

# GRAHAM100

## **Martha Graham Dance Company Announces GRAHAM100, A Three-Season Celebration of the Company's 100th Anniversary**

New York, NY (June 7, 2023) – The **Martha Graham Dance Company** announces **GRAHAM100—The First and The Future**, a three-season 100th anniversary celebration of **Martha Graham's** work and legacy to begin September 2023 and continue throughout 2026.

Known as one of the most influential forces of the 20th century, Martha Graham presented her first performance with a supporting group of dancers on April 18, 1926. Since that date, considered to be the launch of the Martha Graham Dance Company, Graham's groundbreaking and uniquely American style of dance has influenced generations of artists and continues to captivate audiences worldwide. To celebrate its Centennial, the Company is organizing an extensive series of programs and events exploring the diversity and depth of Graham's extraordinary artistic legacy. GRAHAM100 will feature performances, new productions, exhibitions, film screenings, publications, discussions, and educational activities that build on the Company's legacy of innovation and its present and future vision based on this incomparable legacy.

**Janet Eilber, Artistic Director, Martha Graham Dance Company**, says: "We are proud to be the oldest dance company in the United States but have discovered that a celebration encompassing 100 years of artistic innovation informed by vast social, political, and technological change, needs a broader canvas than one season can provide! Three seasons will allow us to curate and organize this unmatched American legacy in ways that highlight not only the Company's timeline of firsts and its historic impact but perhaps more importantly, its continuing relevance and influence."

**Executive Director LaRue Allen** says: "The 100th anniversary of the Martha Graham Dance Company is more than a red-letter day for Graham—the entire field of American modern dance has reason to celebrate. In an art form known for its ephemeral nature, the continuing success of the Graham Company shows that modern dance can be sustained, that it can evolve and remain relevant to successive generations."

The Company will present three New York City seasons and tour internationally during the anniversary. Each season will feature Graham masterworks along with works by some of today's most exciting contemporary choreographers. Several programs and initiatives will span all three seasons illuminating the through-line from Martha Graham's revolutionary break with 19th-century dance to the current Company's 21st-century vision. The growing list includes a documentary in development with PBS, a new book of photography, an exhibition at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, new recordings of the great scores written for Graham, an annual opera collaboration, a national lesson plan based on a Graham classic, and creative partnerships and licensing by professional companies and universities worldwide.

### **The First Season:**

The **2023–24 season, *American Legacies***, will focus on Martha Graham's social activism, Americana, modernism, and her artistic collaborators. Main stage performances will include Graham classics such as *Appalachian Spring* (1944), *Dark Meadow* (1946), and *Maple Leaf Rag* (1990). The diversity of

Graham's collaborators on these works of Americana will be central to conversations convened to discuss their origins and the changing ways they are viewed by contemporary audiences.

New commissions will extend the exploration of American themes with two additions to the repertory. The Company will present a brand-new production of **Agnes DeMille's** 1942 classic, *Rodeo*, with Aaron Copland's iconic score reorchestrated for a six-piece bluegrass ensemble by the multi-instrumentalist and composer/arranger **Gabe Witcher**, opening conversations about the Black origins of that musical form. The work is co-commissioned by **The Soraya** at California State University, Northridge, and will premiere there on **September 30, 2023**—the launch of GRAHAM100. A longtime creative partner and supporter, The Soraya will collaborate with the Company on all three anniversary seasons.

A new work for the Company by **Jamar Roberts**, who has created works for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, San Francisco Ballet, and others, with a commissioned score by Grammy-winning composer **Rhiannon Giddens**, will be presented in tandem with *Rodeo* on tour and as part of the Company's New York season at **NY City Center, April 17–24, 2024**.

*Rodeo* and the new work by Jamar Roberts are co-commissioned by the 92nd Street Y as part of its 150th anniversary celebration, and in honor and continued support of Martha Graham's rich 92NY legacy. The Y will be partnering with the Company on events that expand our understanding of American dance and music, including panel conversations about iconic works of 20th-century dance and how we view them today.

**MetLiveArts** at the **Metropolitan Museum of Art** will launch its series this fall with performances of some of Graham's most powerful solos from the 1930s. The works will be presented throughout the galleries in dialogue with the exhibition *Art for the Millions: American Culture and Politics in the 1930s*. Works include *Lamentation* (1930), *Ekstasis* (1933), *Spectre-1914* (1936), *Immediate Tragedy* (1937), and *Deep Song* (1937).

The Company's touring throughout 2023–24 includes performances in 13 cities across the U.S. and engagements in Spain, Italy, and Germany. The Company's popular Studio Series, which offers audiences a behind-the-scenes look at the work of the Company in the intimate Martha Graham Studio Theater, will return this fall.

