

# A BRILLIANT DANCE BY MARTHA GRAHAM

'Deaths and Entrances' Holds  
an Immense Audience With  
Rapt Attention

By JOHN MARTIN

Martha Graham restored the dance to its status of a profound and creative art last night at the Forty-sixth Street Theatre by giving the season its first serious performance in this medium. It was Miss Graham's first appearance hereabout in two seasons and the tremendous audience that turned out for her, in spite of the weather, was a brilliant one, containing notables from all the fields of art. Its attitude was characteristically one of rapt attention and enthusiastic response, with perhaps more than the customary quota of cheering.

The program was one to test the capacity of even Miss Graham's large and devoted following, for it contained a long, new work called "Deaths and Entrances," which must rank among her most difficult compositions. By design, it tells no consecutive story but is a drama of inward reflection, making no compromises with time-sequence or the logic of events, but treating emotional experiences as having a self-contained relationship to each other. It is about three "doom-eager" sisters, suggestive of the Brontës, and it projects a kind of bleak and wind-swept madness that is altogether Brontëesque. Simple objects, such as a glass goblet, a vase, a seashell, awaken streams of tortured memory, and in their torrent, the turbulent action unfolds. The incident is never transparent; sometimes it contains a wild amorousness, sometimes there are embattled angers, and over all hangs a mysticism that is utterly vague but compelling. In the end the principal sister comes through the delirium with a kind of elevation of spirit that brings the curtain down on a painfully won note of affirmation.

At first seeing that is as clear an exposition as it is possible to give of a work that is curiously out of this world, curiously involved and curiously authoritative. It contains some scenes, however, that even at first sight are tremendous—a mad solo by Miss

Graham with a pair of chess pieces, a fight between Merce Cunningham and Erick Hawkins as rivals in love, a fantastic scene by the four men of the cast, a threesome by the sisters in which Jane Dudley dances magnificently. The music by Hunter Johnson leans to dryness and cacophony, and Arch

Lauterer has been prevented by the presence of the "Rosalinda" set on the stage of the theatre from doing all he might with the décor. But in spite of these things and of the general elusiveness of the work as a whole it is an extraordinary experience in the dance theatre and demands not only to be seen but to be re-seen.

Happily an opportunity for this will be provided on Jan. 9, when, according to an announcement during the intermission, the entire program will be repeated.

The evening opened with another new work, this one a solo and one without any problems. "Salem Shore" is its title and it is "a ballad of a woman's longing for her beloved's return from the sea." If it is perhaps not Miss Graham's finest work in this medium, she dances it with a lovely eloquence. Mr. Lauterer has achieved a stage of great beauty for its presentation, and Paul Nordoff has contributed an atmospheric musical setting. There is some verse spoken off-stage to illuminate the action, but last night it was all but

inaudible, due, no doubt, to trouble with the public address system.

The evening closed with a repetition of the always delightful and gay little "Punch and Judy," with Robert McBride's score played for the first time by a small orchestra. Louis Horst as usual was the musical director.