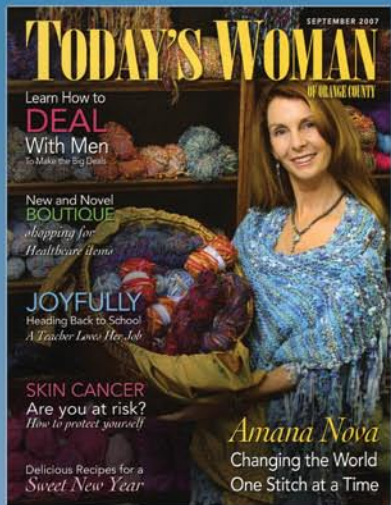


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## *A Passion* FOR THE DANCE

*by Kori Lee Garner*

Irvine Valley College dance professor Marie de la Palme has a reputation with dancers, critics and audiences as a brilliant choreographer. How could she not...dance is her passion.

"Dance is an adventure," says de la Palme. "It is unifying, exciting and creates magic when it is from the heart and the soul. It's all about good choreography and challenging the dancer to create an expressive dialogue with the audience."

Taught to dance in the classical Russian tradition in her hometown of Grenoble, France, de la Palme's eclectic professional experience ranges from classical ballet to vertical wall dancing. After receiving a scholarship that allowed her to come to the U.S. as a dance student, she interned in New York as a soloist with the contemporary Alvin Ailey Workshop Company, among others, eventually moving into more commercial dancing. She participated in numerous MTV videos and television commercials as well as choreographing a Las Vegas industrial production for Lucent Technologies.

Her award-winning choreography has earned its share of critical praise. Lewis Segal of the Los Angeles Times called her

signature piece, *Le Coeur Illuminé*, "an unmitigated triumph, a brilliant example of theatricality and movement..." and named another piece, *The Door*, "one of the big hits of the evening." Joseph Feinstein of *showmag.com* said of de la Palme's *The Cage*, "This dance...was breathtaking."

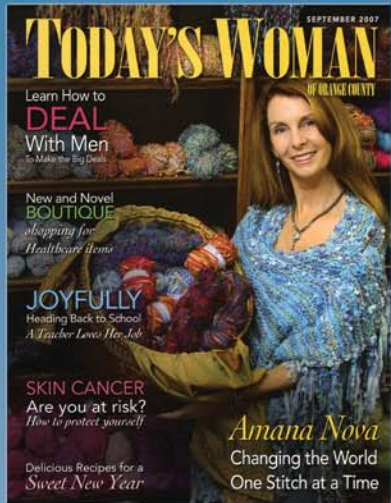
Professor de la Palme started teaching at Irvine Valley College in 2000. She taught there for two years, then left to pursue other projects, but recently returned to IVC as a dance instructor and choreographer.

Ted Weatherford, head of the Dance Department at Irvine Valley College, invited de la Palme to create a new "Performing Dance Ensemble" which would be housed in the recently constructed and architecturally significant Performing Arts Center on campus. The Center is due to open in the fall of 2007.

The Dance Ensemble is meant to appeal to advanced students and is open by audition or special invitation only. While it will be ballet-based, it will feature a more modern, contemporary vocabulary.

"This is ballet for the 21st Century," de la Palme says

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*Marie de La Palme*

emphatically. "I want to challenge my students both technically and emotionally.

Dance tells a story, so they need to delve deep inside themselves. They need to be as real as they can be. I want my students to go to the center and relate to their audiences with enormous honesty—I love to take dancers there with my choreography."

"Finding someone who can inspire you to learn and to become a better teacher is a great gift," says Pili Doheny, assistant director of the Maple Conservatory of Dance in Irvine. "Marie's attitude toward all of her students is as passionate and caring as if she is instructing a class of professionals. Ballet is an art form that can seem so distant for so many, and she makes it "user friendly." Her care and attention to detail is very clear, thoughtful and methodical."

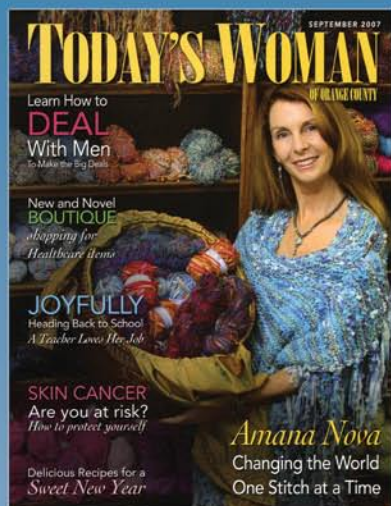
Student Jennifer Pratt agrees. "Marie teaches and choreographs the same way she lives her everyday life—with passion. Marie's deep study and understanding of the body and mind has taught me to work from a different place, an inner place. But more importantly, she has taught me to dance with intention and meaning.

She is a beautiful person inside and out, and it has been a pleasure having her in my life."

Professor de la Palme says she wants the Ensemble to appeal to two disparate sets of students. She hopes to reach out to talented high school students who have dance experience and provide a "stop along the way" for them as they prepare to go on to four-year universities or professional dance schools. She'd also like to work with



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experienced dancers who want to continue their careers after they retire—dancers who “don’t want to hang up the toe shoes just yet.” Her plan is to invite one prominent Orange County choreographer to work with the Ensemble each year, and to challenge the Ensemble dancers with a complex, engaging repertoire.

She also plans to invite professional dancers to work with the Ensemble. She says that a co-mingling of professionals with aspiring intermediate and advanced students, as well as the chance to work with MOTION TRIBE, her own professional dance company, will result in an exciting, collaborative creative process.

A third goal is to develop a local audience for the Ensemble’s work. “The question is how do we build an audience for dance that will compete with Bruce Willis and Disneyland?” asks de la Palme. “I want to create an inviting, quality program that will appeal to a wide audience. We need an exciting venue, and that’s why the new Performing Arts Center at IVC will be so special. To present quality programs you need a quality environment, and that’s what the new PAC is going to provide.”

When discussing the future, de la Palme gives a very Gallic shrug and says with a smile, “I’m afraid I don’t have a five-year plan. Life is too unpredictable. I know I would like to inspire young dancers, give older dancers a place to express themselves, and offer the community dance programs that are entertaining food for the heart and soul. I know that is a very tall order.” ■

## Orange County's *Newest Performing Arts Venue*

When Irvine Valley College’s state-of-the-art \$32 million Performing Arts Center opens this fall, it will offer students and the community a comprehensive learning environment where dance, music and theatre programs will take place.

The physical heart of the 53,200 square-foot facility will be a 400-seat main theatre with a single-level balcony that wraps around the orchestra pit, creating a close audience experience. The proscenium stage with an orchestra pit capable of rising to stage level will accommodate large performances of all kinds. The Black Box (Studio Theatre) will provide a more intimate setting for plays and small concerts with seating for 200.

The college is proud that the Performing Arts Center will not only be a centerpiece for IVC’s dance, music, and theatre departments but also will also provide the community with a convenient and user-friendly venue to host visiting artists and feature performances. The Performing Arts Center will be fully accessible to persons with disabilities, including elevator service from the orchestra pit to the balcony and to an upper technical gallery.

IVC will host a season of “gala” performances to celebrate the opening of the Performing Arts Center starting in late Fall of 2007.

For more information on the PAC and a calendar of upcoming events, including dance performances by Marie de la Palme’s students, please visit the PAC website at [www.ivcperformingarts.org](http://www.ivcperformingarts.org).