



Students in Class Photo by Kristin Lodoen©

# Taking Class with Martha

**The Martha Graham Technique is taught in a class setting. All classes are approximately 90 minutes, divided into three sections. Classes always begin seated with the practice of the basic contraction, and develop towards dancers moving through space. Keep in mind, every movement executed in a class is intended as a vehicle for communication – the movement must have meaning. Throughout class, students must motivate the exercises with images, visualizing something personal and inspiring for each exercise.**

## **30' Floor Work – to strengthen muscles in back and spine; to access the breath**

MG dance classes all start with dancers sitting on the floor, as a means of strengthening and articulating the torso (without appendages). It is here that the basic contraction and release of the body is practiced, primarily through exaggerating the action of the body as it exhales (folds, draws energy in -- contracts) and inhales (expands, sends energy out -- releases).

## **30' Knee Work and Standing**

This is where the torso continues to inform how a dancer's appendages will move: How the energy from the center of the body is projected in standing positions, and how it is used to move in larger ways using more space.

## **30' Moving Through Space – aerobic**

This is the final part of class that includes leaps, jumps and falls. Dancers typically will move across the floor on the diagonal or in other geometric patterns through the space, and on different levels. The projection of energy is now totally developed so that it is strong enough to communicate the dancer's inner monologue with the audience members in the back row! This is training for the stage and for communication. Technique class is preparation, not an end in itself.

## **Adding Appendages**

The contraction and release of breathing, by definition, informs the arms, legs and head. Once the work on the floor has strengthened and prepared the torso, the appendages can be added in more complicated exercises and patterns.