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MARTHA GRAHAM

Modern Dancer Assisted by Group
at the Irvine Auditorium

Two seasons ago Martha Graham and her Dance Group participated in the series of lecture-recitals presented by the Art Alliance to illustrate the various aspects of the modern dance. On that occasion Miss Graham restricted herself to outlining certain principles of the modern dance and to an analysis of the technique developed to meet them. At the Irvine Auditorium Saturday night she and her group appeared in a program which included a number of Miss Graham's newer compositions embodying the principles she had examined on the earlier occasion. Strangely, the compositions of this recital and the technical demonstrations of the lecture were not greatly different. Throughout the evening one had the impression that Miss Graham, the composer, is the slave of Miss Graham, the technician.

A serviceable example was a piece called "Frontier," explained as a study of the pioneer woman who "typifies to us the vision and courage of those who extended our frontiers and established our heritage." A likely subject, but Miss Graham's composition impressed one member of the audience as being predominantly a technical exercise and her frontier woman as being essentially a modern dancer. This was true also of the group dance called "Celebration," designed to "objectify that inner excitement which we feel in the face of all great events." Again the dominant feature was the technique rather than the composition. And so it went throughout the evening.

As a technician, however, Miss Graham is superb, and her group is similarly accomplished. Everyone concerned dances with marvelous assurance and with an almost uncanny muscular detail. All this is impressive in its own way, but it is not the end of creative composition. Miss Graham is not uninventive, but her invention seems to run constantly towards new techniques. So far she seems unable to have placed this technical mastery at the service of a genuinely creative artistry. The recital was under the auspices of the Dance Group of the University of Pennsylvania and was attended by a large and extremely enthusiastic audience. Louis Horst was at the piano.—H. P.