

Hollywood (Cal.)
"Citizen-News."
Friday, March 1, 1940

Modernist's Dancing Art Exhibited

By VIOLA HEGYI SWISHER

Martha Graham, the American modernist whose personal concept of contemporary dance expression has become something of a cult, last night came to Philharmonic Auditorium with two compositions new to the Pacific Coast and two that have been presented here in previous seasons. The program was one of the new Merle Armitage series.

Supported by her austere trained group and her musical collaborator and accompanist, Louis Horst, Miss Graham created her usual controversial effect. Those who worship with singular devotion at the Graham shrine approved. Those who defy her as a dance faddist squirmed unhappily. The innocent bystanders, Mr. and Mrs. Public, were bewildered, pleased, or disappointed, according to their inclinations in matters terpsichorean.

Patterns in Space

A harsh and strident dance form, Miss Graham's art is meticulously worked out to achieve a maximum effect of patterns in space. A forceful, acid-etched method, it has strength and purpose. For Martha Graham it is an ideal medium of self-expression; for her satellites it is less successful.

The new satire, "Every Soul Is a Circus," for all its arresting title and length, proved to be something less than an important Graham work. Its comedic devices were banal and vapid, quite in keeping with the no longer original nor new cacophonies of Paul Nordoff's accompanying music. The title has been arrived at through a choreographic program setting forth the observation that in the circus of life every silly woman likes to envision herself as the star turn.

"Columbiad," a new and not particularly interesting solo with music by Horst, purported to be an "American ode to freedom in style and manner of declamatory poetry of the Revolution."

"Document" Repeated

Major offering of the evening was "American Document" with music by Ray Green, seen here last year and well worth a second viewing. In form it follows loosely the

basic pattern of the American minstrel show. In content it is a compelling historic panorama of the making of these United States. Stirring, clean-cut, splendidly devised, it is a tribute to democracy. Erick Hawkins, principal male dancer, and Houseley Stevens, Jr., the interlocutor, along with Miss Graham and the group, repeated their success of last year.

An interesting reflection on "American Document," with its theme of democracy and ostensible patriotism, was provided by recalling that at least two members of the Graham company, Jane Dudley and Sophie Maslow, gained national publicity in *Life* magazine of Feb. 5, which pictured the Dudley-Maslow faction or group dancing a "Me-

morial to Lenin" at Madison Square Garden in New York. A stellar speaker on this Soviet birthday program was Earl Browder, who that day had been convicted of fraud against the United States Government. The dancers in *Life* were pictured holding aloft a very large red flag.

Miss Graham's second solo of the evening was the familiar and vivid "Frontier."