



Changing the World

by Lisa Grajewski, Psy.D.
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There are no ugly ducklings in Idan Cohen and Noa Shiloh's version of Swan Lake. As a matter of fact, "The Swan Lake Fusion," a collaboration between the Department of Dance of UCI's Claire Trevor School of the Arts and Israel is using the beauty of dance to cross cultural boundaries. The program fuses a contemporary, Israeli-influenced version (created by Cohen), an Asian / Chinese inspired version by one of UCI's assistant professors in the dance department,

Tong Wang, and a traditional, European interpretation by Department of Dance lecturer Diane Diefenderfer.

But Shiloh, a solo dancer who has created and performed with Israel's major dance companies and taught dance on three continents, went beyond the stage and, reached out to The Wooden Floor in Santa Ana. In March, Shiloh taught two master classes at the school and brought a new approach to the school. The Wooden Floor, which provides a 10-year journey for low income and Latino youth, begins in the third grade and continues through graduation. Combining academics, college preparation and social services, Wooden Floor provides

wrap-around services in addition to dance.

"[Dancers] start out at two days a week, but end up [attending] four to six days a week," says Melanie Rios Glaser, Artistic and Co-CEO. Bringing Shiloh to the school created an opportunity that provided exposure to forward-thinking artists, and is the reason, says Glaser, "We are seeing a change in the under-served youth we serve."

The school will mark its own 10-year journey this year by celebrating 100 percent of Wooden Floor students graduating high school and enrolling in college. Out performing their peers three-fold, students are part of a ripple effect that leads to leadership and success.