

# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## The Wooden Floor Holds its 27th Annual Concert

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The Wooden Floor (previously known as Saint Joseph Ballet) held its 27th annual concert, *An Open Space*, and drew 2,200 ticket holders to the Irvine Barclay Theatre for four performances in early June. The opening night pre-performance backstage reception on June 3rd saw 175 supporters gather to celebrate the success of the after-school organization that has delivered hope and opportunity to nearly 400 low-income youth annually for 27 years.



The Wooden Floor's Board Chair **Damien Jordan** welcomed the concert underwriters (who contributed \$282,000 to underwrite the concert) and guests and thanked Haskell & White for hosting the reception. Following tradition, each year the board of directors honors individuals who have been instrumental in the success of the company with a gift in their name. Jordan announced that \$6,000 had been raised to date and invited board member **Joan Beall** to reveal the identity of this year's recipient.

Beall said the couple being honored, **Dorothy "Dodo" Kennedy** and **Don Kennedy** were 20-year Wooden Floor supporters and "a true gift to this organization." Beall said the Kennedy's involvement included mentoring individual students in the Dance Partner Program and supporting alumni by underwriting College Scholarship Awards. She lauded Dodo's annual holiday gathering with fellow supporter **Marilyn McIntyre** that involved wrapping hundreds of gifts – one for each student, as well as Don's helping secure the location of The Wooden Floor's permanent home on Main Street in Santa Ana. "And, the Kennedy's gave one of the important lead gifts to the capital campaign to build the new facility," Beall finished. Although not present at the reception, the Kennedy's son, **Parker Kennedy**, accepted the honor, a commemorative scrapbook, for his parents.

Another opening night reception tradition, inviting several dancers to speak, saw 11-year-old **Lesley Teran** talk about The Wooden Floor being a place where she can relax and be herself. "I love to dance," she said, "and my parents, who said if I wanted to dance I had to keep my grades up, are pleased that my grades have improved." **Mario Chavez**, 18, talked about struggling in school five years ago and "going down the wrong path in my life," as he put it, before joining The Wooden Floor. "The Wooden Floor leads you on the path to be successful in life," Chavez said. "It changed my life." Chavez will be attending Santa Ana College as a full-time student this fall, with plans to transfer to a four-year university in the future.

The Wooden Floor's Executive and Artistic Director **Melanie Rios Glaser** said that the students in their programs are inspired and nurtured from the time they join. "They find their confidence by realizing that through hard work they can accomplish great things...on the dance floor and in the classroom." Rios Glaser credits the students success with The Wooden Floor's Academic Services Program, with its tutoring center and college prep classes, and its Family Services Program, which helps students overcome obstacles and hardships imposed by their low income status. "100% of our seniors graduate high school and, since 2005, 100% have gone on to enroll in college, most the first in their families to do so," she said. "We have 85 alumni in college. They are receiving four-year scholarships from The Wooden Floor, totaling \$4,000 to \$10,000 each."

*An Open Space* performances featured 125 performers in inspiring choreography by acclaimed choreographers **Mark Haim**, who revived his first commission for The Wooden Floor, titled "Los Angelitos," and **Nami Yamamoto**, who created "Flying with My Shooting Stars," with puppet artist **Matt Acheson** and the puppet Tony as collaborators in the dance. Rios Glaser's dance, "True or False: I Was Born in the Netherlands," was the final performance of the three crowd-pleasers.