<u>The Majestic Presents the Martha Graham Dance Company: A Dual Centennial Event</u>
With Special Guest, Tony Award-winner John Rubenstein, and with an ensemble featuring members of the Sunderman Conservatory of Music led by Dr. César Leal.
<u>February 3, 2026 (7:30 PM)</u>

Gettysburg, PA (January 4, 2026) – The Majestic Theater's four-part 100th anniversary season culminates on February 3 with a dual centennial event featuring the Martha Graham Dance Company. The Majestic's milestone season was curated to highlight film, music, theatre, and dance, and will welcome America's oldest and one of its most prestigious dance companies for this special occasion.

Martha Graham (1894-1991) is known as one of the most influential artistic forces of the 20th century, first performing with a supporting group of dancers on April 18, 1926. Her groundbreaking and uniquely American style of dance has impacted generations of artists and captivated audiences worldwide. The Martha Graham Dance Company has received international acclaim in more than fifty countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and has produced several award-winning film broadcasts on PBS and around the world. The Company's 2025-2026 season is their culmination of a three-year celebration featuring an extensive series of programs and events that explore the diversity and depth of Graham's artistic legacy. The 2025-2026 tour schedule includes international venues such as the Megaron Concert Hall in Athens, Greece, and Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Italy, as well as a number of states across the country. In addition, noteworthy historic performance venues include the base of the Great Pyramids in Egypt and the ancient Odeon of Herodes Atticus theater on the Acropolis in Athens.

"This is an uncommon opportunity for arts lovers and history lovers alike. Two of the works are pure celebrations of the best of American Arts: Graham's iconic *Appalachian Spring* and the new work, *En Masse,* while two others deal directly with history in ways that are thought-provoking, poignant, and inspiring to behold. An outsized evening like this at the Majestic is a fitting tribute to

Gettysburg's late visionary impresario and producer, Karl Held," stated the Majestic Theater's Executive Director, Brett Messenger.

The program on February 3 showcases masterpieces by Graham alongside newly commissioned works to unite the work of choreographers across time. Graham's beloved *Appalachian Spring,* the masterpiece that won Aaron Copland the Pulitzer Prize for the score, takes place in a 19th-century Pennsylvania Settlement and captures a sense of American optimism and folk culture as the war in Europe was ending. Aaron Copland weaves the Shaker tune, "Simple Gifts," throughout his luminous score, while Martha Graham's choreography includes square dance patterns, skips and paddle turns, curtsies, and even a grand right and left. This fall, the Company premiered *En Masse* by Hope Boykin, which opens with an incomplete excerpt of music that Leonard Bernstein was working on at the time of his death. Christopher Rountree, a three-time Grammy-nominated composer, imagines what the short piece from Bernstein could be by building the composition in *For Martha (Variations on a Theme by Leonard Bernstein)*. *Suite for Dance from Mass* is a new arrangement of excerpts from Bernstein's *MASS*, also by Rountree, which will be performed live by an ensemble featuring students from Gettysburg College's Sunderman Conservatory under the baton of Dr. César Leal. A highlight of the program, which will only take place in Gettysburg, is Tony Award-winner John Rubinstein (Pippin, Children of a Lesser God) performing *Simple Song*, a Shaker tune woven into Graham's ballet, from Leonard Bernstein's *MASS*. John Rubinstein will return to the Majestic for this special occasion after his portrayal of President Dwight D. Eisenhower in *Eisenhower: This Piece of Ground* in October. This special performance pays homage to the only other time Rubinstein performed *Simple Song*, in 1978 under the baton of Leonard Bernstein himself for the first Kennedy Center Honors, for which his father, Arthur, was an inaugural recipient.

Lamentation premiered ninety-five years ago in New York City in the Maxine Elliot's Theater with music composed by Zoltán Kodály. This piece is performed almost entirely from a seated position, while the dancer wears a purple fabric. The tension created as the dancer's body struggles with the material resembles the essence of grief, and how grief surrounds but moves and changes with an individual. *Immediate Tragedy* was created as a solo for Graham in 1937 as a reaction to the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War and the rise of fascism. Graham stopped performing the solo in the late 1930s, and the piece was considered lost. In 2020, using recently discovered photos of Graham in a performance and other archival materials, Janet Eilber

reimagined the choreography for *Immediate Tragedy*, and Christopher Rountree created a new score inspired by handwritten pages of music by Henry Cowell. *We the* People, a powerful new work by acclaimed choreographer Jamar Roberts, set to music written by the Grammy, Pulitzer, and MacArthur prize-winning folk musician, Rhiannon Giddens, will be performed at the Majestic nearly one year after its premiere in February of 2024. Roberts has said, "*We the People* is equal parts protest and lament, speculating on the ways in which America does not always live up to its promise. Against the backdrop of traditional American music, *We the People* hopes to serve as a reminder that the power for collective change belongs to the people." The program will conclude with a newly commissioned work in celebration of America 250.

The final performance of the Majestic's four-part Centennial Season is dedicated to Karl Held. Karl, a longtime friend of the Majestic, was instrumental in the theater's renovation and led its grand reopening twenty years ago. The evening will conclude outside the theater with the dimming of the marquee and a moment of silence. This performance is made possible in part by the J. William Warehime Fund of the Majestic Theater Centennial Endowment, a special gift from the J. William Warehime Foundation, and the Lydia Ziegler Clare Fund. Outreach and *Our American Document* were made possible by a generous gift from Mary and Jed Smith.

Tickets are available at the Majestic Theater Box Office, 25 Carlisle St., Gettysburg, by calling (717) 337-8200 or online at www.gettysburgmajestic.org. The Majestic Theater at the Jennifer and David LeVan Performing Arts Center is owned and operated by Gettysburg College as a gathering place for its campus and community to celebrate the arts together.

###