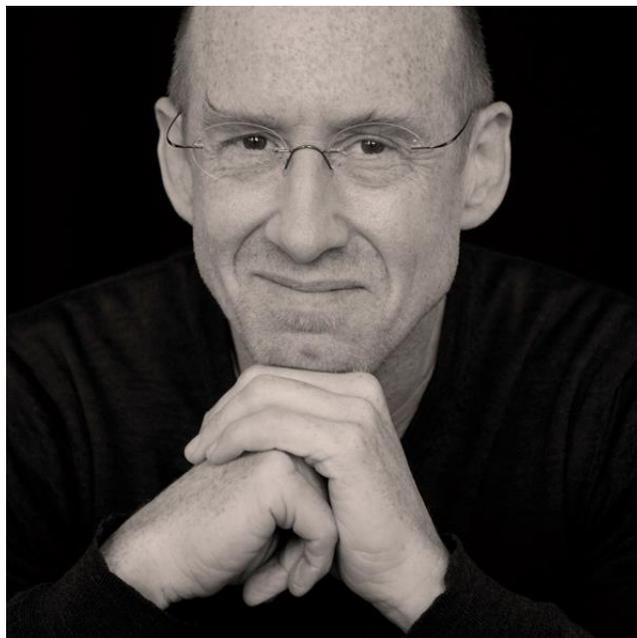
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William Forsythe, who is recognized as one of the world's foremost choreographers, will be joining the University of Southern California's Glorya Kaufman School of Dance as a professor.

The appointment was made by USC Kaufman Dean Robert Cutietta, along with Vice Dean Jodie Gates, who is the school's director. Forsythe will begin at USC Kaufman in fall 2015. His choreographic methods will be practiced in the improvisation and composition courses, and he will work with students from freshman through graduate levels.



Founded in 2012 with a transformational gift by philanthropist Glorya Kaufman, the school combines a conservatory environment with the academic rigor of a major private research institution. A 55,000-square-foot state-of-the-art dance complex broke ground on the University Park Campus April 23, and the first cohort of Bachelor of Fine Arts dance majors will enroll in fall 2015. More information on the school is at kaufman.usc.edu

In coming years, the school plans to establish the Choreographic Institute, with Forsythe as its artistic advisor. He intends to do research with other USC schools such as the USC Thornton School of Music and the USC School of Cinematic Arts, and USC centers such as the Brain and Creativity Institute.

USC Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Elizabeth Garrett also has asked Forsythe, who has been based in Europe for decades, to mentor the USC International Artist Fellows, a program of highly selective graduate students from around the globe who study in the university's six arts schools.

"Bill Forsythe is a perfect match for both USC Kaufman as well as the university," said

Cutietta. “Throughout his career, he has worked closely with composers, architects, philosophers, digital animators and sport scientists. Our strengths as a university match his strengths as an artist, and we are thrilled for him to join our faculty.

“Since he will be teaching across the Kaufman School, professor Forsythe will, quite literally, have an impact on every one of our dance majors,” said Cutietta.

“For over 30 years, I have had the great fortune to work with Bill Forsythe,” said Gates. “He is one of the most important dance philosophers of our time and his choreographic work has transformed the field. He has crossed boundaries and discovered commonalities within dance, visual art, architecture and media, among many other disciplines. This type of scholarly practice and creative thinking through composition and collaboration is what our students will learn in the core curriculum at USC Kaufman.”

“I am so excited that Bill Forsythe decided to return to the United States to help the school create a new model for dance education,” said Kaufman. “He is so open to reinventing what the dancer should learn and how they should approach new ideas and concepts. Having him at USC will allow each student to be fully qualified for any avenue they wish to pursue.”

Forsythe said: “USC offers innumerable opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration,” and said that the potential is “significant” for USC Kaufman to make a large impact on dance in Los Angeles.

[A Q and A with Forsythe on his work, teaching and his plans for the Choreographic Institute is below.]

“Forsythe’s interdisciplinary work is acknowledged for reorienting the practice of ballet from classical repertoire to a dynamic 21st century art form,” said Gates. “The students at USC Kaufman will have the unique opportunity to learn from his groundbreaking choreographic practice.”

Forsythe, who began his career as a dancer with the Joffrey Ballet, first attracted international notice as the resident choreographer of the Stuttgart Ballet. He went on to create new works for ballet companies in Munich, The Hague, London, Basel, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Paris, New York and San Francisco. During two decades as director of Ballet Frankfurt, he created an impressive body of new works, such as *Artifact* (1984), *Impressing the Czar* (1988), *Limb’s Theorem* (1990), *The Loss of Small Detail* (a 1991 collaboration with composer Thom Willems and designer Issey Miyake), *A LIE / N A(C) TION* (1992), *Eidos:Telos* (1995), *Endless House* (1999), *Kammer/Kammer* (2000) and *Decreation* (2003).

