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ART OF MARTHA GRAHAM EVOKES GREAT OVATION

Modern Dancer Finds Favor
With Fashionable Folk At
The Metropolitan Theatre

By EVERHARDT ARMSTRONG

Rodin, said Huneker, "shivered the syntax of stone."

Likewise, Martha Graham has shivered the syntax of the dance—and succeeded. For if the way of the iconoclast is often thorny, this daring artist has not found it so. She flings "ugliness, so called" (to borrow the language of the program notes) at her audiences, and, as the homely phrase goes, "makes 'em like it."

For like it they assuredly do.

Delicate Beauty

Eastern critics and connoisseurs have cheered her innovations in rapturous phrases. And last night at the Metropolitan, when she faced her first Seattle audience, enthusiasm ran high from the very beginning, and at the end of the recital (Miss Graham still uses that conventional word), she was accorded an ovation.

So no one can say in disparagement of Seattle that we are inhospitable to the new and unfamiliar in the changing art of the dance.

Admittedly a member of the "Left Wing"—a radical—Miss Graham sometimes avoids grace as assiduously as certain modern composers avoid recognizable melody. Some of her creations are all angles and corners, stark and abrupt. In these she interprets the modern age—the machine age. But, when the occasion demands, she can give us exquisite pantomime, and at times she actually dances with a delicacy and formal beauty that even an eighteenth century audience would have understood and applauded.

And, heretic that I am, I found most pleasure, last night, in those of her offerings that made no very violent break with the past—such as Erik Satie's "Tanagra," suffused with the very spirit of classicism; and Scriabin's "Fragilitie," in which, a program note told us, we were viewing "a portrayal of the fragile qualities of romantic womanhood."

Caressed Eye

Both caressed the eye, and both were exquisite studies in rhythm.

As one enjoyed the lucid beauty of the "Tanagra," it was hard to believe that the same amazing woman had just given us glimpses of an art bearing the same relation to dancing, as dancing is conventionally known, as some of the wilder flights of James Joyce bear to conventional prose.

Acutely sensitive to rhythmic nuance, Miss Graham made everything she did interesting. Also, she revealed a sense of dramatic values (not melodrama) in such modern conceptions as her immigrant studies, "Steerage" and "Strike," set to music by Slavenski, and in Ornstein's "Poems of 1917," ending with an impressive "cry against the useless conventions of war."

Many of Miss Graham's costumes were startlingly beautiful, and some of them were just startling.

Composer Assists

Assisting the dancer was the gifted and facile composer-pianist, Louis Horst, who provided a veritable feast for devotees of modern music. He also figured in the role of composer, his "Fragments," for flute and gong, providing the tonal background for Miss Graham's arresting contrast of tragedy and comedy—one of the very finest of her offerings wisely chosen as a closing number.

The celebrated dancer appeared under the auspices of the Seattle chapter of Pro Musica. Frank Horsfall, flautist, assisted in the performance of "Fragments."