

This page: Natasha Diamond-Walker in *Lamentation*. Opposite page: Marzia Memoli in *Satyric Festival Song*. Graham often invoked nature through her set pieces and physicality, yet the company's archival photographs were rarely set outside. "This project gave us the opportunity to interpret Graham's ballets in a different way, shooting outdoors," says Ory.

"One of Martha's revolutionary ideas was that costumes are a part of emotional themes," says Graham artistic director Janet Eilber. "In *Lamentation*, the emotional message of the dance does not exist without the radical costume of a dancer inside a tube of fabric."



Photographs from Martha Graham Dance Company 100 Years (*Black Dog & Leventhal*). Copyright © 2025.

CAPTURING THE GRAHAM CONTINUUM



A new photography book commemorates the Martha Graham Dance Company's 100th anniversary.

How can a book of still photos encapsulate a century of Martha Graham's dynamic legacy? Released this month, the collection of images by NYC Dance Project photographers Ken Browar and Deborah Ory, *Martha Graham Dance Company 100 Years*, wrestles with this provocation. In honor of the Graham company's 100th anniversary, Browar and Ory began photographing company dancers for this project four years ago, both outdoors and in studio settings, creating a chronological structure centered on 24 of Graham's iconic works. Graham artistic director Janet

Eilber wrote the book's introduction; the photographers selected an archival image to historically root each chapter, and former Graham principal dancer Peter Sparling wrote descriptive text about each choreographic work.

Here are a few of the book's more than 250 images, and thoughts from Eilber, Sparling, and Ory about creating this tribute to Graham. The photos find power in active stillness, as Graham often did onstage. "There is a sense of the movement before and after each photo," Browar says, "a sense that the dancer is suspended in time."

By Jen Peters

Photos by Ken Browar and Deborah Ory, NYC Dance Project founders



PeiJu Chien-Pott and Lloyd Knight in *Night Journey*. "Martha edited time and space in her works, often through metaphorical time, so I wanted to give the reader a sense of where these images originated," explains former Graham principal dancer Peter Sparling. "What is the context? Where does it come from? I have visceral memories, but also needed to be direct about the action within the work: the costumes, music, and set designs."

Marzia Memoli in *Clytemnestra*. "We've photographed Graham dancers over many years, and it feels like we take a breath together before every movement; the breath is such an important element of the choreography," Ory says. "The dancers have so much power and expressive emotion, but also vulnerability."



Lloyd Knight and So Young An in *Circe*.
 “Seeing Ken and Deborah’s outdoor photographs, I am reminded of how organic Martha’s shapes were, and how she treaded a thin line between the recognizable body and the body capable of creating abstract, pure sculpted form,” Sparling says.



The book includes a page naming all original cast members for each of the 24 featured works. “Our current dancers are building on a legacy, and they absorb the artistry of all the generations that have gone before while putting their own personal stamp on it,” Eilber says. “Martha had her centenary 30 years ago. This 100th is about the generational artistic collaboration that is keeping the legacy alive.” ■

