N.Y. "Sun" May 15, 19

GRAHAM PRESENTS COPLAND'S BALLET

By OSCAR THOMPSON.

"Appalachian Spring" has finally reached New York. The ballet for which Aaron Copland wrote the music and which gained for him the Pulitzer Prize, was presented by Martha Graham and her supporting group at the first dance recital of her spring festival week, opening at the National Theater last night. Commissioned by Edith Sprague Coolidge and first undertaken by Miss Graham at the Library of Congress Festival last October, its introduction locally has awaited the dancer's return at the season's end.

"Appalachian Spring" is notable, first of all, for Mr. Copland's score. This is clearly the best of recent ballet writing—that of Mr. Copland's own works included. The music is clear as a bell and it has freshness. It is melodious and it is technicallly expert. Though it abjures the sort of popular idiom that served Mr. Copland well in "Billy the Kid" and "Rodeo," there is a clear Americanism about it that is very agreeable to the ear. It is scored for small orchestra, with prominence given to a piano; but this scoring could very easily be extended.

Mr. Copeland's is not period music, but its themes and their dress suggest the pioneer times of the ballet's story more than most ballet scores of this day suggest any particular era. The frenetic music for the outburst of the revivalist is an extraordinary achievement and the dancing of it was a tour-de-force last night.

All of the story that was given to the audience last night was contained in a brief program note which stated that "spring was celebrated by a man and a woman building a house with joy and love and prayer; by a revivalist and his followers in their shouts of exultation; by a pioneering woman with her dreams of a promised land." Many of those in the audience elaborated other details. Certatinly, Miss Graham's choreography gave them cause to think that every one departed for the promised land at the close, save the bride and the huhbandman. Some of the symbolism was not so clear, and it had no need to be. The firmness of Miss Graham's technic, her grace and solidity of line, the lyric beauty of her solo passages were sufficient, with or without a story.

Merce Cunningham was scarcely second as the Revivalist. May

O'Donnell presented the Pioneering Woman skillfully and Erick Hawkins was an expressive Husbandman. The followers of the revivalist were admirably danced by Nina Fornaroff, Marjorie Mazia, Ethel Winter and Yuriko. The placing of the Revivalist's hat on the upheld hands of these four in one of the pretty poses they assumed was one of the ballet's quaint touches of humor.

Miss Graham repeated "Salem Shore" and "Deaths and Entrances," which she introduced here a year ago. The former has music by Paul Nordoff and the latter by Hunter Johnson. Isamu Noguchi was credited with the artistic collaboration for "Appalachian Spring" and Arch Lauterer for that of the other ballets. Louis Horst conducted an orchestra of seventeen players. Mr. Copland joined the dancers in the bows after "Appalachian Spring."