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MARTHA GRAHAM AT MT HOLYOKE

Famed Dancer and Company Tell 'Legend' of Emily Dick- inson in 'Letter to the World'

South Hadley, Dec. 8—Martha Graham and her company of dancers presented a program of unusual interest to a large audience in Chapin auditorium at Mount Holyoke college tonight.

Miss Graham not only was acclaimed for her exceptional dancing ability but for the remarkable originality of her choreography. Particularly appreciated was her "Letter to the World," a dance built on the "legend" of Emily Dickinson. Jean Erdman, a talented member of Miss Graham's group, set the mood for each of five scenes in the dance with beautifully spoken lines from poems by Emily Dickinson. Erick Hawkins as the "Lover," Jane Dudley as "Ancestress" and Merce Cunningham as "March," gave Miss Graham excellent support as did Sophie Maslow, Ethel Butler, Nina Fonaroff and Nina Crown. The choral work was skillfully handled by Elizabeth Halpern, Pearl Lang, David Campbell, Sasha Liebich and John Butler. The music for the dance was written by Hunter Johnson. Costumes were by Edythe Gilfond and Arch Lauterer was artistic collaborator.

The combination of the spoken word, music and the dance proved strikingly effective. The poetic lines took on new meaning for the audience as Miss Graham danced "Because I See New Englandly," "The Postponeless Creature," "The Little Tippler," "Leaf at Love Turned Back" and "This, Then, Is My Letter to the World."

For her opening dance, Miss Graham chose a satirical bit based on Vachel Lindsey's lines: "Every soul is a circus, every mind is a tent, every heart is a sawdust ring where the circling race is spent." Satire and the dance have always been good companions and this dance that described a woman in "a circus of ridiculous situations and silly behaviors" proved amusing. It might be even more so with a little judicious editing.

The second of the three dances on the program was "El Penitente," a religious dance with Erick Hawkins as the Penitent, Merce Cunningham as the Christ Figure and Martha Graham as the Virgin, Magdalen and Mother. Louis Horst, musical director for the group, provided a stirring musical background and the mask of Christ, an ingenious abstraction, was made by Isamu Noguchi, well-known New York artist.

MILTON BERLINER.