

Part Real Part Dream: Dancing with Martha Graham



Part Real, Part Dream: Dancing with Martha Graham

by Stuart Hodes

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Martha Graham was an American modern dancer and choreographer. She is considered one of the pioneers of modern dance, and her work has had a profound impact on the art form.

Graham's choreography is characterized by its strong, angular movements, its use of tension and release, and its focus on expressing emotions through movement. Her dances often explore themes of love, loss, and betrayal.

Graham was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1894. She began studying dance at the age of 22, and she quickly developed a passion for the art form. In 1926, she founded her own dance company, the Martha

Graham Dance Company, which became one of the most influential dance companies in the world.

Graham's work has been praised for its originality, its emotional power, and its technical virtuosity. She was a prolific choreographer, and she created over 150 dances during her career.

Graham died in New York City in 1991. She is considered one of the most important figures in the history of modern dance, and her work continues to be performed and studied around the world.

Martha Graham's Influences

Graham was influenced by a variety of sources, including Native American dance, Japanese theater, and the works of the early modern dance pioneers Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan.

Native American dance influenced Graham's use of strong, angular movements and her focus on expressing emotions through movement. Japanese theater influenced her use of masks and stylized gestures.

Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan influenced Graham's use of flowing, organic movements. Fuller was known for her use of veils and scarves, and Duncan was known for her free-form, improvisational style.

Graham synthesized these influences into a unique choreographic style that was both modern and timeless.

Martha Graham's Dance Technique

Graham developed a highly technical dance technique that is based on the principles of contraction and release. Contraction is the act of pulling the body inward, and release is the act of letting the body go. Graham believed that these two movements were the basis of all human movement.

Graham's technique also emphasizes the use of the breath, the spine, and the pelvis. She believed that the breath was the source of power for movement, and that the spine and pelvis were the central axes of the body.

Graham's technique is demanding, but it can also be very rewarding. Dancers who master Graham's technique can achieve a high level of control, expressiveness, and agility.

Martha Graham's Choreography

Graham's choreography is characterized by its strong, angular movements, its use of tension and release, and its focus on expressing emotions through movement. Her dances often explore themes of love, loss, and betrayal.

Some of Graham's most famous dances include:

- Lamentation (1930)
- Frontier (1935)
- Appalachian Spring (1944)
- Night Journey (1947)
- Clytemnestra (1958)

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Martha Graham's Legacy

Graham is considered one of the most important figures in the history of modern dance. Her work has had a profound impact on the art form, and her influence can still be seen in the work of contemporary choreographers.

Graham's legacy is secure. She was a visionary artist who changed the way we think about dance. Her work continues to inspire and challenge dancers, and it will continue to do so for generations to come.

Martha Graham was a true pioneer of modern dance. Her work was original, powerful, and technically demanding. She was a master choreographer who created some of the most iconic dances of the 20th century.

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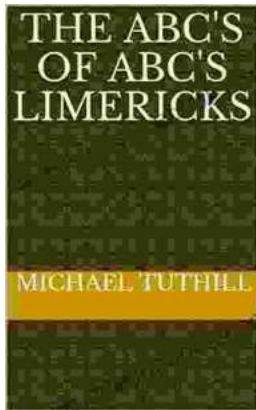
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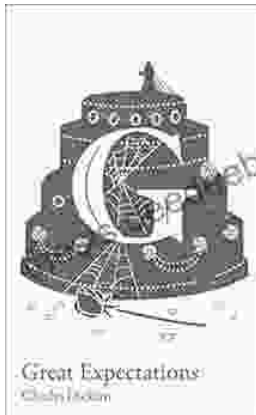
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