Graham’s ‘Rite’ astounding, apt

Choreography plumbs emotional power of score

By ANNA BEVERLY LEIGHT

Graham’s ‘Rite of Spring’ has a reputation as a famous dance piece, but it was not always so. The dance was created in 1920 by the renowned choreographer Martha Graham, and it was not until the 1930s that it gained widespread recognition. The dance was initially met with controversy and even outrage due to its unabashed depiction of sexuality and the use of the male body in a way that was considered scandalous at the time.

The dance is based on Mikhail Fokine’s version of Stravinsky’s score, which was itself a radical departure from the original orchestra arrangement. Stravinsky’s score is known for its dissonant harmonies and unconventional rhythms, and it was this that Graham sought to exploit in her choreography. The result was a dance that was both powerful and controversial, and it served as a catalyst for the development of modern dance.

In Graham’s ‘Rite of Spring’, the dancers are depicted as a tribe of archaic women who are led by their male leaders. The dance is filled with images of fertility and sacrifice, and it culminates in the ritual killing of a young boy, who is chosen as a sacrifice to the gods.

The choreography is intense and visceral, and it uses the dancers’ bodies to convey a range of emotions, from joy and celebration to fear and repression. The dance is a powerful exploration of the human condition, and it continues to be performed and studied today as a testament to Graham’s innovative approach to dance.

In conclusion, Martha Graham’s ‘Rite of Spring’ is a dance that is both pioneering and provoking. It is a work that challenges conventions and defies expectations, and it is a testament to the power of dance as a form of artistic expression. The dance is a reminder of the importance of free expression and the need for artistic innovation, and it is a work that continues to inspire and challenge audiences around the world.