



Photo of Laurel Dalley Smith, So Young An, Natasha M. Diamond-Walker and Lloyd Knight in Lil Buck's *Lamentation Variation*. Photo by Melissa Sherwood

BWW Review: Celebrating 10 Years of LamVar10 with the MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY

Caryn Cooper Oct. 20, 2017

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"Martha Graham and her radical choreography have made such a huge contribution to the dance world here in the US and across the globe. So many dancers have studied and have been influenced by her and her work."

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the *Lamentation Variations* project- LamVar10: A Festival for New Work. Since its founding in 2007 by Graham Company Artistic Director Janet Eilber, the company has commissioned some of today's most noteworthy choreographers to create new works inspired by Graham's signature solo, *Lamentation*, originally created in 1930, on dancers of the company. These choreographers have included Lar Lubovitch, Michelle Dorrance, and Doug Varone, among others.

Over the past month, the Graham Company provided audiences around the world opportunities to watch rarely seen variations via live-streamed performances, rehearsals, and limited-released digital links. This celebration culminated in a two-night NEW@Graham engagement at the Martha Graham Studio Theater. Each evening featured five different variations, with a discussion with some of the artists who have created variations over the years.

I had the opportunity to see the program on opening night on October 17, 2017 at the Martha Graham Studio Theater in Manhattan.

The evening started with a screening of Graham herself performing her solo, *Lamentations*. I appreciated being able to see her do the piece, first because it is such a quintessential piece in American modern dance, but to also see how the following choreographers were inspired by her work. If you are not familiar with this piece, it features a solo dancer sitting on a box in what looks like a bed sheet, doing the entire dance on the box featuring different elements such as long extensions, tilts, and rocking movements.

The first variation was choreographed by Kyle Abraham. He did a duet for two men with an essence of many sharp movements as opposed to working with just one dancer. The second variation was a work in progress piece by Gwen Welliver, set to premiere on the company's tour in February 2018. This work captured the unique arms, long arm extensions, and dramatic movements. The third variation, by Lil Buck, was a contemporary piece fused with some street dance. Attention was given to the arms and hands, along with quick and sharp movements. <

The fourth variation by Bulareyaung Pagarlava had a voiceover of Martha talking about her piece *Lamentations*, discussing the power dance has to speak to us as audience members. The choreography featured the aspects of the tilts and rocking. The fifth and final variation of the night was by Larry Keigwin. He used the full company in this piece with special attention given to the hands while also featuring tilts and rocking movements.

This was truly a fascinating event! Martha Graham and her radical choreography have made such a huge contribution to the dance world here in the US and across the globe. So many dancers have studied and have been influenced by her and her work. And this festival shows just how much her work still has an impact on dance today.

I applaud Artistic Director Janet Eilber for creating this festival and continuing the legacy of Martha Graham for generations to come. This series will continue with the premiere of the complete variation by Welliver in 2018, followed by a new variation by the Paris Opera Ballet in 2019. Be sure to keep an eye out for the company as they will be touring to cities in various places such as Florida, New York, Taiwan, Holland, Germany, and Quebec. The company will also continue its studio series events, giving audiences an intimate opportunity to view up close and personal showings of Graham's work.

For more information on their tours, studio series events, or to support the work of the company, please visit their website at www.marthagraham.org.