

DECEMBER 18, 2025

The Music Center Names Celesta M. Billeci as New Principal Advisor for Dance Season Programming

LOS ANGELES (December 18, 2025) - The Music Center announced today that **Celesta M. Billeci**, the lauded Miller McCune executive director emerita of the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) Arts & Lectures, will join L.A.'s performing arts center as principal strategic dance advisor for the institution's **Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center** series. Billeci, who will work closely with The Music Center President & CEO Rachel S. Moore, succeeds TMC Arts Senior Advisor, Dance Presentations Martin Wechsler, who will retire at the end of 2025.



In her new role, Billeci will further enhance The Music Center's longstanding commitment to present the highest caliber of dance experiences in Los Angeles. She recently concluded a distinguished tenure at UCSB Arts & Lectures, where she served as the longest-standing director in the organization's 65-year history. Under her leadership, UCSB Arts & Lectures grew from a modest campus-focused series into a nationally respected presenting powerhouse; Billeci expanded its annual budget from under \$1 million to more than \$10 million and helped elevate Santa Barbara into a top destination for superb performing arts programming.

"Celesta is not only one of the most respected performing arts leaders and curators in the nation, but also someone I have known from a very young age. We grew up together in Sacramento's dance community, training at the same ballet studio, and have admired each other's accomplishments and success in bringing unforgettable dance experiences to countless audiences in Southern California. For more than two decades, Celesta's artistic vision shaped the trajectory of concert dance presentation at UCSB Arts & Lectures and the West Coast," said **Rachel S. Moore**, president and CEO of The Music Center. "Her vast knowledge of and deep relationships with dance companies and choreographers around the world, paired with her impeccable eye for quality, make her an ideal and trusted partner. Together, we will continue to advance The Music Center's role as the premier home for dance in Los Angeles."

At UCSB, Billeci reimagined the campus as a coveted stop for major American and international dance companies, including Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ballet Preljocaj, Batsheva Dance Company, Cloud Gate Dance Theater of Taiwan, Dorrance Dance, Lyon Opera Ballet, Martha Graham Dance Company, and New York City Ballet Moves. Her influence is recognized across the field. Billeci is the 2025 recipient of the Tim Wilson Distinguished Service Award, honoring her outstanding impact on the performing arts presenting community in the West. Prior to UCSB, Billeci worked for more than 10 years at the UCLA Center for the Performing Arts (now known as the UCLA Center for the Art of Performance).

Billeci also received the Santa Barbara County 2024 Leadership in Arts Individual Award, reflecting her transformational expansion of community-based cultural initiatives, including *Viva el Arte de Santa Barbara!*, which shared the rich heritage of Latin America with thousands of local students and community members, and *Access for All*, providing arts learning experiences for K-12 students. In addition to elevating Santa Barbara's cultural presence, Billeci forged impactful partnerships with performing arts institutions nationwide, such as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center and Cal Performances, advancing significant artistic commissions and premieres across the dance and music arenas.

"I am honored to collaborate with The Music Center, a world-class performing arts institution I have admired throughout my career," said **Celesta M. Billeci**. "Helping to expand and curate an acclaimed dance season for an organization with a deep commitment to artistic excellence, civic engagement, arts education and cultural vibrancy is an extraordinary opportunity. I look forward to working with The Music Center team and especially with my longtime friend Rachel, who is known internationally for her clear and ambitious vision. We share a passion for the dance field and a love for arts education, and we are excited to bring today's most compelling and distinguished dance works to L.A. audiences!"

Billeci holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. She and her husband John Hajda live in Santa Barbara; their son Alexander is a first-year student at Cornell University.

For more information about The Music Center, visit musiccenter.org

ABOUT THE MUSIC CENTER

As L.A.'s performing arts center, The Music Center convenes artists, communities and ideas with the goal of deepening the cultural lives of every resident in Los Angeles County. The \$80 million non-profit performing arts organization has two divisions: TMC Arts and TMC Ops. TMC Arts, The Music Center's programming engine, provides year-round programming inside The Music Center's four theatres, on Jerry Moss Plaza, outside at Gloria Molina Grand Park--a 12-acre adjacent green space--in schools and other locations all over Los Angeles County. TMC Arts presents world-class dance with *Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center*, free and low-cost public concerts and events, live and digital K-12 arts education programs, workshops, performances, interactive experiences and special events. TMC Ops manages the theatres, the Plaza and Gloria Molina Grand Park, which comprise \$3 billion in county assets, on behalf of the County of Los Angeles. The Music Center is also home to four renowned resident companies--Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles Master Chorale, LA Opera and LA Phil. For more information, visit musiccenter.org. Follow The Music Center on social media @MusicCenterLA.

ABOUT GLORYA KAUFMAN PRESENTS DANCE AT THE MUSIC CENTER

Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center, a TMC Arts program, is one of the leading presenters of dance on the West Coast. The celebrated series offers significant works by prestigious ballet and contemporary dance artists from around the world. Now in its 23rd year, *Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center* is a powerful force, bringing works by today's most influential companies and choreographers to audiences in Los Angeles. Performances are complemented by special experiences for both ticket buyers and the public with opportunities to learn more about the choreography and the themes explored, including panels, master classes, dance film festivals, interactive experiences and more. The 23rd season of *Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center* is generously supported by Glorya Kaufman Foundation, Center Dance Arts, Dorothy B. Chandler Program Fund and Elisabeth Katte Harris.

###

© Music Center. All Rights Reserved.