In 2005, he started an independent ensemble, The Forsythe Company. That ensemble is supported by the German states of Saxony and Hesse, the cities of Dresden and Frankfurt am Main and private sponsors. The company maintains an extensive international touring schedule as the exclusive presenter of recent Forsythe works such as *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2005), *You made me a monster* (2005), *Human Writes* (2005), *Heterotopia* (2006), *The Defenders* (2007), *Yes we can’t* (2008/2010), *I don’t believe in outer space* (2008), *The Returns* (2009) and *Sider* (2011).

Forsythe’s earlier pieces are featured in the repertoire of virtually every major ballet company in the world.

He has been commissioned to produce on-site architectural installations with architect-artist Daniel Libeskind, and his installation and film works have been presented in many museums

and exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennial, the Venice Biennale, the Louvre Museum, Folkwang Museum, Centre Pompidou, MoMA, ICA Boston and museums in Tokyo and Korea.

USC Kaufman Director Gates, a former principal ballerina with the Joffrey Ballet, Frankfurt Ballet, Ballet Pennsylvania and other leading companies, has taught, staged and produced Forsythe's ballets worldwide, including productions at Paris Opera Ballet, Scottish Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Prague National Theater, Zurich Opera Ballet and Teatro La Scala.

Q & A WITH WILLIAM FORSYTHE

What appeals to you about the Kaufman School and USC?

USC is a research university, and that probably means there are many people, like myself, who are interested in processes. I'm very excited at the prospect of teaching components of choreographic process — I really enjoy the challenge of illuminating the fundamentals of motion and aesthetic analysis.

I'm impressed by the flexibility of the people at the university. Vice Dean and Kaufman School Director Jodie Gates and Thornton School Dean Rob Cutietta are both exceptional, and it's a very open environment.

USC offers incredible opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration. Here, you could do a conference with virtually anyone — the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the Department of Sociology, or the USC Marshall School of Business — chiming in about advancing American dance.

Do you see the Kaufman School making a larger impact on dance in Los Angeles?

The potential is significant. There is a push in Los Angeles to make the dance community more interesting, all the time, and in any capacity. In other very established artistic communities like Paris or London there are a few important individuals, but you don't have the same kind of community drive.

In your experience, what kinds of students are most suited for success in the field?

I've worked with students throughout my career, and the most important thing is a desire to dance. Some students would like you to provide them with a vision, and that in my experience, often doesn't work. If the student comes in with a vision and a desire, a nascent idea of who they think the professional they want to become is, then there is a person to work with.

Can you describe your teaching philosophy?

Dance training needs to be choreographic, because I can't imagine any choreographer today not working in some collaborative sense. Dancers are asked to be part of the creative process. They need to learn how to think choreographically about their dancing.

I find tandem teaching very effective. When there are two people in the room, one sees things that the other doesn't. Students get more quality attention that way, and in my experience they work harder in that kind of situation, because they realize they are going to be noticed.

One wants to give students everything one knows about one's art, so one must go to the limit of one's knowledge at every instance of one's interactions. This is the substance of the daily process in choreographic practice. We should help them develop a habit of reflective articulation, as a way of

being in the world, a way to offer what is meaningful to oneself.

Can you describe your work in the field of dance?

I've done vastly different kinds of work, from neo-classical dance, contemporary dance to highly theatrical work. At my company, I have an open-door policy. Students are welcome to come in and work with us, learn steps, and I usually stay afterward to work with them. So, mentorship is already a part of what I do. This appointment is just a little bit more formalized.

What are your plans for the Choreographic Institute?

The Choreographic Institute should act as something that synthesizes the potential for interaction between choreographic thinking and other sciences. I want to create projects that interlink. Rather than working on 10 separate projects, I'd rather work on one project with 10 aspects. That involves working with top professionals from all over the world and those at USC, dispelling mysteries and getting everyone to think differently.

I want to address the needs of the school as a whole. I don't want to have my own agenda. I like the idea of making a great department, a great school — it's a creative project. The Institute will be created in tandem with the evolution of the school.

You've spent considerable time working in Europe. What of European dance practice do you see influencing your goals for the Choreographic Institute?

It seems as if in Europe, there is an unspoken, intuitive mandate to examine a received notion of what the practice of dance truly is, and investigate if it could not be otherwise. There is a quote by René Magritte that states: "An object is not so attached to its name that we could not find another one that would suit it better." I feel the same way about the practice of dance: Is choreography really bound to the historical notions of its own practices? Could it not be otherwise?

[Image of William Forsythe, copyright Stephan Floss.]

Image of Forsythe and Jodie Gates, below, taken at a rehearsal for her farewell performance from the stage in 2005. She danced one of Forsythe's works. Photo by Ian Carney.]



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