

Hibbard Nash Photography



ANNENBERG  
CENTER  
— P R E S E N T S —

# MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY

Thursday, December 10 @ 7 PM

**Artistic Director** Janet Eilber  
**Executive Director** LaRue Allen

**Dancers** Lloyd Knight, Xin Ying

# PROGRAM

## **Lamentation**

**Choreography and Costume** Martha Graham  
**Music** *Neun Klavierstücke*, Op. 3, No. 2 by Zoltán Kodály  
**Original Lighting** Martha Graham  
**Adaptation** Beverly Emmons  
**Dancer** Xin Ying

Premiere: January 8, 1930, Maxine Elliott's Theatre, New York City

*Lamentation* is performed almost entirely from a seated position, with the dancer encased in a tube of purple jersey. The diagonals and tensions formed by the dancer's body struggling within the material create a moving sculpture, a portrait which presents the very essence of grief. The figure in this dance is neither human nor animal, neither male nor female: it is grief itself.

According to Martha Graham, after one performance of the work she was visited by a woman in the audience who had recently seen her child killed in an accident. Viewing *Lamentation* enabled her to grieve, as she realized that "grief was a dignified and valid emotion and that I could yield to it without shame."

This presentation of *Lamentation* has been made possible by a gift from Francis Mason in honor of William D. Witter. Additional support was provided by The Harkness Foundation for Dance.

## **Appalachian Spring** (excerpt)

**Choreography and Costume** Martha Graham  
**Music** Aaron Copland  
**Original Lighting** Jean Rosenthal  
**Adaptation** Beverly Emmons  
**Dancer** Lloyd Knight

Premiere: October 30, 1944, Coolidge Auditorium, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## *The Revivalist*

Springtime in the wilderness is celebrated by a man and woman building a house with joy and love and prayer; by a revivalist and his followers in their shouts of exaltation; by a pioneering woman with her dreams of the Promised Land.

In 1942, Martha Graham received a commission from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation for a new ballet to be premiered at the Library of Congress. Aaron Copland was to compose the score. Graham called the new dance *Appalachian Spring*, after a poem by Hart Crane, but for Copland it always remained "Ballet for Martha." Choreographed as the war in Europe was drawing to an end, it captured the imagination of Americans who were beginning to believe in a more prosperous future, a future in which men and women would be

united again. With its simple tale of a new life in a new land, the dance embodied hope. Critics called *Appalachian Spring* “shining and joyous,” “a testimony to the simple fineness of the human spirit.” The ballet tells the story of a young couple and their wedding day; there is a Husbandman, his Bride, a Pioneering Woman, a Preacher, and his Followers.

In a letter to Copland, Graham wrote that she wanted the dance to be “a legend of American living, like a bone structure, the inner frame that holds together a people.” As Copland later recalled, “After Martha gave me this bare outline, I knew certain crucial things – that it had to do with the pioneer American spirit, with youth and spring, with optimism and hope. I thought about that in combination with the special quality of Martha’s own personality, her talents as a dancer, what she gave off and the basic simplicity of her art. Nobody else seems anything like Martha, and she’s unquestionably very American.” Themes from American folk culture can be found throughout the dance. Copland uses a Shaker tune, “Simple Gifts,” in the second half of his luminous score, while Graham’s choreography includes square dance patterns, skips and paddle turns and curtsies, even a grand right and left. The set by Isamu Noguchi features a Shaker rocking chair. *Appalachian Spring* is perhaps Graham’s most optimistic ballet, yet it does contain a dark side. The fire and brimstone Preacher and his condemnation of earthly pleasures recalls the repressive weight of our Puritan heritage, while the solemn presence of the Pioneering Woman hints at the problems of raising families in remote and isolated communities. In this newly cleared land life was not simple, and Graham’s vision pays homage to that as well.

- Ellen Graff

### **Satyrical Festival Song**

**Choreography and Costume** Martha Graham

**Original Music** Imre Weissshaus

**Music for Reconstruction** *Minuta perversa* by Fernando Palacios

**Lighting for Reconstruction** David Finley

**Dancer** Xin Ying

Premiere: November 20, 1932, Guild Theatre, New York City

*Satyrical Festival Song* premiered as part of a suite of solo dances entitled *Dance Songs*. The dance was inspired by American Indian Pueblo culture and the clowns who satirize and mock the sacred rituals. Set to a score by Imre Weissshaus, with a costume designed by Martha Graham, the dance disappeared from the repertory for many years and was best known through the series of photographs published in Barbara Morgan’s 1942 book on Graham. It was reimagined by Diane Gray and Janet Eilber in 1994, to music by Fernando Palacios, for a season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York.

