66 Fifth Avenue
New York City
May 21, 1942

Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge
Library of Congress
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mrs. Coolidge,

I am making this request of your consideration because a woman whom I believe and whom I think many others believe is one of the great creative artists of America, Martha Graham, needs help and possibly you can give it to her.

Pro what she has achieved she has had remarkably little help from either private or public sources. She has maintained a performing company of some size all her creative life, and since 1938 she has held together and toured a sizable company of thirteen dancers, which she has maintained entirely by money earned by teaching in her studio and various schools except for one anonymous gift of $1000 which was given her to present in New York, "Letter to the World". Whoever gave her that money had good judgment, for subsequently it has turned out to be a masterpiece; indeed, some critics, and from what they tell me personally, audiences, consider it to be not only one of the greatest dances or ballets of modern times, but one of the most moving experiences of any kind in the theatre.

While her touring this past year under the management of Mr. Austin Miller, of the New NBC Concerts, has been successful for a first year, there appears to be no possibility as yet of making enough to pay for the costs of producing her works. At the present time, there is no way of her making enough by teaching to pay for costumes, sets, and music.

I know of your long, and if I may say so as an artist myself, glorious interest in commissioning works for instrumentalists. Would you consider commissioning a composer to write a score for Miss Graham for a new work?

I feel that is is extremely important, now that she is at the height of her career, that she should be able to use the music of the finest composers of the time for her dance. It is impossible for her under the present circumstances to ask Mr. Copland or Mr. Hindemith, for example, (since I know she has been considering how she could approach them) to write for her since she has no money to offer them.

Her collaboration with a first rank composer would result I believe in a fine work. "Letter to the World" I am sure is so moving and rich because of Hunter Johnson's score.

I take the liberty of writing you about this without her knowledge because I have been so close to her for the last four years since I have been dancing as her partner, and know her difficulties and needs. Her year has been very arduous and has told on her. She is a brave woman and a brave artist. To have this present from you of a commissioned work would be a tonic which she so badly needs at this time, and I am sure you would be very happy at what would come out of her mature work at this time.

Perhaps you have not happened to see the book of photographs of her work published last fall, made by Barbara Morgan. In case you have not, I am sure you would be interested in seeing it, and so I am sending the book to you.

Thanking you for your consideration of my request, Sincerely,