### **Second and Third Seasons:**

GRAHAM100 continues in **2024–25** curated under the theme, ***Dances of the Mind***, focusing on Graham's psychological works, multifaceted women characters, and longtime artistic partnership with renowned visual artist **Isamu Noguchi**. Works to be presented—including *Phaedra* (1962), *Errand into the Maze* (1947), and *Herodiade* (1944)—foreground Graham's command of complex ideas illustrated in movement and augmented with modernist sets and original scores. Graham's long and fruitful collaboration with Noguchi will be explored on stage and in audience engagement activities.

The **2025–26** season, aligned with the national celebration America250, is titled ***The Masterpieces***. Curated around the question "What is an American?" from Graham's 1939 work *American Document*, the season focuses on Graham's greatest works including *Cave of the Heart* (1946), *Night Journey* (1947), *Chronicle* (1936), and *Primitive Mysteries* (1931), and will include commissions and the culmination of many of the ongoing projects.

### **Other GRAHAM100 highlights:**

Two programs that support commissions by professional companies and universities will be offered. The international ***Lamentations Variations Project*** invites organizations to commission new *Lamentation Variations*, short dances inspired by Graham's iconic 1930 solo *Lamentation*, for their dancers. A digital showcase of these Graham-inspired selections will be part of the three-year celebration. ***GrahamEverywhere*** extends an invitation to dance groups performing at many levels to

license Graham classics. The resulting performances will be presented in a digital festival hosted by the Company.

The Company is also producing a national lesson plan for teachers, ***Our Own American Document***, created by education specialist **Cynthia Stanley**. This instruction guide, supported by in-person and online professional development, leads students through the process of creating a dance based on *American Document*, choreographed by Graham in 1939. Little remains of the original choreography, but the themes resonate anew with today's conversations about race, gender, nationalism, and how we see ourselves and our personal legacies as part of the evolving American story.

A documentary about the current Graham Company is in development with seven-time Emmy Award-winning documentarian **Peter Schnall** and **Partisan Pictures** with initial production support from **PBS**. The documentary team has begun filming and is joining the Company on tour in the coming season. The film is slated to premiere in the 2025–26 season.

**The Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York Public Library** has announced that the 2023–24 cycle of the Dance Research Fellowship will be dedicated to Martha Graham, with six awardees receiving funding to investigate various aspects of the Graham legacy and explore the recently acquired Graham archives. The Dance Division will schedule free programming throughout the anniversary period and is planning a comprehensive Graham exhibition at the Library for the Performing Arts in 2026.

A three-season partnership between the Company and **Long Beach Opera** explores a deeper connection between dance and opera. These projects will feature Graham dancers and draw on the Graham physical vocabulary in new ways. As a precursor, the first work, *The Feast*, with music of G.F. Handel based on his seldom-staged opera *Alessandro* and starring superstar countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński was presented in May 2023.

The Company's longtime partner, the music ensemble **Wild Up** and conductor **Christopher Roundtree**, are creating new recordings of many of the musical scores written for Graham. Commissioned by The Soraya, these state-of-the-art recordings will be released throughout the three seasons of GRAHAM100.

A new coffee table book from Deborah Ory and Ken Browar, known as **NYC Dance Project**, will be published by Black Dog & Leventhal and will feature the current Graham dancers along with archival photos from the past 100 years. It will be released in fall 2025.

An updated schedule of programs, partnerships, and engagements will be announced.

Digital images are available [here](#).

### **About Martha Graham**

Martha Graham (1894–1991) is recognized as a primal artistic force of the 20th century, alongside James Joyce, Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, and Frank Lloyd Wright. *TIME* magazine named Martha Graham “Dancer of the Century,” and *People* magazine named her among the female “Icons of the Century.” The diversity and depth of her extraordinary artistic legacy, often compared to Stanislavsky's Art Theatre in Moscow and the Grand Kabuki Theatre of Japan, is perpetuated in performance by the Martha Graham Dance Company and Graham 2, and by the students of the Martha Graham School.

In 1926, Martha Graham founded her dance company and school while living and working out of a tiny Carnegie Hall studio in midtown Manhattan. In developing her technique, Graham experimented endlessly with basic human movement, beginning with the elemental forms of contraction and release. Using those principles as the foundation, she built a movement vocabulary that would “increase the emotional activity of the dancer's body.” With this pioneering technique, which has been compared to ballet in its scope and magnitude, Graham's 181 ballets expose the depths of human emotion through movements that are sharp, angular, jagged, and direct.

As complex as she was prolific, Graham's approach not only revolutionized the art form of dance with an innovative physical vocabulary, she expanded the scope of the art form by rooting works in contemporary social, political, psychological, and sexual contexts, deepening their impact and resonance. Graham's ballets were inspired by a wide variety of sources, including modern painting, the American frontier, religious ceremonies of Native Americans, and Greek mythology. Many of her most important roles portray great women of history and mythology: Clytemnestra, Jocasta, Medea, Phaedra, Joan of Arc, and Emily Dickinson.

