Martha Graham Dance Company: The First and The Future, marks the triumphant return to the stage for the Company after a long 19 months, and is part of their 96th season! Martha Graham Dance Company will perform iconic Graham classics alongside a stunning new work by one of today’s top choreographers.

The dancers of the Department of Theatre & Dance, School of the Arts at the University of Nevada, Reno will open the program with a special restaging of Graham's first modernist masterpiece, "Heretic," from 1929.

Then, the Company dancers take the stage with Graham’s joyous ode to love, "Diversion of Angels," which will be followed by one of her most powerful solos, "Immediate Tragedy."

Reno audiences will be among the first to see "Scavengers" by the much-in-demand choreographer Andrea Miller. This season premiere brings us four intimate duets that evoke our renewed appreciation of human connection post pandemic. "Scavengers" also showcases the world-renown athleticism of the Graham dancers.

The full Company closes the program with "Acts of Light," created by Graham in 1981 and performed in three sections. The first is a passionate duet titled "Conversation of Lovers." The second, "Lament," references Graham’s early modernist solo, "Lamentation," and the final section, "Ritual to the Sun," is a high-energy celebration of Graham’s famed dance language.
Martha Graham has had a deep and lasting impact on American art and culture. She single-handedly 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.”
About The 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, 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 Martha Graham Dance Company has received international acclaim from audiences in more than 50 countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Russia, and the Middle East. The Company has performed at the Metropolitan Opera, 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 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.

Artistic Director

JANET EILBER (Artistic Director) 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, as a principal dancer with the Company, Ms. 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, Ms. 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. Ms. 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.
Diversion of Angels

Choreography and Costumes by Martha Graham
Music by Norman Dello Joio†
Original lighting by Jean Rosenthal
Adapted by Beverly Emmons

Premiere: August 13, 1948, Palmer Auditorium, New London, CT

Martha Graham once described *Diversion of Angels* as three aspects of love: the couple in white represents mature love in perfect balance; red, erotic love; and yellow, adolescent love. The dance follows no story. Its action takes place in the imaginary garden love creates for itself. The ballet was originally called *Wilderness Stair*.

“It is the place of the Rock and the Ladder, the raven, the blessing, the tempter, the rose. It is the wish of the single-hearted, the undivided; play after the spirit’s labor; games, flights, fancies, configurations of the lover’s intention; the believed Possibility, at once strenuous and tender; humors of innocence, garlands, evangels, Joy on the Wilderness Stair, diversion of angels.” – Ben Belitt

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DIVERSION OF ANGELS (1948)

*Diversion of Angels*, originally titled *Wilderness Stair*, premiered at the Palmer Auditorium of Connecticut College on August 13, 1948. The title, as well as a set piece designed by Isamu Noguchi suggestive of desert terrain, was discarded after the first performance, and the dance was re-conceived as a plotless ballet. *Diversion of Angels* is set to a romantic score by Norman Dello Joio and takes its themes from the infinite aspects of love. The Couple in Red embodies romantic love and “the ecstasy of the contraction;” the Couple in White, mature love; and the Couple in Yellow, a flirtatious and adolescent love.

Martha Graham recalled that when she first saw the work of the modern artist Wassily Kandinsky, she was astonished by his use of color, a bold slash of red across a blue background. She determined to make a dance that would express this. *Diversion of Angels* is that dance, and the Girl in Red, dashing across the stage, is the streak of red paint bisecting the Kandinsky canvas. —ELLEN GRAFF
Immediate Tragedy

Dance of Dedication

Choreography by Martha Graham reimagined by Janet Eilber
Costume by Martha Graham
Original Music by Henry Cowell
Music for reimagined Immediate Tragedy by Christopher Rountree†
Music performed by Richard Valitutto, piano
Lighting by Yi-Chung Chen
Danceturgy for reimagining by Neil Baldwin

Premiere: July 30, 1937, Bennington, VT

I was upright and determined to stay upright at all costs. – Martha Graham

Anne Souder

Significant commissioning support provided by The O'Donnell-Green Music and Dance Foundation.

†Music produced and mixed by Lewis Pesacov
Scavengers

World Premiere: October 26, 2021, The Joyce Theater, New York City

Choreography by Andrea Miller
Music by Will Epstein
Lighting by Burke Brown
Costumes by Oana Botez
Creative Assistant Connor Speetjens

Four duets and one solo. Dancing with strangers, a kingdom of sandcastles, on broken boards to a mended melody.

Andrea would like to thank the members of the cast and GALLIM artists Allysen Hooks, Christopher Kinsey, and Haley Sung for their contributions to the creative process.

Scavengers was made possible in part through a generous grant by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, and was commissioned by Christopher Jones and Deborah McAlister. The music was commissioned by the Charles and Joan Gross Family Foundation.

Program Notes
Scavengers is a dance that has emerged out of the pandemic experience. Andrea Miller began work on a new dance for the Graham Company in early 2020, which was interrupted by the Covid shutdown in March of 2020. When she returned to the studio 18 months later, we were living in a changed world, and that deeply affected the creative process. This new work reflects this shift. With a newly commissioned score from Will Epstein, Scavengers is made up of four duets and a solo.
Acts Of Light

Choreography by Martha Graham
Music by Carl Nielsen†
Costumes by Halston and Martha Graham
Lighting by Beverly Emmons

Premiere: February 26, 1981, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC

“Thank you for all the acts of light which beautified a summer now past its reward.” – Emily Dickinson

I. Conversation of Lovers

II. Lament

III. Ritual to the Sun

† I. Pan and Syrinx, Op.49; II. Andante lamentoso (At the Bier of a Young Artist); III. Helios Overture, Op.17. Recorded by the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Herbert Blomstedt, courtesy of EMI Classics. I and II used by arrangement with G. Schirmer, Inc., agents in the United States for Edition Wilhelm Hansen A/S-Denmark, publisher and copyright owner.

ACTS OF LIGHT (1981)

Acts of Light premiered in Washington DC at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts on February 26, 1981. Taking its title from a phrase by Emily Dickinson, a poet beloved by Graham, the dance introduced a new period in Graham’s work. Devoid of theatrical trappings, Acts of Light celebrates the dancer as an exquisite instrument of expression, while making references to earlier works in the Graham canon. Former New York Times dance critic Anna Kisselgoff called the work neo-classical. The score for the ballet is by the 19th-century Danish composer Carl Nielsen – another divergence for Graham, who typically sought out contemporary composers for her work. Composed in three sections, the dance begins with “Conversation of Lovers,” a duet exploring the constant, yet ever-changing, ties that exist between lovers. The music for the second section, “Lament,” was composed by Nielsen in response to the death of a friend. Graham made a dance for a solo female figure surrounded by five male witnesses. The body of the woman is encased in an elastic white fabric. According to one critic, the fabric acted as a “membrane…abstracting the shapes of grief [the dancer’s] body makes.” The reference to Graham’s own 1930 Lamentation is clear. “Ritual to the Sun,” the final section, is an ode to the Graham classroom technique.

—ELLEN GRAFF