



The Wooden Floor at Irvine Barclay Theatre



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by Benn Widdey

For its 32nd annual end-of-year dance concert, The Wooden Floor — Santa Ana’s multi-award-winning after-school program for low-income youth — continues its recent tradition of bringing in fresh choreographic ideas from New York City’s top envelope-pushing dance makers. Collaborating with the 375 young performers this year in “As light comes through” are choreographers Faye Driscoll, John Heginbotham and the organization’s Artistic Director and Co-CEO Melanie Rios Glaser. Four performances begin this Thursday, May 28, at 8 p.m. and repeat Friday and Saturday, May 29 and 30, at the same time, with an additional matinee on Saturday at 2:30 p.m. All performances are at the Irvine Barclay Theatre.

Focused dramatically on the students achieving excellence in the classroom, as well as confidence-building experience on the stage, this comprehensive approach addresses learners at an early age, and adult and older student mentors stay connected to their proteges throughout their primary and secondary years. The Wooden Floor has a 100 percent rate of graduation from high school on time and matriculation into higher education.

But what’s really exciting about this show is that the artists involved are all of the highest caliber in their fields — dance, music, lighting, costumes. The resulting dances are not narrative stories as in a ballet recital, or youthful virtuosic highlights to make moms and dads happy, but are thought-provoking assemblages of movement, image, community, shared decision-making and personal expression. There probably won’t be tutus, girls will lift boys as much as boys will lift girls, big kids may dance next to kids 10 years their junior, the music will be of-the-moment, and there may even be episodes where the performers don’t know what will happen next. They’ve been meticulously rehearsed to know when and where to be and what to do, but they’ve also been schooled to deal expertly with silence, wild and crazy rhythms, and spontaneously created choices (yes, George and Martha, that’s called “improvisation”).

Given the unique and original voices of the chosen choreographers, one never knows what to expect. Definitely worth the drive down into the OC.