

MARTHA GRAHAM
Biographical Information

Martha Graham was born May 11, 1894 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She was the oldest of three daughters of Dr. and Mrs. George Graham. In 1908, the family moved to Santa Barbara, California, where Martha first became interested in dance.

In 1911, Miss Graham saw a performance by Ruth St. Denis. In 1916, she enrolled at Denishawn, the Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn School of Dance in Los Angeles. She came to New York as a teacher with Denishawn in 1920. After two years as a dancer for Greenwich Village Follies, she moved to Rochester, New York to become codirector of a newly established dance department at the Eastman School of Music.

During the late 1920's and early 1930's, Miss Graham first choreographed and performed the contemporary dances she would make famous. She received the first Guggenheim fellowship ever awarded a dancer in 1932, and in 1935, she helped establish the School of Modern Dance at Bennington College.

Today, her company, the oldest major dance company in America, is in its 50th year. From a troupe of four, it has grown to a permanent complement of 24. Since 1950, the Martha Graham Dance Company has been on many world tours, often under the auspices of the State Department. During the past year, Miss Graham took the company on a major tour of European capitals, which climaxed this past July with a sold-out run at London's Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. It was the first appearance there by a contemporary dance company.

Miss Graham danced for the last time in public in 1969, but she continues to choreograph dances, including four new works in the past five years. Her works, now numbering over 150, have been described by New York Times critic, Clive Barnes, as "national treasures."

Miss Graham has been described as an "immortal" in the world of dance. Her 53 years as a dancer in addition to her teaching and choreography have earned her numerous professional and critical accolades. The vitality and creativity of her artistic contributions have made her a pioneer in the world of dance.

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