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'LETTER TO WORLD' DANCED BY GRAHAM

Jane Dudley and Jean Erdman Guest Artists Before Throng —'Dark Meadow' Given

By JOHN MARTIN

Martha Graham gave the season's first performance of "Letter to the World" last night at the Plymouth Theatre, before an audience that filled the house to overflowing.

This remains one of her most glowingly beautiful works, even coming as it did at the end of a long and taxing program, and the performance was an admirable one. Jane Dudley and Jean Erdman returned as guest artists to their former rôles of the Ancestress and the "One Who Speaks," respectively, and both of them were at the top of their form. Miss Erdman, indeed, has probably never read the lovely Emily Dickinson verses more beautifully. Miss Graham herself, Erick Hawkins and Merce Cunningham in their familiar rôles danced them to the hilt and the company, which is in notably fine shape this season, did likewise.

The evening also contained the second performance of the new "Dark Meadow," a work which is likely to cause controversy for some time to come. For all that it is elusive and difficult to follow if one attempts to read meanings into it, it is perhaps as engrossing a forty minutes as the dance theatre has yet produced. Its entire conception taps a kind of fourth dimension of the subconscious, not as the orthodox surrealists tap it, but in a comparable vein. Its movements are extraordinarily evocative, and its choreography is magnificently rich. A passage in its second section in which Miss Graham struggles against a long black cloth, and an erotic passage for six dancers in the third section must rank among the finest things she has ever given us. The whole work gains enormously on second seeing, and whether one likes it or not, it is unquestionably an important event of the season and must definitely be seen.

The program opened with a fine performance of the fresh and sunny "Appalachian Spring." Surely here was a program of such generous substance as to tax the emotional assimilation of any audience.