

MODERN LUXURY

# RIVIERA

ORANGE COUNTY

The Fabulous  
**Emmy  
Rossum**

# BEST of O.C. 2013!

Who to Know, Where to Be and What to See

PLUS  
Feng Shui Chic  
A Project With Soul  
Gardens of Eden

Shimmer  
And All the

tap to  
**MIX**  
IT up the west coast's  
best cocktails



**TINA BORGATTA**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

## Editor's Note

### January 2013

The year was 2007, and I was on assignment at Saint Joseph Ballet in the heart of Santa Ana. I'd heard about a group of siblings—the Montalvo kids—who were living with their parents in a one-bedroom apartment in a tough part of town, where gang life was the norm for a great number of teens. Six out of eight kids in the family had either completed or were enrolled in Saint Joseph's after-school dance and academic programs. The two who were finished had each attended college, and one of them even served a tour of duty in Iraq. I wanted to find out more about the Montalvos—and about Saint Joseph Ballet. As it turned out, the Montalvo kids—all of whom proved to be talented dancers—were shining examples of the then-24-year-old program's success, guiding underprivileged kids toward a brighter future. That's because the ballet's programs weren't just focused on dance instruction. The team provided tutoring, family counseling, college admission advisement and a safe haven from the streets of Santa Ana—a 360-degree approach to development. And the program was working—94 percent of Saint Joseph's kids were graduating high school and going on to college.

A few things have changed since then—the name for one. The group is now called The Wooden Floor. And that 94 percent stat has grown. Since 2005, 100 percent of The Wooden Floor's kids have graduated high school and earned college admission. Now, as the nonprofit group enters its 30th anniversary year, it's enjoying some much-deserved recognition, which you'll read about in this month's issue. Writer William Lobdell caught

up with Melanie Ríos Glaser, the group's artistic director and co-CEO, for *Look Who's Talking*. She enjoys an international following, and she's creating continued magic at the ballet. It's an uplifting read, and a perfect fit for this month's theme, *The Best of O.C.*

This issue is all about the best of what's before us. Our feature story gives the inside scoop on what's new, who's hot and what's on the horizon in fashion, retail, home design and beauty. And we share our picks for the must-see stage productions and art exhibits that are coming our way. (Tip for fashionistas: Clear your calendar in late March. You'll know why when you read our feature.)

And because everyone wants to start the new year off with plenty of good chi, we introduce you to Carole Shashona, who's among the nation's best feng shui masters. She creates elegant rooms that foster positive energy. You can read all about her in Radar Design "Balancing Act." And in Radar Biz "Soul Mates," we profile Summer and Don Meek, who are channeling their own positive energy through their new apparel brand, which gives back to communities. Then there's Brooke Dietrich, the subject of our Radar Garden "Green Goddess" feature. She's creating outdoor yardscapes that are enviable works of art. And our Now section is packed with juicy nuggets, including my Q&A with A Restaurant partner Stan Frazier, who's proved he's not just a great musician, he's also a winning chef.

I'd say 2013 is off to a great start—perhaps one of the best. And I predict it'll be a hit for The Wooden Floor! [tborgatta@modernluxury.com](mailto:tborgatta@modernluxury.com)

# Leap of Faith

The Wooden Floor's Melanie Ríos Glaser is dancing in the spotlight—and so are her students. | By William Lobdell | Photography by John Gilhooley |



FLOORED Melanie Ríos Glaser changes lives through dance.

For three decades, The Wooden Floor has been one of O.C.'s best-kept secrets. But Melanie Ríos Glaser hopes her nonprofit's yearlong 30th anniversary celebration in 2013 will reveal to a wider audience "this hidden jewel of our community."

In case you haven't heard, Santa Ana's The Wooden Floor (formerly Saint Joseph Ballet) offers a dance-centered after-school program that helps low-income youth "strengthen self-esteem, self-discipline and a sense of accomplishment." Since 2005, 100 percent of the young artists have graduated from high school and pursued higher education—that's three times the national average for their socioeconomic peers. More than 130 alumni are currently enrolled in universities across the nation, like Cornell and UCLA, and 80 of those learners have received scholarships from The Wooden Floor, which every year reaches 6,000-plus students. It's no wonder the program earned an Innovator Award last year.

Glaser is the nonprofit's artistic director and recently added the title of co-chief executive officer to her name. She is the embodiment of what The Wooden Floor is all about. Born and raised in Guatemala, she's a Juilliard grad, a former Kennedy Center Fellow and Fulbright Scholar. She's known internationally for her contemporary and experimental dance choreography. Despite many professional options, the married mother of two remains devoted to The Wooden Floor because, she says, she's able to witness daily "the growth and transformation" of economically challenged children.

Take, for instance, the Valdovinos siblings. Prior to The Wooden Floor, no one in the family had attended college. But now, Blanca is in her second year of medical school. Brother Robert received his bachelor's and plans to earn a medical degree. Youngest brother Bryan will graduate from the program this year. Kind of makes you want to dance.

## Glaser's Hots

*Good prosciutto, downtown Santa Ana, Guatemala, Playmobil, Stravinsky*

## Glaser's Nots

*Another Nutcracker ballet, homophobia, super-high heels, funding cuts to the arts in schools*