**Dark Meadow Suite** (excerpts)

**Choreography and Costumes** Martha Graham

**Arrangement** Janet Eilber

**Music** *La Hija de Colquide* by Carlos Chávez

**Lighting** Nick Hung

**Dancers** Lloyd Knight, Xin Ying

Premiere: April 1, 2016, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

*He Who Summons*

*The One Who Seeks*

Through the act of dancing forgotten memories emerge. We sense that we have been all things. "I have been ere now a boy and a girl, a brush, a bird, and a dumb fish in the sea." (Empedocles)

The *Dark Meadow Suite* is made up of highlights from a much longer work by Martha Graham, *Dark Meadow*, which premiered in 1946. The *Suite*, created in 2016, is designed to feature the exceptional choreography that Graham created for the ensemble of dancers in *Dark Meadow*. Both the unison dancing and the partnering have been recognized as some of Graham's most architectural, ritualistic and profound creations. They are clearly inspired by Graham's love of the rituals of the natives of the American Southwest and Mexico, which she observed as a young woman. The Mexican composer Carlos Chávez wrote the spacious musical score for Graham. The dancers often work in counterpoint to the score using the sound of their feet and other body percussion effects. In her original program note, Graham wrote, "*Dark Meadow* is a re-enactment of the mysteries which attend the eternal adventure of seeking." It is an abstract work about life's journey and the search for connection with one's self and one's community. This dance is a prime example of Graham as a leader in mid-20th century modernism.

Commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

*La Hija de Colquide* used by arrangement with G. Schirmer, Inc., agent for Carlanita Music Company, publisher and copyright owner. Adapted and conducted by Aaron Sherber.

Major support for the Martha Graham Dance Company is provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the New York City Council, and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

The Artists employed in this production are members of the American Guild of Musical Artists AFL-CIO.

Copyright to all Martha Graham dances presented held by the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance, Inc. All rights reserved.

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

### **Martha Graham**

Martha Graham has had a deep and lasting impact on American art and culture. She singlehandedly 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."

### **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, under the direction of Artistic Director Janet Eilber, 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 company has received international acclaim from audiences in over 50 countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The company has performed at such illustrious venues as the Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, the Paris Opera House and Covent Garden, as well as at the base of the Great Pyramids of 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.

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. Among celebrities who have joined the company in performance are 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 mainstage performances. It has created a series of intimate in-studio events, forged unusual creative partnerships with the likes of SIT 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, 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 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 those 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* last year. “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.”

### **Janet Eilber (Artistic Director)**

Eilber has been the Company's Artistic Director since 2005. Her direction has focused on creating new forms of audience access to Martha Graham's masterworks. These initiatives include contextual programming, educational and community partnerships, use of new media, commissions from today's top choreographers and creative events such as the *Lamentation Variations*. Earlier in her career, Eilber worked closely with Martha Graham. 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 has since taught, lectured and directed Graham ballets internationally. Apart from her work with Graham, Eilber has performed in films, on television and on Broadway directed by such greats as Agnes deMille and Bob Fosse and has received four Lester Horton Awards for her reconstruction and performance of seminal American modern dance. She has served as

Director of Arts Education for the Dana Foundation, guiding the Foundation's support for teaching artist training, and contributing regularly to its arts education publications. Eilber is a Trustee Emeritus of the Interlochen Center for the Arts. She is married to screenwriter/director John Warren, with whom she has two daughters, Madeline and Eva.

### **Lloyd Knight (Dancer)**

Knight joined the company in 2005 and performs lead roles in *Appalachian Spring*, *Embattled Garden*, *Errand into the Maze*, *The Rite of Spring* and others. Born in England and raised in Miami, he trained at Miami Conservatory of Ballet and graduated from New World School of the Arts, under the direction of Daniel Lewis. There, he worked with choreographers Donald McKayle, Robert Battle and Michael Uthoff. He received scholarships to The Ailey School and Dance Theatre of Harlem. *Dance Magazine* named him one of the "Top 25 Dancers to Watch" in 2010. Knight partnered Wendy Whelan in *Moon* and Misty Copeland in *At Summer's Full*.

### **Xin Ying (Dancer)**

Ying joined the company in 2011 and performs lead roles in *Cave of the Heart*, *Chronicle*, *Diversion of Angels*, *Clytemnestra*, *Woodland* and *I used to love you*, among others. In 2008, she received the China Dance Lotus Award. She was the director of the dance department at Sichuan College of Arts & Culture and a guest teacher at the Graham School, the Beijing Dance Academy and Nanjing University of Arts. She was awarded a full scholarship to the Graham School and was a member of Graham 2.

# SPRING 2021 DIGITAL SEASON

## Coming soon!



ANNENBERG  
CENTER  
— P R E S E N T S —

[AnnenbergCenter.org](http://AnnenbergCenter.org)  
215.898.3900

