Dance Gives Historic Significance

Representing one more effort of Martha Graham in the realm of the theater dance, "American Document," a dance-drama in five parts, was uncellophaned for local consumption last evening in Carnegie Hall. The performance was given under the auspices of the New Masses.

"American Document" had been given its world premiere at the Bennington Festival of the Dance last summer. Miss Graham has arranged it in a series of quasi-American Minstrel episodes, each touching on some important phase of American history. Besides a dance group and an assistant dance group, the piece calls for two solo dancers, Miss Graham and Eric Hawkins, and an interlocutor, Housely Stevens, Jr.

Aside from the obvious excellence shown by the dancers in the modern technic, and, particularly, Miss Graham's and Mr. Hawkins' suppleness, one could find little of beauty or imagination in "American Document," though it was apparent to the most unsympathetic observer that the work drips heavily with significance.

However, even the most unsympathetic observer required the imperative use of his ears to get it all, meaning specifically that the interlocutor, hoarsely intoned by Mr. Stevens, explains everything in primer English. Regretfully, one announces that the time has not yet come when the Euclidian lifting of a leg or bending of an elbow (strictly dance, not potational) can symbolize the order or chaos of the universe.

As for the rest of the credits:—The music, essentially piano-percussive, is by Ray Green, and it was played by Louis Horst and Normand Lloyd, pianists, and an unknown percussionist; the costumes by Edythe Gilfond, the stage design (one red and grey backdrop, indicative, perhaps, of the American flag) by Arch Lauterer.

A large audience applauded enthusiastically. R. C. B.

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