



**Martha Graham Dance Company's Studio Series presents a
Merce Cunningham and Martha Graham Technique Comparison
February 4–5, 2020**

New York, NY, January 7, 2020 – Martha Graham Dance Company's Studio Series continues with CunninGraham, a Merce Cunningham and Martha Graham technique comparison and discussion featuring Graham 2 and Cunningham Workshop participants, on Tuesday and Wednesday, February 4–5, at 7pm, at the Martha Graham Studio Theater.

Merce Cunningham began his career in Martha Graham's company. Was his new style a complete revolt from Graham or is there more in common between these two geniuses than we think? This two-night-only event will feature a comparison of the two physical systems—the classroom techniques—they invented to serve their visions for the stage. The evening will include technique demonstrations and excerpts from a Cunningham work and a Graham work. CunninGraham is organized by Janet Eilber and Virginie Mécène (Graham), and Jennifer Goggans and Daniel Madoff (Cunningham).

Tickets for CunninGraham are \$25 (general) and \$15 (students) and can be purchased by phone at 212-229-9200, or online at www.marthagraham.org/studioseries. The Martha Graham Studio Theater is located at 55 Bethune Street, 11th floor, in Manhattan.

Merce Cunningham (April 16, 1919–July 26, 2009) is widely considered to be one of the most important choreographers of all time. His approach to performance was groundbreaking in its ideological simplicity and physical complexity: he applied the idea that “a thing is just that thing” to choreography, embracing the notion that “if the dancer dances, everything is there.”

Cunningham was born in Centralia, Washington, and attended the Cornish School in Seattle. There, he was introduced to the work of Martha Graham (he would later have a six year tenure as a soloist with her company) and met John Cage, who would become the greatest influence on his practice, his closest collaborator, and his life partner until Cage's death in 1992. In 1948, Cunningham and Cage began a relationship with the famed experimental institution Black Mountain College, where Cunningham first formed a dance company to explore his convention-breaking ideas. The Merce Cunningham Dance Company, formed in 1953 (originally called Merce Cunningham and Dance Company), would remain in continuous operation until 2011, with Cunningham as Artistic Director until his death in 2009. Over the course of his career, Cunningham choreographed 180 dances and over 700 Events.

Across his 70-year career, Cunningham proposed a number of radical innovations to how movement and choreography are understood, and sought to find new ways to integrate technology and dance. With long-term collaborations with artists like Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Charles Atlas, and Elliot Caplan, Cunningham's sphere of influence also extended deep into the visual arts world. Cunningham earned some of the highest honors bestowed in the arts, and his dances have been performed by groups including the Paris Opera Ballet, New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, White Oak Dance Project, the Lyon Opera Ballet, Ballett am Rhein, and London's Rambert.

Through the Merce Cunningham Trust, his vision lives on, regenerated time and time again through new bodies and minds.

Martha Graham (May 11, 1894–April 1, 1991) has had a deep and lasting impact on American art and culture. She single-handedly defined contemporary dance as a uniquely American art form, which the nation has in turn shared with the world. Crossing artistic boundaries, she collaborated with and commissioned work from the leading visual artists, musicians, and designers of her day, including sculptor Isamu Noguchi and composers Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, and Gian Carlo Menotti. Graham's groundbreaking style grew from her experimentation with the elemental movements of contraction and release. By focusing on the basic activities of the human form, she enlivened the body with raw, electric emotion. The sharp, angular, and direct movements of her technique were a dramatic departure from the predominant style of the time.

Graham influenced generations of choreographers that included Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, and Twyla Tharp, altering the scope of dance. Classical ballet dancers Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev, and Mikhail Baryshnikov sought her out to broaden their artistry. Artists of all genres were eager to study and work with Graham—she taught actors including Bette Davis, Kirk Douglas, Madonna, Liza Minnelli, Gregory Peck, Tony Randall, Eli Wallach, Anne Jackson, and Joanne Woodward to utilize their bodies as expressive instruments.

During her long and illustrious career, Graham created 181 dance compositions. During the Bicentennial she was granted the United States' highest civilian honor, The Medal of Freedom. In 1998, *TIME* Magazine named her the "Dancer of the Century." The first dancer to perform at the White House and to act as a cultural ambassador abroad, she captured the spirit of a nation. "No artist is ahead of his time," she said. "He is his time. It is just that the others are behind the time."

About Martha Graham Dance Company

The Martha Graham Dance Company has been a world leader in the evolving art form of modern dance since its founding in 1926. Today, the Company is embracing a new programming vision that showcases masterpieces by Graham alongside newly commissioned works by contemporary artists. With programs that offer a rich thematic narrative, the Company creates new platforms for contemporary dance and multiple points of access for audiences.

Since its inception, the Martha Graham Dance Company has received international acclaim from audiences in more than 50 countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The Company has performed at the Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, the Paris Opera House, Covent Garden, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, as well as at the base of the Great Pyramids in Egypt and in the ancient Herod Atticus Theatre on the Acropolis in Athens. In addition, the Company has also produced several award-winning films broadcast on PBS and around the world.

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Digital photos are available on request.