

# *Expanding the Boundaries of Dance: Martha Graham*

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# *Why is Martha Graham such an important dancer and choreographer even today?*

*Martha Graham is an important dancer and choreographer because  
she created a new dancing style and explored many themes that are  
still practiced by modern dancers today*



Image source: Barbara Morgan

Martha Graham was an American dancer and choreographer who brought modern dance to a new level of popularity in American culture. She was often called Mother of Modern Dance because she challenged the traditional ballet and created a new language of movement that expressed powerful emotions.

("Martha Graham, 1894-1991: The Mother of Modern Dance." VOA.)



Image source: Wikipedia.org

Martha Graham was born in 1894 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she and her family moved to California in 1908. In 1926, she established the Martha Graham Dance Company in New York. She died in 1991 in New York.

("Chapter 3: The Modern Dancers." *University of Pittsburgh.*)



Image source: Maria-Helena Buckley/John Deane

The image at left shows the traditional ballet, the dominant style of dancing before Martha Graham's exploration, and it is arranged to appear effortless. However, the image at right shows the modern dance, the muscular movement makes the effort visible. The traditional ballet often tells a story; in contrast, the modern dance sometimes just expresses an emotion or an idea.

("Martha Graham: The Mother of Modern Dance." *Bio.com*.)



Image source: Broadway.tv

In her life, Martha Graham committed to creating a new dancing style which consisted of powerful, sharp, and direct movements. The choreography she created was filled with tension and strong emotions, and her groundbreaking style of dancing was a dramatic departure from the traditional ballet.

("History." *Martha Graham Dance Company*.)



Image source: Tamar Ashdot

Martha Graham created a technique called Graham Technique, which focused on two main principles: contraction and release. Her dancers created tension through contracting a muscle, and then used the flow of energy when the muscle was relaxed to initiate the movement. The Graham Technique is central to the development of modern dance in the United States, and is now used by dance companies throughout the world.

(Anna, Kisselgoff. "Martha Graham Dies at 96; A Revolutionary in Dance." *The New York Times*.)



Image source: Jerry Cooke

In 1944, Martha Graham created one of her most celebrated works, Appalachian Spring, which explored the lives of a young pioneer husband and his wife beginning a life together on the American frontier. The choreography was based on American experience and it showed the young couple's joy and great longing for the future.

("The Kennedy Center: ARTSEDGE - the National Arts and Education Network.")



Image source: Cheryl Mann

In 1947, Martha Graham created a dance work, *Errand into the Maze*, which was based on a Greek myth. The dancing presented a story about Theseus, who journeyed into the maze to confront the Minotaur.

("Martha Graham Dance Company Repertory." *Martha Graham Dance Company*.)



Image source: Barbara Morgan

In 1943, Martha Graham created a psychological dance work called Death and Entrance which was about female psyche. The dance presented rejection in love, loss in life, and inner struggles of women under traditions and conventions.

("Martha Graham Dance Company: Embattled Garden, Deaths and Entrances, Sketches from Chronicle.")



Image source: Barbara Morgan

In 1930, Martha Graham created a choreography, Lamentation, which explored an emotional theme. The dancing presented a feeling of sorrow by showing a grieving women sitting alone on a bench and moving.

(Howard, Reich. "Martha Graham, 96, An Architect Of Modern Dance Movement")

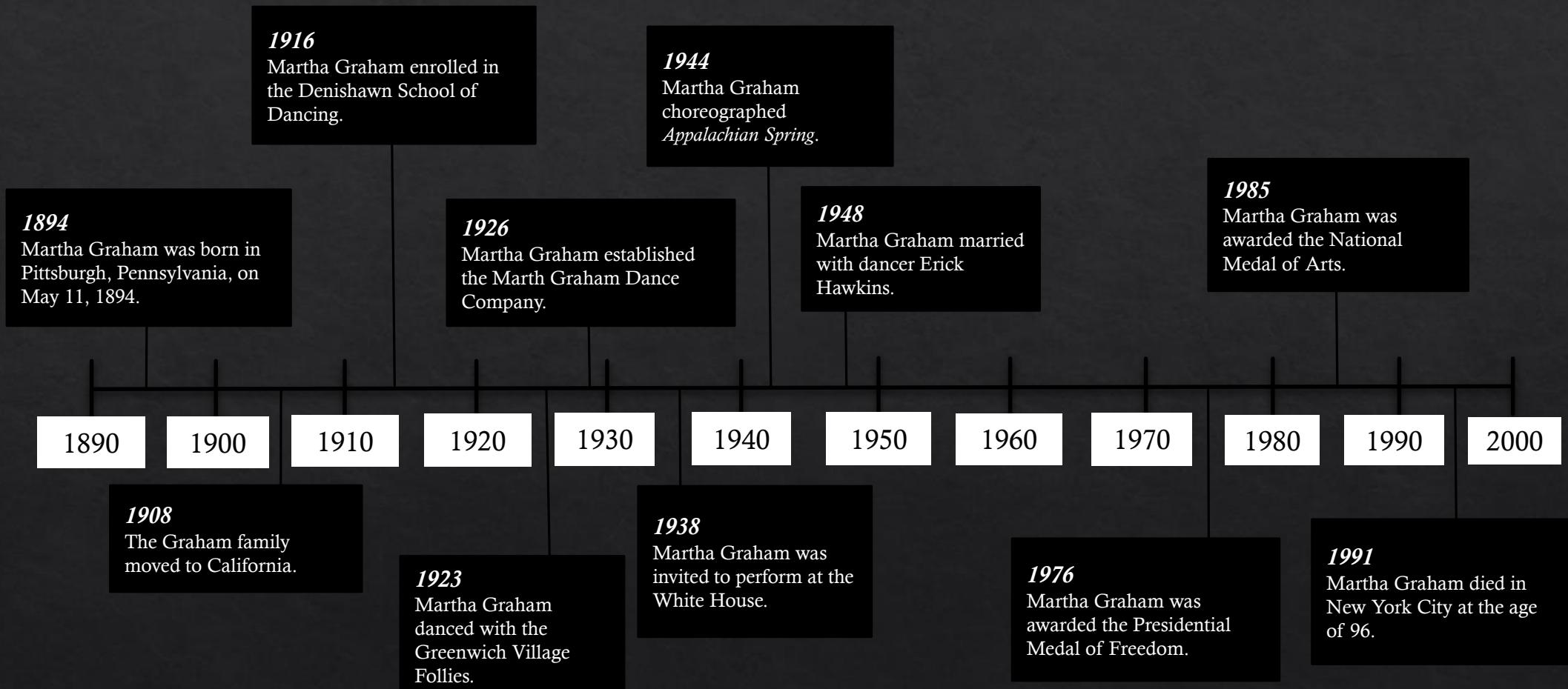


Image source: missomnimedia.com

In 1976, Martha Graham was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom because of her contribution in breaking new ground in the world of dance. She successfully created a new dancing style and explored new themes in her choreography. Martha Graham is a dancer who is worthy of mention even after many years and her influence on the world of dance continues today.

("Martha Graham, 1894-1991: The Mother of Modern Dance." *VOA*.)

# Events in the Life of Martha Graham



# Works Cited

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