



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 12, 2005

**CORNISH TO RESTAGE MARTHA GRAHAM MASTERPIECE**

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SEATTLE, WA - Cornish College of the Arts will restage dance pioneer Martha Graham's signature masterwork *Diversion of Angels* in celebration of Graham's first solo performance at Cornish in 1930. The dance will be staged during a four-week visiting artist residency by Peter Sparling and Susan McLain, both former soloists with the Martha Graham Dance Company. The residency will culminate in performances of *Diversion of Angels* by the Cornish Dance Theater, the Dance Department's performing ensemble, November 18-19, 2005 at Broadway Performance Hall.

*Diversion of Angels* was premiered by the Martha Graham Dance Company in 1948. Set to music by Norman Dello Joio, the dance is a lyrical, ecstatic essay on love for eleven dancers. The four week residency will include master classes, open rehearsals, and a lecture-demonstration with several events open to the public. The highlight of the community offerings will be *Day of Dance: the Life and Legacy of Martha Graham*, a lecture-demonstration at the Moore Theater presented in partnership with Seattle Theater Group's Education Outreach Program on October 30. The lecture-demonstration will be followed by a master class in Graham Technique for invited regional high school students.

Martha Graham was a brilliant and influential pioneer of American modern dance. Her impact on dance was profound, and has often been compared to that of Picasso on painting. As a teacher, Graham trained and inspired generations of dancers and choreographers, including such greats as Alvin Ailey, Twyla Tharp, Paul Taylor and Merce Cunningham. Graham collaborated with some of the foremost artists of her time including composer Aaron Copland and sculptor Isamu Noguchi. The Martha Graham Dance Company, founded in 1926, still tours internationally.

In 1930, Martha Graham performed a solo concert and taught a summer workshop at Cornish, introducing Seattle to her modern dance technique. The Graham tradition has been kept alive at Cornish in Graham-based technique classes taught by faculty member Pat Hon, a protégé of Mary Hinkson, principal dancer with the Martha Graham Company from 1951-1973.

This historic project is made possible through major contributions from The Boeing Company and the National College Choreography Initiative (NCCI), a Leadership Initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, administered by Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance. Cornish College of the Arts was one of 35 award winners in 34 cities across the country. Additional funding for this project has been provided by the Bossak-Heilbron Foundation, and E.K. and Lillian F. Bishop Foundation.

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## GRAHAM RESIDENCY SCHEDULE AND EVENTS

- **Peter Sparling Residency:** September 19 - October 1, 2005
- **Susan McLain Residency:** October 3 - 8 and October 28 - November 2, 2005
- **Open rehearsal:** Friday, October 7, 2-5 pm  
Velocity Mainstage Theater, 915 East Pine Street, Seattle
- ***Day of Dance: the Life and Legacy of Martha Graham:*** a lecture demonstration for adults and children ages 10+; Sunday, October 30, 2-3 pm, Moore Theater, 1932 2nd Avenue, Seattle
- ***Cornish Dance Theater Fall 2005 Concert:*** Friday, November 18 at 8 pm and Saturday, November 19 at 2 pm and 8 pm, Broadway Performance Hall, 1625 Broadway, Seattle

For more information about any of these events, please call 206.726.5011.

Additionally, *Diversion of Angels* will be performed by Cornish Dance Theater at our gala event ***Cornish Celebrates: An Evening of the Arts***, celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martha Graham's first solo recital at Cornish, on Sunday, November 20, 2005. Reception, Dinner and Performance at the Grand Ballroom, Seattle Sheraton Hotel & Towers, 1400 6th Avenue, Seattle. For more information, please call 206.726.5064 or email [CornishCelebrates@Cornish.edu](mailto:CornishCelebrates@Cornish.edu)

*Images available upon request.*

## ABOUT CORNISH COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

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Cornish College of the Arts is the premier, accredited arts college in the Northwest, inspiring the highest standards of artistic and academic excellence. Founded in 1914 by Nellie Cornish, Cornish College is the only private, accredited college in the region offering baccalaureate degrees in visual and performing arts. Cornish College offers a Bachelor of Music and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in art, dance, design, theater and performance production. Cornish College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design.

Over the years, Cornish has hosted a parade of important artists in the roles of students, teachers or as visiting artists-in-residence, including John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham, Ping Chong, Kenny Werner, Obo Addy, Mark Morris, Meredith Monk, Rinde Eckert, Bebe Miller, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Robin Holcomb, Chet Huntley, Syvilla Fort, Ralph Towner, Thornton Wilder, Lou Harrison, Bill Frisell, Morris Graves, Jane Ira Bloom, Kraig Patterson, Musicians Accord, Bun Ching Lam, Brendan Fraser, Myra Melford, Sharon Isbin, Joanne Brackeen, Oliver Lake, California Ear Unit, Colorado Quartet, and Gary Peacock, among others.

