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GRAHAM OPENS DANCE SERIES

By IRVING KOLODIN.

Something definitely was lacking in the Plymouth Theater last night as Martha Graham and her company opened a two-weeks season of dance performances, the longest she has ventured upon in her local career. It was not until the program was well along that one realized that absent was the frenzied, adoring Graham audiences of the old days in the Guild Theater, where hundreds seemed to be having a good time, even if you weren't among them. Probably most of them are now wives and mothers, who will be on hand for the week end, but they leave a gap.

In toto, the evening was not the sort to send one away cheering. Miss Graham has left an indelible mark on the dance, as an innovator and a liberator. Coming back to her work last night after not seeing it for a couple of years made me wonder whether she is not more important as a generative force than as a creator and an interpreter.

"Appalachian Spring," the much admired novelty of last season, has a mood and an emotion to convey. But both seemed to dissipate under the lengthy examination to which they were subjected. One can think of very few dance creations indeed that can sustain the interest in a single set, with only eight performers, for upward of half an hour. Then, too, Aaron Copland's fine score was raggedly delivered by the smallish orchestra that attempted to play it.

"Herodiade," which followed, is more compact. But its theses—"The scene is an antechamber where a woman waits with her attendant. She does not know for what she waits; she does not know what she may be required to do or endure"—is much too negative for my taste. I am admiring of much of the fine bodily discipline Miss Graham and her company (especially May O'Donnell, Merce Cunningham and Erick Hawkins) brought to their performance, but little they did drew me into a circle of contact and comprehension. The evening concluded with "Every Soul Is a Circus." Louis Horst was the musical director, but he did not seem to be keeping the best company last night.