

GRAHAM100

100 YEARS OF THE MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY 1926 - 2026



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MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY

ABOUT THE 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.

In recent years, the Company has challenged expectations and experimented with a wide range of offerings beyond its mainstage performances. It has created a series of intimate in-studio events, forged unusual creative partnerships with the likes of Christian Dior, SITI Company, Performa, the New Museum, Barney's, and Siracusa's Greek Theater Festival (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, Baye & Asa, 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, Jamar Roberts, Sonya Tayeh, Doug Varone, Luca Vegetti, Gwen Welliver, and Robert Wilson.

The current Company dancers hail from around the world and, while 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. **"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 *Los Angeles Times* notes, **"They seem able to do anything, and to make it look easy as well as poetic."**



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ABOUT MARTHA GRAHAM

Martha Graham's revolutionary vision and artistic mastery has had a deep and lasting impact on American art and culture. Her bold use of socially infused subjects and emotionally charged performances single-handedly defined contemporary dance as a uniquely American art form, which the nation has in turn shared with the world.

Graham's creativity crossed artistic boundaries and embraced every artistic genre. She collaborated with and commissioned work from the leading visual artists, musicians, and designers of her day, including sculptor Isamu Noguchi and fashion designers Halston, Donna Karan, and Calvin Klein, as well as composers Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, William Schuman, Norman Dello Joio, and Gian Carlo Menotti.

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

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.

With an artistic practice deeply ingrained in the rhythm of American life and the struggles of the individual, Graham brought a distinctly American sensibility to every theme she explored. "A dance reveals the spirit of the country in which it takes root. No sooner does it fail to do this than it loses its integrity and significance," she wrote in the 1937 essay "A Platform for the American Dance".

Consistently infused with social, political, psychological, and sexual themes, Graham's choreography is timeless, connecting with audiences past and present. Works such as *Revolt* (1927), *Immigrant: Steerage, Strike* (1928), and *Chronicle* (1936) — created the same year she turned down Hitler's invitation to perform at the International Arts Festival organized in conjunction with the Olympic Games in Berlin — personify Graham's commitment to addressing challenging contemporary issues and distinguish her as a conscientious and politically powerful artist.



MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Janet Eilber has been Artistic Director of the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance Company since 2005. Her creative curation has pioneered new forms of audience access to the Graham legacy. These diverse initiatives include her popular spoken introductions, thematic programming, unusual educational and cultural partnerships, licensing of the Graham classics to schools and professional companies, the use of new media and technology, commissions for today's top choreographers and a wide range of creative events such as the *Lamentation Variations*, *The 19 Poses*, *All-City Panorama* and the *Clytemnestra* Remash Challenge. Ms. Eilber has reconstructed the lost Graham solos *Satyric Festival Song* and *Immediate Tragedy* and remixed Graham choreography for productions of *The Bacchae* and *Prometheus Bound* at the Teatro Greco in Siracusa, Italy, and for *The Feast* with the Long Beach Opera starring renowned countertenor Jakub Józef Orłowski.

Ms. Eilber is a graduate of the Juilliard School where she was mentored by teachers of the Graham and Limón legacies and directed by José Limón in several of his classics. While still at Juilliard, she was invited to join the Graham Company where she worked closely with Martha Graham for almost a decade. She danced many of Graham's greatest roles, had roles created for her by Graham, and was directed by Graham in most of the major roles of the repertory. She soloed at the White House, was partnered by Rudolf Nureyev, starred in three segments of *Dance in America*, and worked with Graham's major collaborators such as Isamu Noguchi, Aaron Copland and Halston. She has since taught, lectured, and directed Graham ballets internationally for companies such as the Dutch National Ballet and the Paris Opera Ballet.

Apart from her work with Graham, Ms. Eilber has co-starred in films such as *Whose Life is it Anyway?* with Richard Dreyfuss, and *Romantic Comedy* with Dudley Moore. She was featured in several television series in the 1980s, and danced and acted on and off Broadway directed by such greats as Agnes DeMille and Bob Fosse. For her performance in *Stepping Out* directed by Tommy Tune, she was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for Featured Actress in a Play. Ms. Eilber received four Lester Horton Awards for her reconstruction and performance of seminal American modern dance. She served as Director of Arts Education for the Dana Foundation, guiding the Foundation's support for Teaching Artist training and contributing regularly to its publications. She is also a Trustee Emeritus of the Interlochen Center for the Arts.

At the 2022 celebration of the 50th anniversary of her first performance with the Martha Graham Dance Company, Ms. Eilber received a congratulatory letter from President and First Lady Biden saluting her half-century contribution to the arts in America. She is married to screenwriter/NYU professor John Warren, with whom she has two daughters, Madeline and Eva.



PHOTOS: Xin Ying in Martha Graham's *Imperial Gesture* and Janet Eilber portrait (c) NYC Dance Project; Martha Graham in *Lamentation* by Barbara Morgan. Martha Graham in *Deep Song* by Barbara Morgan; Leslie Andrea Williams in Martha Graham's *Deep Song* by Melissa Sherwood.

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TOURING REPERTORY + THEMATIC PROGRAMS

To celebrate its Centennial, the Company has organized an extensive series of programs and events exploring the diversity and depth of Graham's extraordinary artistic legacy. **GRAHAM100** features 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.

GRAHAM100 continues in 2025–26 season with *The Masterpieces*. Curated around the question "What is an American?" from Graham's 1939 work *American Document*, the season includes commissions and the culmination of many ongoing projects and focuses on Graham's greatest works, including:

- *Appalachian Spring*
- *CAVE* by Hofesh Shechter
- *Cave of the Heart*
- *Chronicle*
- *Cortege* by Baye & Asa
- *Deep Song*
- *Diversion of Angels*
- *Ekstasis*
- *Errand into the Maze*
- *Immediate Tragedy*
- *Lamentation*
- *Night Journey*
- *Satyric Festival Song*
- *We The People* by Jamar Roberts



Our repertory can be customized for your audiences with programming that speaks to contemporary times and issues – from social activism and the power of women to Americana, myth, modernism – and many more.

We welcome collaborations that might include dancers from other professional companies or student groups as part of our performance.

We also offer a great range of auxiliary events such as master classes, film screenings, gallery shows, lectures and workshops. It is always our pleasure to build connections with your community partners.