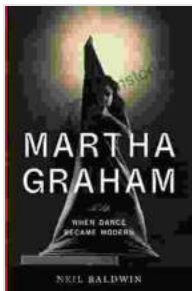


Martha Graham: When Dance Became Modern

Martha Graham (May 11, 1894 – April 1, 1991) was an American dancer and choreographer who is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of modern dance. Her work revolutionized the traditional ballet form, and her innovative techniques and expressive style continue to influence dancers and choreographers worldwide.

Early Life and Education

Martha Graham was born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in 1894. Her parents were George Graham, a doctor, and Janet Cunningham, a homemaker. Graham showed an early interest in dance and began taking lessons at the age of four. In 1911, she enrolled at the Denishawn School of Dancing in Los Angeles, where she studied under Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn.



Martha Graham: When Dance Became Modern

by Neil Baldwin

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported

Print length : 251 pages



At Denishawn, Graham developed a deep appreciation for the expressive power of dance. She also met other dancers who would later become

influential figures in the modern dance movement, including Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman.

Career

In 1923, Graham founded her own dance company, the Martha Graham Dance Company. The company's early performances were met with mixed reviews, but Graham's unique style and vision gradually gained recognition. Over the next few decades, Graham created some of the most iconic works of modern dance, including "Lamentation" (1930), "Frontier" (1935), "Letter to the World" (1940), and "Appalachian Spring" (1944).

Graham's work was characterized by its innovative use of contraction and release, its focus on the breath, and its exploration of the human condition. She was also known for her use of ritual and myth in her choreography.

In addition to her work as a dancer and choreographer, Graham also taught at a number of schools, including the Juilliard School and the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance. She also wrote several books on dance, including "Primitive Rhythms" (1931) and "Blood Memory" (1991).

Legacy

Martha Graham is considered one of the most important figures in the history of modern dance. Her work revolutionized the traditional ballet form, and her innovative techniques and expressive style continue to influence dancers and choreographers worldwide.

Graham's work has been performed by some of the most famous dancers in the world, including Merce Cunningham, Agnes de Mille, and Twyla

Tharp. Her work has also been the subject of numerous books, articles, and documentaries.

Martha Graham's legacy is one of innovation, creativity, and artistic excellence. Her work has had a profound impact on the world of dance, and her influence continues to be felt today.

Influences

Martha Graham was influenced by a wide range of sources, including:

- **Modern art:** Graham was a close friend of the artist Georgia O'Keeffe, and her work was also influenced by the works of Pablo Picasso and Wassily Kandinsky.
- **Native American culture:** Graham was fascinated by Native American culture, and many of her works incorporated elements of Native American dance and music.
- **Greek mythology:** Graham was also influenced by Greek mythology, and many of her works explored the themes of love, loss, and betrayal.
- **Personal experiences:** Graham's work was often inspired by her own personal experiences, including her struggles with depression and her relationships with men.

Techniques

Martha Graham developed a number of innovative dance techniques, including:

- **Contraction and release:** Graham's technique of contraction and release involved contracting the muscles of the body and then

releasing them. This technique created a sense of tension and release that was unique to Graham's work.

- **The breath:** Graham believed that the breath was a powerful tool for expressing emotion and movement. She developed a number of exercises that focused on the breath, and she often used the breath to create rhythm and flow in her choreography.
- **The floor:** Graham was one of the first dancers to use the floor as a dynamic element in her choreography. She often used the floor to create different levels and perspectives, and she also used the floor to explore the relationship between the body and the earth.

Awards and Honors

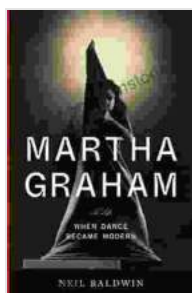
Martha Graham received numerous awards and honors throughout her career, including:

- The Presidential Medal of Freedom (1976)
- The National Medal of Arts (1985)
- The Kennedy Center Honors (1981)
- The American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement (1987)

Martha Graham was one of the most important figures in the history of modern dance. Her work revolutionized the traditional ballet form, and her innovative techniques and expressive style continue to influence dancers and choreographers worldwide. Graham's work is a testament to the power of dance to express the human condition, and her legacy will continue to inspire dancers and audiences for generations to come.

Images





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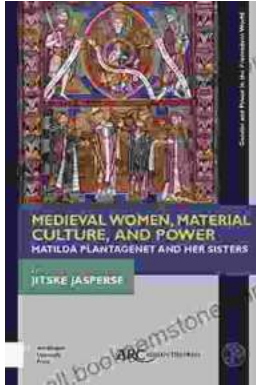
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