

MARTHA GRAHAM AND DANCE GROUP,
Alvin Theatre, December 25.

On Christmas night, Martha Graham and her Dance Group presented a programme containing no new items, but made up of two of her very successful earlier works, and a repetition of this year's *American Document*.

The earlier works were *Primitive Mysteries* and *Frontier*, both familiar items. Unless my memory is unusually faulty, *Frontier* seemed to have undergone some excisions—for the better, in this writer's opinion. There is, however, little to be

said at this date about Miss Graham's "American Perspective of the Plains." The Graham partisans have wracked both brains and thesaurus for adjectives of praise. The dance critic of one great American family journal has sung its praises and has wrung the changes in every key.

American Document has been hailed as one of the most significant choreographic achievements of our time. This observer would like to go on record as having obtained from it an emotional reaction for the first time from any of Miss Graham's work. But in the cold light of the morning after Christmas, he is quite aware that this emotional reaction did not come from Miss Graham, or Eric Hawkins, or the Dance Group, or the choreography, or the music; but from the Declaration of Independence, the letter of Red Jacket of the Senecas, Solomon's Song of Songs, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and Walt Whitman.

The emotional content was a literary content; not choreographic or music.

Yet there is a cult of hysterical worshippers who confuse ugliness with beauty, and who, with their bravos, confound and put to rout the most hysterical ballet devotee.

High priestess of the modern dance Martha Graham reigns; but if *American Document*

is a realization of the potentialities of its theme, then I, for one, am willing to undergo a diet of hats for a fortnight. Here is a genuinely arresting idea; one with tremendous potentialities. The result, so far as this observer is concerned, is merely a surface scraping that leaves the basic idea still untouched.

IRVING DEAKIN

"American Dancer"
Feb. 1939.