

ARTS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Ricardo Pedro, Principal
MS. Devonne Gorman Vice Principal Visual and Performing Arts
550 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
973-733-7391/7392
Fax: 973-733-7395

Junior Dance

Summer Assignments

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE ON THE FIRST DAY OF
SCHOOL**

Martha Graham Dance Technique

Martha Graham developed a dance technique that broke the mold of classical ballet and pioneered the field of modern dance.



Martha Graham and Bertram Ross ([Carl Van Vechten](#))

[Martha Graham](#) (May 11, 1894 -April 1, 1991) is considered the mother of modern dance. She created the only fully codified modern dance technique, choreographed over 150 works during her lifetime, and has had a remarkable impact on the entire field of modern dance. Her technique's deviation from classical ballet and use of specific body movements such as the contraction, release, and spiral have had profound influence on the development of modern dance.

The Contraction

The contraction serves as the foundation of Graham technique. Graham developed the idea from observing the physical manifestation of grief in the

body. It is one of the fundamental characteristics of her choreography and as such, most of Graham exercises were created with the contraction in mind. While Graham was the creator of the contraction, the move has become a staple of modern dance and has been used, altered, and redefined by many subsequent choreographers.

A Graham contraction begins from the pelvis and travels up the spine, lengthening the space between each vertebra, up to the neck and head, which remain in line with the spine. Each contraction is accompanied with an exhalation of breath. To the inexperienced eye, a contraction may look like a sucking in of the gut or a hunching over of the torso. However, any change in the rib cage, shoulders, or neck, is a result of the building of the contraction from the pelvis and occurs automatically when it has been performed correctly.

The Release

The release is the counter to the contraction. It occurs on the inhalation of breath. A release also begins from the pelvis and travels up the spine to return the torso to a neutral, straight position.

A second type of release, called the high release occurs when a dancer opens their breastbone to the sky and seems to rest their torso on an invisible shelf beneath the shoulder blades. The rib cage maintains alignment over the hips with no break in the lower back. The head remains in line with the spine.

The Spiral

A twisting of the torso around the spine, or spiral, is another fundamental part of Graham technique. Like the contraction, the spiral begins in the pelvis and travels up the spine to the neck and head, although the head always stays in line with the spine. The changes in the torso take place as a cause and effect process as the spiral moves up from the pelvis. The lower spine must move before the shoulders which move before the neck, etc. As the dancer releases from the spiral and returns to a neutral position, the movement, again, originates from the pelvis and travels upwards.

A Typical Graham Technique Class

All Graham classes spend approximately 30-45 minutes performing exercises on the floor at the beginning of class. Much like a ballet technique class, there is a progression of specific exercises, each which can be altered to fit the ability level of the class. The floor work is especially focused on the use of the contraction/release and the spiral.

The middle of class is spent on center work with a set of standard exercises to warm up the legs and feet and to get the dancers moving. The rest of the class is spent applying the concepts learned in the beginning of class to combinations that move across the floor. Choreography from Graham dances may sometimes be used during this portion of the class to demonstrate the intersection of technique with repertory.

Famous students and members of Graham's Company include Paul Taylor, Merce Cunningham, Erick Hawkins, Bertram Ross, and Pearl Lang, among others. Graham's works are still performed today by the Martha Graham Dance Company and the Martha Graham Ensemble. Students interested in learning Graham technique today can take class at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York City.

Technique: The Hows of Horton

The Lester Horton technique constructs some of the best human skyscrapers in the dance world. And like good building design, the Horton technique's emphasis on flat backs, pelvic hinges, and "lateral T's" produces a long-muscled, powerhouse dancer--something not easily toppled. Uninitiated eyes widen the moment an advanced Horton dancer strikes a "lateral T." To create the position resembling the letter "T," a dancer stands on one leg, tilts his or her torso 90 degrees, and counterbalances it with the oppositional energy of the extending leg. Dancers capable of performing the lateral T in turns, jumps, and transitions to the floor project a sense of invincibility.