As an artist, Martha Graham conceived each new work in its entirety—dance, costumes, and music. During her 70 years of creating dances, she collaborated with such artists as sculptor Isamu Noguchi; actor and director John Houseman; fashion designers Halston, Donna Karan, and Calvin Klein; and renowned composers including Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, Norman Dello Joio, Louis Horst (her mentor), Gian Carlo Menotti, William Schuman, and Carlos Surinach.

Always a fertile ground for experimentation, Martha Graham and her Company have been an unparalleled resource in nurturing many leading choreographers and dancers of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Jacquelyn Buglisi, Merce Cunningham, Sir Robert Cohan, Erick Hawkins, Pearl Lang, Donald McKayle, Elisa Monte, Anna Sokolow, Paul Taylor, and Twyla Tharp. She created roles for classical ballet stars such as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Margot Fonteyn, and Rudolf Nureyev, welcoming them as guests into her Company. In charge of movement and dance at The Neighborhood Playhouse, she taught actors such as Bette Davis, Kirk Douglas, Anne Jackson, Madonna, Liza Minnelli, Gregory Peck, Tony Randall, and Joanne Woodward how to use the body as an expressive instrument.

Martha Graham's uniquely American vision and creative genius earned her numerous honors and awards, such as The Laurel Leaf of American Composers Alliance in 1959 for her service to music. Her colleagues in theater, the members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local One, voted her the recipient of the 1986 Local One Centennial Award for Dance, not to be awarded for another 100 years. In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford bestowed upon Martha Graham the United States' highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and declared her a "national treasure," making her the first dancer and choreographer to receive this recognition. Graham received another presidential honor when President Ronald Reagan named her among the first recipients of the United States National Medal of Arts in 1985.

### **About the Martha Graham Dance Company**

The Martha Graham Dance Company has been a leader in the evolving art form of modern dance since its founding in 1926. It is both the oldest dance company in the United States and the oldest integrated dance company.

Today, the Company is embracing a new programming vision that showcases masterpieces by Graham alongside newly commissioned works by contemporary artists. With programs that unite the work of choreographers across time within a rich historical and thematic narrative, the Company is actively working to create 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 House, 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 Odeon of Herodes Atticus theater on the Acropolis in Athens. In addition, the Company has also produced several award-winning films broadcast on PBS and around the world.

Though Martha Graham herself is the best-known alumna of her company, the Company has provided a training ground for some of modern dance's most celebrated performers and choreographers. Former members of the Company include Merce Cunningham, Erick Hawkins, Paul Taylor, John Butler and

Glen Tetley. Celebrities who have joined the Company in performance include Mikhail Baryshnikov, Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev, Maya Plisetskaya, Tiler Peck, Misty Copeland, Herman Cornejo, and Aurelie Dupont.

In recent years, the Company has challenged expectations and experimented with a wide range of offerings beyond its main stage performances. It has created a series of intimate in-studio events, forged unusual creative partnerships with the likes of SITI Company, Performa, the New Museum, Barney's, and the Greek Theater Festival in Siracusa, Italy (to name a few); created substantial digital offerings with Google Arts and Culture, YouTube, and Cennarium; and created a model for reaching new audiences through social media. The astonishing list of artists who have created works for the Graham dancers in the last decade reads like a catalog of must-see choreographers: Kyle Abraham, Aszure Barton, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Lucinda Childs, Marie Chouinard, Michelle Dorrance, Nacho Duato, Mats Ek, Andonis Foniadakis, Liz Gerring, Larry Keigwin, Michael Kliën, Pontus Lidberg, Lil Buck, Lar Lubovitch, Josie Moseley, Richard Move, Bulareyaung Pagarlava, Annie-B Parson, Yvonne Rainer, Sonya Tayeh, Doug Varone, Luca Vegetti, Gwen Welliver, and Robert Wilson.

The current Company dancers hail from around the world and, while always grounded in their Graham core training, can also slip into the style of contemporary choreographers like a second skin, bringing technical brilliance and artistic nuance to all they do—from brand-new works to Graham classics and pieces from early pioneers such as Isadora Duncan, Jane Dudley, Anna Sokolow, and Mary Wigman. "Some of the most skilled and powerful dancers you can ever hope to see," according to *The Washington Post*. "One of the great companies of the world," says *The New York Times*, while the *Los Angeles Times* notes, "They seem able to do anything, and to make it look easy as well as poetic."

For more information about the Company, visit [www.marthagraham.org](http://www.marthagraham.org).

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