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## Martha Graham still captivates

**BY ORLA SWIFT, Staff Writer**

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DURHAM - Anyone wondering how the word "modern" still applies to the content of a 75-year-old dance festival can find an answer this weekend.

In one of the most highly anticipated programs of this landmark American Dance Festival season, the Martha Graham Dance Company underscores Graham's reign as the mother of modern dance. It proves that almost two decades after Graham's death, her work still packs a contemporary wallop.

The Graham Company performance is especially fitting in this anniversary season, as it was Graham's work -- and that of a few others at the time -- that prompted the festival's birth as a way to support artistic innovation. Many of Graham's works, including this weekend's "Diversion of Angels," premiered at ADF.

The program also serves as a reminder of Graham's influence over current ADF headliners, including former Graham dancer Paul Taylor. Lar Lubovitch, who studied with Graham, shares this bill.

Graham's "Steps in the Street," the program opener, could have been choreographed yesterday, it speaks so powerfully to the eternal abuse of political power. Let's call it Graham's Zimbabwe piece -- though we don't have to look nearly that far for relevance. When Graham created "Steps" in 1936 -- as part of a longer work called "Chronicle" -- it addressed growing fascism in Europe.

Earlier in 1936, Graham had refused an invitation to perform at the Olympics in Germany, and "Steps" -- set to a symphonic score by Wallingford Riegger -- could have served as her rejection letter. Its frequent halting lock-step marching and physical expressions of constraint, struggle and

uniformity illustrate the difficulty and necessity of rebelling against a malevolent tide that feels inevitable.

Graham's 1930 solo "Lamentation" maintains that dramatic intensity. Intended as an embodiment of grief, "Lamentation" features dancer Elizabeth Auclair, seated and wrapped in stretchy fabric tube. Auclair never looks straight at the audience, and her face is more often obscured by her cocoon, but her body contortions form fabric shapes that are remarkably expressive, from jagged shouts to collapsing whimpers.

"Diversion of Angels," from 1948, complements the other two works in illustrating Graham's innovative movement vocabulary. Of the three dances, this study of the stages of love is the most balletlike. But here we can plainly see how modern dance co-opted some of ballet's movements and transformed them into a more plain-spoken expression.

Katherine Crockett and Blakeley White-McGuire beautifully express mature love and erotic love, respectively, as does Lloyd Knight with adolescent love. But "Diversion" lacks the emotional intensity of the other two works and is the least captivating portion of the program.

Lubovitch's "Concerto Six Twenty Two" perks things up again. Set to Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in A major, this popular 1986 work demonstrates Lubovitch's musicality and also the dramatic flair that has served him well in many disciplines.

Lubovitch relies a bit too heavily on humor, and a brief butterfly sequence in the adagio borders on Hallmark Channel soppieness. But his sensitivity to the textures of the music, to the clarinet's sighs and rollicking runs, and to the interplay between clarinet and orchestra, make this physical expression of an aural masterpiece irresistible.

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