



Martha Graham (left) and company in Appalachian Spring. (Photo "Dance News" Arnold Eagle)

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By ANATOLE CHUJOY

**MARTHA GRAHAM** and Dance Company, N. Y. Season, beg. Jan 21, at the Plymouth Theatre, Mgt. S. Hurok.

Martha Graham's first season under the management of S. Hurok, opened Jan. 21 at the Plymouth Theatre to a sold out and dressed up house. Last season's novelties, Appalachian Spring to Aaron Copland's music in decor by Isamu Noguchi and costumes by Edythe Gilfond, and Herodiade, to Paul Hindemith's music in de-

cor and costumes by the same artists, gained from additional seeings, as do most of Miss Graham's works. If Herodiade deepened in intensity of the impression it created in the spectator, Appalachian Spring with its wonderful score grew in stature as a stylized folk piece. Every Soul Is A Circus, staged some six years ago, has stood up very well indeed.

The piece de resistance of Martha Graham's season will apparently be her new and controversial work, Dark Meadow, world-premiered Jan. 23.

#### Dark Meadow

Never too literal and outward, Miss Graham made her Dark Meadow more obscure than most of her compositions, with the exception, perhaps, of Herodiade.

According to the program note, "the action of Dark Meadow in concerned with adventures of seeking. This dance is the re-enactment of the Mysteries which attend that adventure: Remembrance of the ancestral footsteps, Terror of loss, Ceaselessness of love, Recurring ecstasy of the flowering branch".

As performed, however, any spectator can read any meaning into Dark Meadow. Isamu Noguchi's props, generously distributed over the stage can be accepted as phallic symbols, if your mind runs in that direction. In that case the piece becomes as clear as a dream interpreted by Dr. Freud himself. If your mind runs differently, you can accept Mr. Naguchi's paraphernalia for what they are, odd shaped objects which just grace the stage. In either case, however, I am afraid you'll be more occupied with the stage setting than

with the dances.

#### The Dances

Miss Graham has set for herself a few beautiful choreographic passages. There is an interesting pas de deux for Miss Graham (The One Who Seeks) and Erik Hawkins (He Who Summons). May O'Donnell, as She Of The Ground, has at least one exciting dance. Most of the actual dancing is done by the ensemble, and the formal arrangements staged for the group have a tendency to overshadow the generally formless movements of the principals.

#### A shortcoming of Dark Meadow

is its overabundance of decor. This includes not only the stationary props we spoke about, but a length of back material on which Miss Graham depends for the effect of a long passage. At least one stage effect is below Miss Graham's high standard of taste and artistic standing. It is the appearance of green leaves from the side of a tall conical object in the background. The effect is too obvious, and the twigs look exactly like a railroad semaphore signaling: go ahead.

As a theatre piece Dark Meadow is much too long and at times repetitious. Its music by Carlos Chavez is meager, monotonous, limited in invention.

#### The Company

Edythe Gilfond's costumes, especially for the three principals, are not of the designer's best creations.

One must comment on the excellence of Miss Graham's company in this and the other numbers. The dancers are well trained and dance with the spirit that makes them a true unit and not a group of dancers assembled for the occasion. In addition to the principals mentioned, there is Merce Cunningham, Jane Dudley and Jean Erdman. The latter two are guest artists.

The company includes: Pearl Lang, Nina Fonaroff, Natanya Neumann, Marjorie Mazia, Yuri-ko, Ethel Winter, Helen McGehee, David Zellmer, Mary Ryder, Douglass Watson.

Musical director Louis Horst conducted the chamber orchestra.