

In Major Expansion, Martha Graham Dance Company Will Move to Midtown

The acclaimed troupe will relocate to a Times Square tower, more than doubling its footprint, and building six new studios.

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By **Javier C. Hernández**

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The Martha Graham Dance Company, one of New York’s most storied troupes, will celebrate its centenary next year. And for its birthday it has lined up a momentous gift: a gleaming new headquarters in Midtown Manhattan.

The company announced on Friday that it would leave its offices in the West Village of Manhattan and relocate to a 30,000-square-foot space in Times Square, more than doubling its footprint. The troupe, the oldest in the United States, will build six new dance studios and expand its education programs.

“It’s just feels like a triumph to have found this space,” LaRue Allen, executive director of the Martha Graham Dance Company, said in an interview. “It will be a real game changer for us.”

While the pandemic has created new financial pressures and uncertainty for performing arts groups, the Martha Graham Dance Company said its new headquarters was a sign of stability.

“We’re all under siege a little bit,” Allen said. “Funding is always swinging in the breeze a little bit. To be able to take this step feels like the dance world has a good toehold in the city.”

Under a leasehold agreement with Paramount Leasehold, a real estate firm, the Graham company will essentially own the space on the 11th floor of the Paramount Building on Broadway at 43rd Street for 30 years. Martha Graham Dance Company will renovate the space for about \$6 million, with Paramount Leasehold providing about \$2 million.

The leasehold arrangement will allow the Graham troupe, a nonprofit organization, and Paramount Leasehold to claim an exemption from property taxes on the space.

Martha Graham Dance Company is the latest dance troupe to benefit from a post-pandemic commercial real estate slump. The Paul Taylor Dance Company recently relocated to a Midtown Manhattan office tower under a similar agreement.

In New York, one of the world's most expensive real estate markets, only a small number of dance troupes are able to afford substantial real estate. (Others include Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the Mark Morris Dance Group and Dance Theater of Harlem.)

The Graham company, which operates a school and a dance company, has been searching for a new space for more than three years. The company has two studios at its headquarters at the Westbeth Artists Housing complex, where it has been since 2012, when it took over Merce Cunningham's studios there. Graham also rents space in a nearby church basement.

The new space will allow the company to significantly expand its educational offerings, Allen said.

"Our students need better facilities," she said. "The facilities we have now — we're crammed in, to say the least."

The company plans to rent out studio space at its new headquarters to other performing arts groups at a discounted rate.

"It will be a home for us," Allen said, "and for others as well."

Javier C. Hernández reports on classical music, opera and dance in New York City and beyond. More about Javier C. Hernández