

MARTHA GRAHAM AND TROUPE GLORIFY AMERICAN SCENE

BY ISABEL MORSE JONES

Martha Graham and company gave two new dance designs and repeated two last night in the Philharmonic Auditorium. There is a little more theater in costume and color in the new dances, "Columbiad" and "Every Soul Is a Circus," than in the "Frontier" and "American Document," which are familiar. But the idiom of the Graham dances changes but little. It has crystallized into an expression of Miss Graham's America.

ALWAYS DIRECT

The impersonalized moving shapes, light and gaining levitation every year, form interesting designs on dark curtains similar to the music of Louis Horst, Paul Nordoff and Ray Green, all monotonously alike. This is young America, wholesome with character, honest without frills or concessions to beauty but clear in its stark outline and direct always, if not full of wisdom.

"Columbiad" had grace and refreshing color. Miss Graham danced it alone dressed in a fitted jacket and a becoming blue headdress. Her dances have wide horizons and there is an idealism that transfigures. Her patriotism and loyalty to her own country are fundamental.

SATIRE ON WOMAN

"Every Soul a Circus" is a satire on the silly woman. The intellectual Graham has given the "Empress of the Arena" a dignity she doesn't possess. Erick Hawkins made an impres-

sive, strong ringmaster blissfully unaware of the silken threads which bound him. His amazing bounds in air and control of great muscular strength were entertainment too. Mercier Cunningham danced so well that one suspected a ballet technique in his background.

Vivid red lines against black curtains with simple, straight furniture made the setting composition which contributed to the meaning of the dance.

'FRONTIER' SCORES

"Frontier" is Graham's high achievement. She visualizes the plains and the far mountains. "American Document" is set off by noble words clearly enunciated by Houseley Stevens. It is inspiring but, like Whitman, says the same things in repetition with slight changes endlessly.

There is too little variation in the Graham choreography and most of the music is without form. Improvisations pall when they are studied too often.

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