

In one other instance, located at the very Antipodes to Mr. Hanson's music, let us point out another such discrepancy between the pretension and the actual approach. This time it concerns M. Varese and his *Ionization* for forty-one percussion instruments. We have nothing against the percussion. Though wholly confined to them, a rhythmically vital continuity may make itself articulate. They are even articulate enough to betray a fundamental insecurity and vagueness in their handling just as surely as a string quartet will. What we mean to say is that once more the basic impressionism of Varese's method showed up glaringly against its modernistic pretensions; its entire dependence on "effect," its lack of any instinct for real rhythmic expansion placing it where it really belongs: *Au Bord de l'Eau* in the late 1890's.

Israel Citkowitz

FALSE DAWN FOR THE DANCE

THE special kind of millenium the dance has always waited for seemed to have become an actuality early this season. Martha Graham was dancing with her group at Radio City. Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman were composing and dancing for the revue *Americana*. Agnes de Mille was doing the dances for *Flying Colors*. Hurok, who now has three dancers, one waned, one waning, and one in the ascendant, projected a "festival" with Wigman, Escudero and Uday Shan-kar.

Now all this is over, and the net result is not much. We have learned that Graham is more adaptable than she has been given credit for; that Humphrey and Weidman, almost through their sole efforts, can elevate a revue into something worth seeing; that Wigman brings to totality the eclipse she started last year; and that we can confirm some already fairly solid suspicions about Roxy. Not very important things, any of them. Or only important in so far as they defer the millenium to a future date.

This should be discouraging, yet there have been incidents of this theatrical outburst and one or two recitals that demand mention. For one thing, Martha Graham, with her group work *Ceremonials* of last year, appears to have swallowed her Indian inspiration in a generous gulp and put it behind her—not for-

gotten or abandoned it by any means, but finally encompassed and absorbed it, so that it will no longer insistently occupy the focus of her attention. Her new *Choric Dance* and the *Chavez Prelude* (the latter a slight but pleasing opening bit) point to a technical expansion toward a less fractured style. The movement of the former is more violent and has greater carrying power than any she has allowed herself heretofore. Emotionally it is so curious a compound as to be confusing with only one seeing. It is primitive, yet full of hard, little, Graham sophistications. The staccato gestures have at moments the deliberate, magicking properties of ritual; at others, the acid mechanism of modern satire. What confusion there is lies entirely in trying to resolve this conflict. Structurally the dance is clear and strong, although it leaves behind a feeling of incompleteness. It lacks the cohesiveness and finality that would place it beside the now perfected *Primitive Mysteries*, and it is decidedly worth the effort of reworking to place it there.

Graham brought back a Guggenheim cycle from Mexico, which I have not seen. Her other venture was the direction of six *Miracle* plays for the Stage Alliance, an undertaking, for one who sees the strong pantomimic basis of even so abstract-seeming a dance as the *Mysteries*, not as unprecedented as it has been made to appear. Of the six plays, one at least (*Les Trois Rois*) was sufficient excuse for their being. The posturings were Gothic, with some of the heaviness of stone, but with the complementary lightness that Gothic stone-carving can achieve. In the solo number, on the other hand, Graham's miming seemed hurried and uncoordinated—at times strikingly like restatements of Angna Enters' numerous Virgins, although this may well have been due to the identical source they both used.

Enters is one of the latest artists to join the Mexican invasion. Her foraging has not been as successful in this field as, for example, in the Spain of the Inquisition. I have seen *Peon's Heavenly Robe* and *Virgin of the Fields*, both of which were as inconclusive as several of her discarded Elizabethan observations. That Enters has looked very carefully at the Mexicans there can be no doubt. Her detail is sharp and authentic. The only thing the dances need is to be made into dances. They

exist at present only as notes, lacking the final bite that she can well give. The former, concerning the death of a peon and the emergence of his white-garbed spirit, was the more finished, although I resented the abrupt ending which cut off the composition at the moment of awakened interest in the midst of the tip-toe trance-dancing of the spirit.

Life is a Dream was repetitious and slightly mawkish. Its second half brought the Lady with Green Gloves home, where she remembered things—by the obvious device of hauling knick-knacks out of a trunk. For a time the pantomime was absorbing. But the saturation point for this kind of thing is soon reached, and unfortunately I reached it quite some time before Miss Enters had exhausted the contents of her trunk.

The best of her new things (I have not seen the Greek cycle) was *Boy Cardinal*, an incisive and subtle study of a youth torn between profession and inclination. The nervous walk and the sense of mental distress were Enters at her finest—which means a penetrating human snapshot, with a nice balance of conflicting moods—such a piece as *Pavana*. In this kind of conflict—between conventional appearance and the undercurrent of personal emotion, or, in this case, between the Cardinal's professed gravity and his youthful desire to skip and notice the ladies—you have what no one can do so well as Enters. This is, I suppose, pantomime, but it is pantomime with such a tight, progressive composition that it becomes dance.

There is, finally, Shan-kar, who has authority, authenticity, and brilliance. I insist on these things first, because finally I was disappointed. His style has the sharpness of etching, but, like etching, it is an intimate medium, to be observed and studied at close range, with a loving attention to the most minute details. It is like the strange music, linear melody, but by no means as inescapably clear in the dance as in the music. It is decadent, of course, with all the over-concise vocabulary of hands and fingers that decadence in the dance implies. A style which is narrowly focussed on hands and arms, and on almost imperceptible variations of angular balance, does not project itself adequately from a large stage, where it is continually in danger of resolving itself into glitter, postures, and padding.

The total composition, I feel, is unimportant. The dance is like a string of beads, where the string has a utilitarian rather than an aesthetic purpose. In this respect a comparison with Mei Lan-fang suggests itself, and I think it is a legitimate one, since he is in the same general tradition and uses, essentially, the same linear style. But in him there is a clearer sense of composition, of pattern, the lack of which is the greatest weakness of Shan-kar's presence. One cannot deny the hypnotic effect of his personality or the perfection of his technical resources; and, if one accepts the intimate nature of his art, the concession of greatness is easily made. But on the stage his intricate and highly-wrought gesture often fades against the equally intricate costume, or against the whiteness of his body, and the flourishes of the padding become over-stressed. He was at his best in the encore to *Indra*, from which the distracting excitement of the orchestra was absent; at the poorest advantage, perhaps, in the *Astra Puja*, sword games, where his manipulation of the swords was rendered negligible by a too-fresh memory of Mei's interlacing of the silver points in the *Sword Dance* New York saw three or four years ago.

Doris Humphrey, incidentally, emerged from her preoccupation with Milhaud's *Orestes* long enough to arrange the *Hymn to the Moon* for Hall Johnson's *Run, Little Chillun*. It and the final revival scene present one of the genuine thrills of the season. The opening ritual, except for the two solo dancers, suffered from lack of more finished performers. The final orgiastic revel, however, could hardly have been bettered, and, throughout, her handling of the crowds in relation to the relatively small space of the stage was consummate. The whole scene worked through ascending tensions from the processional, slow and decorous, to a disintegration the more complete for this contrast.

Paul Love

ALL-AMERICAN

THE second of the season's League of Composers concerts, taking place on the evening of February 5th at the French Institute, presented works by six American composers. These