HISTORY Born in 1906 in Indiana, Lester Horton studied Native American dance, researched world dance styles, was inspired by occasional Denishawn concerts, and was a keen observer of the natural world. Moving to California in 1928, Horton danced with Michio Ito, a choreographer who had trained in Dalcroze Eurythmics, and then he formed his own company. He also choreographed for theater, films, and nightclubs. Generous,

paternal, and a bit of a ham, he developed his technique by studying anatomy and by formulating exercises to strengthen and open up the body for performance in any style. The Lester Horton Dance Theater, which formally opened in West Hollywood in 1946, was the first permanent theater in the U.S. devoted to modern dance. It stood out for its ethnic inclusiveness. Having a diverse company, said former Horton dancer Don Martin "wasn't a matter of being politically correct. If you could do the work, he wanted to work with you." Horton died at age 47. Today his technique's influence is worldwide.

HORTON'S DANCERS Horton developed his technique on a handful of students. His primary protégée and later collaborator was Bella Lewitzky. When Lewitzky left to start her own company, Horton focused on Carmen de Lavallade, James Truitte, Don Martin, Joyce Trisler, Janet Collins, Arthur Mitchell, and Alvin Alley. It was Ailey, a youngster, who stepped in after Horton's sudden death to choreograph the necessary premieres.

WHY STUDY HORTON? Milton Myers, who teaches at Jacob's Pillow and The Ailey School, says the technique strengthens and increases the expressive range of every body, not just classically proportioned ones.

Ana Marie Forsythe, who chairs the Horton department at The Alley School, says Horton's warm up, like the ballet barre, moves from simple to more complex exercises. It begins with roll downs and flat hacks. It culminates with fortification studies, many of which teach students to transition from the floor to knees to standing smoothly.

Cynthia Riesterer says the technique addresses every inch of the body and that "each one of the 17 fortifications is based on working a specific body part or a quality of movement." Riesterer teaches at Cincinnati School for the Creative and Performing Arts.

ASPECTS OF A HORTON CLASS * Beginning and ending each exercise in parallel to create muscular balance * Beginning class with flat backs, then primitive squats, laterals, leg swings, metatarsal presses, lunges and dimensional tonus (the yawn stretch) * In exercises where extreme stretches, sustained extensions or deep hinges are executed, large muscles—like the quads and the gluteus—may shake. Do not be alarmed; it's normal! * After a sustained movement study, using a swing series or a rhythmic exercise to wake up the body and the mind * Never treating an exercise as though it is just for strengthening or limbering a body part. Using each exercise to explore its expressive qualities * Taking chances as the class progresses, but not diminishing the focus on precision work * Using improvisation to awaken individual dancers' movement sensibilities

Watch the following YouTube videos on Martha Graham and Lester Horton:

Martha Graham

<http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7jSDtfee6lFUPdNZJ43gsA>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dX7YQxn7HVw>

Lester Horton

<http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaVaq5HfjFPf44XDtsw0eQw>

<http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfaRax97s2Js5TNUWakjxRA>

Write a 2 page essay on the following:

What is your dance dream? How do you see your life in dance? If you could have the dance career you always wanted, what would that be made up of? What type of dancer would you be? What company would you dance for? What Broadway play would you be a part of? What would a typical day in the life of your dance career be made up of? How much money would you make? What other stars would want to have you work with them? Dream big and show how dance will influence your life after you leave high school. Be specific. If you can dream it, you can be it.

Find these words

Arabesque	Assemble	Ballerina	Chasee	Choreographer
Coupe Degage	Develope	Elevation	Entrechat	Glissade
5 th Position	Flexibility	4 th Position	Frappe	Grande Battement
Jete	Port de bra	Plie	Rond de Jambe	Sissonne

2nd Position

F	O	U	R	T	H	P	O	S	I	T	I	O	N	S	U	I	U
J	I	I	D	E	V	E	L	O	P	P	E	R	Q	U	R	T	I
F	R	A	P	P	E	Z	A	R	A	B	E	S	Q	U	E	E	R
P	G	R	A	N	D	E	B	A	T	T	E	M	E	N	T	I	A
P	F	L	E	X	I	B	I	L	I	T	Y	R	E	L	E	V	E
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V	A	S	A	E	T	T	E	U	O	R	I	P	I	N	O	E	E