comparison with the best contemporary effort of the young Europeans.

A spicy *bonne bouche* was offered in Darius Milhaud's witty score to the Cavalcanti film, *La P'tite Lilie,* the story of the little midinette who left her sewing and her daisies to follow a life of sin at the instigation of the "Brute" who led her astray, lived upon her unhappy earnings and at length foully stabbed her to death before carving himself a hearty lunch from a melon with the fatal blade. Throughout, one sensed a strange nostalgia for the Hollywood "super-film" of the not so long ago. The Milhaud score, characteristically, was redolent of gay foolishness, tangy sarcasm and good-humored blague.

Richard Hammond

DANCERS OF THE SEASON

WHAT are the chances for an American Ballet? The question has come up periodically during the last few years; it seems today pertinent as never before. The American public appears to have become suddenly dance-conscious; it attends recitals given by foreign and native dancers, in the huge numbers and with the conscientious enthusiasm manifested some years ago for the visiting lecturer. Who are the dancers who supply the demand in this new movement—which has taken hold here at the very moment when a similar one is fast ebbing in Germany—and what are the possibilities for an integrated ballet which shall be America's own?

Those who for the last two seasons have grouped themselves under the name of the Dance Repertory Theatre, are, with one or two outside the circle, the best we have. They are Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Tamiris, and their groups; and Agnes De Mille with Warren Leonard. The getting-together idea—whether as economic merger, artistic amalgam, or simply dance-festival—is, I think, definitely a failure. There is no hope for a combined ballet; the dancers are too individual and too little connected in attitude. Economically the idea is poor; a person who might be pleased to attend one dance-recital is frightened out of his wits at the prospect of nine in a row. Continuity and individuality were sacrificed to a

jumbled melange in the name of "festival". It was not so bad when Graham or Tamiris or Humphrey had singly a whole performance; but on other nights a cheap and hectic vaudeville psychology was set up by seeing Agnes De Mille's *Civil War Songs* follow Martha Graham's *Primitive Mysteries.* What critical acumen survived traveled in the direction of comparisons. One evolved a whole set of them: Humphrey treats choreography as music, Graham treats it as plastic, Tamiris is most of the things De Mille is not, and a great many of them are bad, Tamiris going for the American scene pretentiously, De Mille being simple about it, and so on. All these statements are more or less true, and more or less unimportant.

Martha Graham is the one to get excited about. She outstrips the others as Wigman in Germany outstrips Vera Skoronel, Herta Feist, or even Laban. Graham is fanatical, which is good; definitely committed to a type by her macabre and mystical face and by her spirit which is narrow and deep. She goes deeply into mysticism with an intensity at once ferocious and brooding. She seldom forsakes this note; it becomes a marvelous inhumanity (not a non-human inhumanity, but a *genius* inhumanity). Even the lighter dances adhere beautifully to this fixed path: when her girls do Poulenc's *Moment Rustica,* it is like an old-fashioned wood-cut, naive, with silly flourishes of kerchiefs, a bit mad rather than flowing or warm. I liked best the *Primitive Mysteries.* It was the cathedral at Chartres come to life, with a strange, touching quality; not exactly lifted to the field of the dance (more a series of moving tableaux) it was perfect in conception and perfect in projection. In general Graham's approach is stark and simple, what the Germans call "echt sauber;" occasionally her plastic arrangements get "modern" in the bad sense, in a shoddy Rockwell Kent manner.

Doris Humphrey lacks the main quality Graham possesses—steadfastness—and is as yet not good enough to be great in many manners. She seems to be still finding herself, her approach, her spirit. She is lovely to look at, and her group is trained to a beautiful and effective instrument of her choreography. That this choreography is not yet the full or rounded product of a point of view may be simply a matter of waiting. The second scene of

her incomplete *Dances of Women* was best. Almost everything was right—the first mincing dance of the girls, the few warning figures, the nervousness and brittleness everywhere on the scene, and the final march of the huge stalking men-figures—everything except perhaps a big enough climax at the close.

Agnes De Mille has splendid training in the classic school of ballet; yet she escapes more than the others into the field of the theatre. She acts as well as dances; the electric moment in her Degas number comes when the tired dancer reaches both arms deep into a bucket and sprinkles real water all over her sweating head and face. De Mille has no pretensions; she is content to do nothing at all about the "art of the Dance;" she wants to get an idea across—usually a literary idea—and it gets across. She is an excellent actress, both in depth of feeling, and in simplicity in expressing it. I liked best her Oriental *Ouled Nail*—an unashamed and alluring study of a brutal, voluptuous, filthy belly-dancer.

