

"New Masses." Jan. 10. 1939.

Dedication To Democracy

MARTHA GRAHAM showed her *American Document* at the Alvin Theater Christmas night, and for the second time this short season an audience rose in ovation to a magnificent dance composition and, whatever its shortcomings, the finest single statement on and dedication to democracy that has come to the contemporary dance theater on this part of the Atlantic Seaboard. Not that dancers have neglected their understanding of democracy, or that *American Document* is the last word possible in this direction. But at no time in American dance has there been presented the knowledge of the history of struggle behind our present-day democracy, nor the immediate need to unite for its defense.

The composition needs both tightening and broadening; its long sweep, from the "Indian Episode" to 1938, requires a more even distribution of values; but in the light of the development of dancing in this country, the publicity-manufactured revival of enthusiasm for *decadent* ballet, and the equally sickly revival on the part of other of our leading dancers of an art-for-art's-sake, the dancing of Graham and especially of her *American Document* is a decidedly progressive and exceedingly welcome art.

OWEN BURKE.