

## The Annenberg Center Presents the Celebrated Martha Graham Dance Company in a Livestreamed Performance, Thursday, December 10

(Philadelphia – December 2, 2020) — The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts presents the iconic **Martha Graham Dance Company** in a performance of solos and duets, **Thursday, December 10 at 7 PM**. This is an original, live event performed on the Annenberg Center stage and streamed online. Visit [AnnenbergCenter.org](https://AnnenbergCenter.org) for more information.

Dancers **Lloyd Knight** and **Xin Ying** perform a program of excerpts from Graham's seminal ***Appalachian Spring, Dark Meadow Suite*** and ***Satyric Festival Song***, as well as the full solo work, ***Lamentation***, intermixed with dramatic archival footage. This showcase of Graham's signature choreographic style illustrates why the Martha Graham Dance Company is one of the most celebrated contemporary dance companies on the planet. The program concludes with an interactive Q&A with the dancers and **Janet Eilber, Artistic Director** of Martha Graham Dance Company.

**[Photographs](#) of the Martha Graham Dance Company are available in the Annenberg Center's Press Room.**

### 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 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, 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.

#### **About the Annenberg Center's 2020-21 Digital Season**

The Annenberg Center's fall 2020 digital season comprises livestreamed performances by top dance companies, outstanding jazz artists making their Annenberg Center debuts, and a collaborative early music performance, in addition to screenings of recently released independent films. The live performances are broadcast using state-of-the-art digital technology from the Prince or Zellerbach Theatre, integrating live chat, and concluding with interactive discussions with the creators and performers. Livestreamed performances are available online for 48 hours after the start time for those who purchased access. **The spring 2021 digital season will be announced in mid-December.**

#### **About the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts**

The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts serves as a major cultural destination and crossroads connecting the University of Pennsylvania and the Greater Philadelphia region through innovative human expression in theatre, music, dance and film, serving an annual audience of over 80,000. The Annenberg Center also serves as a key resource for the arts at Penn, connecting master artists with Penn students in support of and as an enhancement to the arts curriculum. Student performing arts groups are also key users of the Annenberg Center's multiple performance and rehearsal spaces, while also staffing many operational roles throughout the academic year. In reflection of Penn's core values as a world-respected academic institution, the Annenberg Center emphasizes artistic and intellectual excellence, diversity and rigor in its presentations; prioritizes broad inclusiveness in the artists, audiences and groups it serves; manages outstanding performance, conference and meeting facilities; and stresses comprehensive event planning, production support and customer service. The

Annenberg Center is a major provider of performing arts access for school children and actively engages a broad range of primary, secondary and post-secondary student audiences and inclusive constituencies from the campus, community and surrounding region. Visit [AnnenbergCenter.org](http://AnnenbergCenter.org).

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## CALENDAR LISTING

### LIVESTREAM

#### **Martha Graham Dance Company**

Thursday, December 10, 7 PM

With the “most skilled and powerful dancers you can ever hope to see,” (*The Washington Post*) this iconic company returns to the Annenberg Center for a livestreamed performance of solos and duets. Graham’s seminal *Appalachian Spring*, *Dark Meadow Suite* and *Satyric Festival Song*, as well as the full solo work, *Lamentation*, will be intermixed with dramatic archival footage. Graham’s signature choreographic style, illustrated in these works, demonstrates why the Martha Graham Dance Company is one of the most celebrated contemporary dance companies on the planet.

It will include an interactive Q&A with the dancers and Janet Eilber, Artistic Director of Martha Graham Dance Company.

#### **Access Information for Martha Graham Dance Company**

Visit [AnnenbergCenter.org](http://AnnenbergCenter.org) to purchase access to this show until 7:30 PM on December 10.

The performance may be watched live at 7 PM on December 10 to participate in the chat and artist Q&A.

It will be available on-demand to ticketholders through December 12.

Visit the Annenberg Center’s [FAQs](#) for additional details.

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