Tamiris is a handsome woman, terribly in earnest about the "art of the Dance;" but nothing much seems to come of it. She has a great deal of energy and vitality, a brazenness which is very attractive. After that, there is not much to be said. I have heard her "vulgarity" disparaged; I assume that by the word is meant her abandon and her willingness upon occasion to be blunt and ugly; it seems to me her one agreeable quality. A definite lack of intelligence—which sometimes finds the most elaborate way of doing a simple thing, and sometimes abruptly solves too easily what needs care and development—runs through her work. The jazz and marathon episodes of the *Olympus Americanus* (dreadful title!) to music of Aaron Copland, were the best—the ballet as a whole was windy law-de-daw.

Weidman is a dancer in a minor field, with bodily charm and a graceful talent for miming. His *Happy Hypocrite,* to Herbert Elwell's music, got off to a dull start, but achieved a whimsical and light pleasantness later on, especially in the park scene.

A dancer who is not affiliated with the Dance Repertory group, though it is not unthinkable that some of them might profit by studying with him, is Benjamin Zemach. He comes from the Habima Hebrew Theatre, and his art shows traces of their ex-

pressionism. Zemach is deeply rooted in a racial spirit, and his imagination derives immense fertility from the contact. (He is planning a Jewish ballet group.) His body has wonderful strength and clarity and he can also do finely-lined things with it. He has that oneness of direction of Graham's, only in her case it has to do with an individual temperament, whereas a rich full tradition supports Zemach. In the *People and the Prophet* he showed himself an expert group-choreographer as well as a moving solo dancer. I liked too his *Chassidic Prayer,* done alone on what he, by turns entreating and arrogant, made seem an incredibly vast stage. Best of all, perhaps, was the folk-ballet, *Farewell to Queen Sabbath,* in which Zemach, carried away, raised his voice in chanting. This is one of the most important dancers we possess; it will not do to lose sight of him. He has the technic, he is alert to the spirit of the dance-as-art; and he has besides a rare humility, and a rarer closeness to life.

Then there is Mary Wigman, the German. Wigman is revered by many of the American dancers as their priestess. I saw her first in Germany with her group; a single work, called *Feier,* a sort of gigantic symphony, lasted for an entire performance. It had style, continuity, was in general admirably realized. I remember that even the color-scheme of the costumes underwent a development: from a gold-and-black, punctuated by white-and-red, through a white-into-silver, red-into-rose, finally clearing on a monochrome variety of pinks and reds. One felt that some of Wigman's plastic was intended for an audience seated above, not before the dancers; some original figure-patterns lost point.

The big line, a long work, is Wigman's forte, which is perhaps one reason why she missed out in her solo performance of fragments here. Physically Wigman is not beautiful; she has power in the imperious dominance of a not-wholly pleasant personality. Her best mood is the grotesque and tragic; when she tries a *Sommerlicher Tanz* it is as though she had planned something much more sombre and then substituted legato gestures for staccato ones and added a smile to her face. Her costuming in New York has been execrable—ugly, lumpy clothes, too much or too little of the body revealed, ridiculous scarfs. It is rather easy to see why Wigman is a dancer's dancer. Her technic is a perfect

machine, especially those pulsing, bounding, alive feet of hers; her mind is clear, "modern" in the sense of being radical and not aiming to please, and while not deep, still bold and challenging. She projects herself extremely well. There is a strange and persistent Oriental note; the trance motif is overworked; when it is absent, Wigman is pretty cold emotionally.

Marc Blitzstein

WINTER CHRONICLE NEW YORK

Schola Cantorum Concert, Jan. 29

A program of modern works in place of the usual choral-society repertoire is something of an event in New York, for it happens rarely enough that one of the larger organizations devotes an entire evening to modern music. The music in this case was at least alive, if not representative of the most significant contemporary composers. In the *Stabat Mater* of Szymanowski, the outstanding work, ardent devotion and faith form the keynote to the music. Unfortunately many of the dissonances seem purely arbitrary, and the melodic line, though modal, is often obscured by complicated harmonies. The work suffers from lack of harmonic conviction; the modulations rarely seem inevitable, and the polytonal passages give less the impression of the play between different keys than that of a single key with overtones. The religious mood is well sustained throughout the work, although I find the orchestral color at times a bit too sensuous for the austerity of the Latin text. On the whole this is an addition to choral literature, which has not been greatly enriched within the last decade.

The Lambert *Rio Grande,* a setting of a poem by Sacheverell Sitwell for chorus, piano solo, and orchestra, is gay and trivial. It seems to have created quite a sensation in England, where it is considered the poetic apotheosis of jazz. As a matter of fact its syncopated rhythms are much more Latin-American. It contains rhythmic and harmonic devices that Gershwin and many others among our popular writers have long abandoned. Its vitality depends on high speed rather than interesting rhythmic structure. The music is fluent and glib, abounding in quotations from a motley crowd of composers, a shining example of much brilliant