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## GRAHAM RESIDENCY BIOGRAPHIES

**Susan McLain**, professor, is currently on the faculty of the Department of Dance at California State University, Long Beach. A former principal dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company and Pearl Lang Dance Company, she has also performed with Ballet West, Richard Move, Douglas Nielsen, Larry Richardson and has danced extensively throughout the world and can be seen in the *Dance in America* series for public television. She holds a B.A. in Dance Education and a M.F.A. from the Modern Dance Department at the University of Utah where she also served as a faculty member for eight years. Ms. McLain has taught at the Alvin Ailey School, the Martha Graham School, and various other professional studios and universities. Her choreography can be seen in the repertory of professional companies in the United States. Ms. McLain's published articles on Pilates-based research have been presented at several Dance and Sports Medicine Conferences. A biographical film, *Susan, A Dancer's Life* directed by David Viera, has been presented at the New York City Lincoln Center Performing Arts Library Film Series and at the American Dance Festival Film Series in Durham, North Carolina.

**Peter Sparling** is a professor and former chair of the University of Michigan Department of Dance and Artistic Director of the Ann Arbor-based Peter Sparling Dance Company. A graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy and the Juilliard School, he danced with the Jose Limon Dance Company from 1971-73. From 1973-87, he was a principal dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company; since then he has returned often to perform, coach and teach. As a regisseur of the Martha Graham Trust, he has staged Graham's works on his own company and on companies all over the world. Sparling presented his own company and solo performance, *Solo Flight*, for five successive seasons at New York's Riverside Dance Festival. He has held residencies at the American Dance Festival, at numerous American universities and in London, Australia, Portugal and Taiwan. He is a recipient of the 1998 Governor's Michigan Artist Award and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and Arts Foundation of Michigan. Active in the Institute for the Humanities and in interdisciplinary studies at UM, he has worked extensively with composers, actors, visual artists and scientists to create collaborative performance works. He has written texts for performance and has been published in the Michigan Quarterly Review and *Choreography and Dance*. During the past few years, he has choreographed and directed Gluck's opera, *Orfeo and Euridice*, *Bodytalk: A Vaudeville for Dancing Man at Middle Age*, and *Peninsula*, featuring original video and collaborations with numerous Michigan artists. He most recently premiered *PSDC/Solos* in June, 2005 and is presently developing *The Bodytalk Template*, a cross-cultural video archive of male dancers.

**Martha Graham** (1894-1991) is recognized as a primal artistic force of the 20th Century alongside Picasso, Stravinsky, James Joyce, and Frank Lloyd Wright. In 1998 *TIME Magazine* named Martha Graham as the "Dancer of the Century", and *People Magazine* named her among the female "Icons" of the Century. As a choreographer, she was as prolific as she was complex. She created 181 ballets and a dance technique that has been compared to ballet in its scope and magnitude. Many of the great modern and ballet choreographers have studied the Martha Graham Technique or have been members of her company.

Martha Graham's extraordinary artistic legacy has often been compared to Stanislavsky's Art Theatre in Moscow and the Grand Kabuki Theatre of Japan, for its diversity and breadth. Her legacy continues to be perpetuated in performance by the members of the *Martha Graham Dance Company*, *Martha Graham Ensemble*, and by the students of the *Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance*.

## **Martha Graham, continued**

In 1926, Martha Graham founded her dance company and school, living and working out of a tiny Carnegie Hall studio in midtown Manhattan. In developing her technique, Martha Graham experimented endlessly with basic human movement, beginning with the most elemental movements of contraction and release. Using the principles of contraction and release as the foundation for her technique, Martha Graham built a vocabulary of movement that would "increase the emotional activity of the dancer's body." Graham's dancing and choreography exposed the depths of human emotion through movements that were sharp angular, jagged, and direct. The dance world was forever altered by Martha Graham's vision which has been and continues to be a source of inspiration for generations of dance and theatre artists.

Martha Graham ballets were inspired by a wide variety of sources, including modern painting, the American frontier, religious ceremonies of Native Americans, and Greek mythology. Many of her most important roles portray great women of history and mythology: Clytemnestra, Jocasta, Medea, Phaedra, Joan of Arc, and Emily Dickinson.

As an artist, Martha Graham conceived each new work in its entirety - dance, costumes, and music. During her 70 years of creating dances, Martha Graham collaborated with such artists as sculptor Isamu Noguchi; actor and director John Houseman; fashion designers Halston, Donna Karan and Calvin Klein; and renowned composers including Aaron Copland, Louis Horst (her mentor), Samuel Barber, William Schuman, and Gian Carlo Menotti. Her company was the training ground for future modern choreographers such as Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor and Twyla Tharp. She created roles for classical ballet stars such as Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev, and Mikhail Baryshnikov, welcoming them as guests into her company. In charge of movement and dance at The Neighborhood Playhouse, she taught actors such as Bette Davis, Kirk Douglas, Madonna, Liza Minnelli, Gregory Peck, Tony Randall, Anne Jackson, and Joanne Woodward how to use the body as an expressive instrument.

Her uniquely American vision and creative genius earned her numerous honors and awards such as the Laurel Leaf of the American Composers Alliance in 1959 for her service to music. Her colleagues in theater, the members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local One, voted her the recipient of the 1986 Local One Centennial Award for dance, not to be awarded for another 100 years. In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford bestowed upon Martha Graham the United State's highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom, and declared her a "National Treasure," making her the first dancer and choreographer to receive this honor. Another Presidential honor was awarded Martha Graham in 1985 when President Ronald Reagan designated her among the first recipients of the United States' National Medal of Arts.