

MUSIC OF THE DAY

By Miles Kastendieck

Martha Graham Scores Another Ovation On Reappearance at 46th St. Theater

Leave it to Martha Graham to bring the most challenging ideas into the dance world on her return for a performance at the 46th St. Theatre last night. Her latest creation, "Deaths and Entrances," is undoubtedly her most provocative work.

While this alone would place her in the forefront of choreographers, the whole program attested to the individuality of her contribution and the originality of her ideas. Some of the esteem in which she is held was expressed in a "house-sold-out" announcement several days before the performance. Because of this reception she will repeat this program on Jan. 9 probably at the same theater.

Martha Graham has the remarkable ability to deal graphically with intangibles. This talent got a three-fold expression in this program, though the opening number, "Salem Shore," and "Deaths and Entrances" had certain qualities in common. The third work, one of her most popular and ingenious creations, "Punch and the Judy," was primarily satiric.

"Salem Shore," a ballad of a woman's longing for her beloved's return from sea, is a singularly moving spectacle, stark in outline, yet meaningful in movement. Expression and gesture carried the emotional changes, while the spoken word (unfortunately almost inaudible) lined them up more distinctly. The piece was effectively set with some stage properties and good lighting.

"Deaths and Entrances" concerns the restless paces of the heart on some Winter evening. That is a large order because past, present and future objects, feelings and dreams are worked out in a state of flux. On first acquaintance the result is no clearer perhaps than the stream of consciousness Miss Graham is seeking to depict. Our fleeting thoughts are never ordered, but come rushing forth amid strange associations. So this psychological dance-drama is perplexing though credible in flashes

of insight. Putting into movement the poetic experience of intangibles such as those emanating from three sisters "doom eager" to fulfill their destinies, is no easy achievement. The work captures interest, though it may hold the attention irregularly. Probably it is a bit too long.

It was strikingly performed. The Graham technique is now well defined. There are meaning and resourcefulness and graphic qualities in all its movement that succeed in conveying an apparently ceaseless flow of ideas. The three sisters were danced by Miss Graham, Sophie Maslow and Jane Dudley. The "three remembered children," their youthful counterparts, were played by Ethel Butler, Nina Fonaroff and Pearl Lang. Erick Hawkins played the "dark beloved" and Merce Cunningham, the "poetic beloved." The impersonal lovers, called "the cavaliers," were danced by John Butler and Robert Horan. The score was by Hunter Johnson, remembered for the music of "Letter to the World." Its abstractions were as modern as the work itself.

"Punch and the Judy" came as excellent balance to the introspective choreography of the other work. Its story of man and woman ever falling into triangular complications, both in substance and in movement, is as old as it is also probably humorous. Both Miss Graham and Mr. Hawkins dance this wonderfully to say nothing of the excellent support of the rest of the company.

A small orchestra replaced the piano accompaniments of old with generally pleasing results. There was definitely more "theatre" to the whole show. All things considered, Martha Graham and her company are now unique on Broadway.