

MOVEOPOLIS!

Artistic Director, Richard Move

MARTHA @

Press Kit Table of Contents

1. "Fast on the Heels of Achilles and Martha Graham" (feature), NEW YORK TIMES, April 16, 2006	page 2
2. Martha Graham Like You've Never Seen Him" (feature), NEW YORK TIMES, June 13, 2004	page 3
3. "Martha, My Dear" (feature), TIME OUT NEW YORK, October 19, 2000	page 4
4. "For the Love of Martha" (feature), SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE, March 3, 2005	page 5
5. "Move's Martha@ Odd Yet Moving (review), SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE, March 5, 2005	page 8
6. "Body Snatchers" (review of <i>Ghostlight</i>), NEW YORK MAGAZINE, July 12, 2004	page 9
7. "Richard Move's Martha: A Drag Homage that Soars (review), WASHINGTON POST, October 15, 2001	page 10
8. "Martha Graham Reincarnated (review), PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, May 11, 2002	page 11
9. "Martha's Divine Seed" (review), THE GUARDIAN, October 26, 1999	page 12
10. "Divine Turbulence" (review), BOSTON PHOENIX, January 26, 2001	page 13
11. "In Martha @ Summerdance, He Lets Her Spirit Move Him" (review), SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS	page 14
12. "Identities on the Move" (review), VILLAGE VOICE, January 23, 2001	page 15
13. "Flaming Creatures" (feature), INTERVIEW, February, 2000	page 16
14. "Martha After Dark" (feature), VOGUE	page 17
15. "Errand Into the Maze" (feature), VILLAGE VOICE, January 16, 2001	page 18
16. "Dragging Martha Back From the Dead" (feature), NEW YORK TIMES, December 6, 1998	page 20

The New York Times
Arts&LEISURE

Sunday, April 16, 2006

Fast on the Heels of Achilles and Martha Graham

By CLAUDIA LA ROCCO

THIS month, Richard Move is resurrecting a pair of giants: Achilles and Martha.

On April 27, "The Show (Achilles Heels)" makes its New York debut at the Kitchen. And on Tuesday, Mr. Move is to embody Martha Graham once again, this time in her company's scheduled celebration of its 80th anniversary at the Skirball Center. His variety show "Martha @" has been thrilling audiences around the world since 1996, but he has never shared the stage with the grande dame's troupe.

"I love epic," he said of the two projects with one of his big laughs. "It's in my DNA."

Rasta Thomas, most recently seen on Broadway in Twyla Tharp's "Movin' Out," will play the beautiful, doomed Achilles. The role was originally a vehicle for Mikhail Baryshnikov, who commissioned the piece for his White Oak Dance Project in 2002. It was performed only a few times before White Oak disbanded, but Mr.

with his childhood friend Patroclus, whose death spurs the magnificent warrior to battle.

And, of course, there are the gods.

For Athena, Mr. Move has employed a contemporary goddess: the new Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Deborah Harry will sing and act in this production. "She is the icon," he said of Ms. Harry. "And somehow, the Athena story, it's a compression of her own."

Asked what she thought of being likened to

an ancient warrior goddess, Ms. Harry laughed and said she supposed she did feel as if she was sometimes "doing battle." "He's a funny person, Richard," she said. Mr. Move comes up with "very interesting and beautiful things," she added. "I can't imagine what made him be so insightful as to try to become Martha Graham."

Though steeped in classical literature and early modern dance, Mr. Move (real name: Richard Winberg) is a wholly contemporary

creature, one who says that "everything is available for me to use." His apartment, in a Midtown high-rise with a truly epic view of the city, illustrates this blend of sensibilities, from minimalist vases containing fish and Japanese bamboo to ornately framed mirrors and an imposing skull staff (a Graham prop).

He has given the singular Helen of Troy, who he says is underdeveloped as a character in the literature, a special movement language: the Graham technique. But no impersonations here. The role is performed by Katherine Crockett, a principal dancer with the Graham company.

Mr. Move gets his chance to be Martha on Tuesday in one of his Graham monologues and a reconstruction of the 1965 Graham duet "Part Real, Part Dream," with the former Alvin Ailey star Desmond Richardson. The entire evening seems part real and part dream to him — an unimaginable opportunity, especially given that Mr. Move's relationship with the Graham estate began on rocky footing. (When Mr. Move first started impersonating Graham, he received a letter from lawyers for her estate seeking among other things a disclaimer in his show's program, distancing the estate from his production.)

"I had heard rumblings," Mr. Move said, about being invited to perform with the company, "and I just thought, 'Oh, puh-lease, that will never happen in a million years.' And I was shocked and awed when I did get that call" from the Graham company's artistic director, Janet Eilber.

Not all Graham-watchers are thrilled, but Mr. Move, well aware that his inclusion will ruffle some feathers, seems unconcerned.

"And you know, the irony isn't lost on anyone, that my relationship with the official Graham enterprise began with cease-and-desist orders." He paused mischievously. "And now here I am, finally performing with my company again."

Richard Move is impersonating a legend once again, but this time at the invitation of her dance troupe.

Baryshnikov is helping to present it through the Baryshnikov Dance Foundation.

In directing and choreographing "The Show," Mr. Move draws heavily on "The Iliad," but also invokes 1950's Hollywood films and game-show culture. Mixing pure dance with elements of performance art and a self-conscious theatricality, the work moves easily between high drama and playfulness. Fascinated by dichotomies in the myth, Mr. Move has emphasized both Achilles' ambivalence toward war and his desire for glory, as well as his love affair



Photographs by Josef Astor



After a decade of playing Martha Graham in his own unauthorized show, Richard Move, above, was asked to participate in her troupe's 80th-anniversary celebration.

By GIA KOURLAS

RICHARD MOVE plays Martha Graham big. At 6-foot-4, he is at least a foot taller than the diminutive Graham (and his mountainous bun adds even more inches). Yet armed with great style and a makeup brush, Mr. Move has brought the mother of modern dance back to life.

Barring the occasional benefit, it has been more than three years since Mr. Move's poignant, meticulously researched and hilarious interpretation of Ms. Graham has graced a New York stage. On Thursday, "Martha @," the variety show that originated in 1996 at Mother, a meat-packing district club that has since closed, relocates to the Jane Street Theater for a new installment featuring the guest artists Lar Lubovitch, Isaac Mizrahi, Stuart Hodes and Julie Atlas Muz. As always, Mr. Move plays Graham — both a genial and irritable

Graham was always larger than life.

Now she's back as a 6-foot-4 man.

hostess whom he aptly captures through versions of her dances, monologues taken from her writing and stories passed along by former dancers and friends.

"I think he's blackly funny," Mr. Mizrahi said. "He's always got a tongue in his cheek, but because he's such an earnest fellow himself, it always comes out without air quotes. He's not parodying anything, because he has such range and such beauty."

Sitting in his West Village loft, Mr. Move considered his subject. "I think she'll have more to talk about than ever," he said. "I want to address her absence in New York. I want to address her experiences in film. You know, Paramount offered her an extraordinary amount of money to make her life story starring Cyd Charisse. She said: 'No thank you. I can ruin my own reputation in five minutes.'"

Graham, who died in 1991, left behind delicious fodder for a drag performer like Mr. Move. With fine comic timing and unwavering concentration, Mr. Move is a terrific actor who most recently returned from New Mexico, where he portrayed another Martha (the boozer made famous by Elizabeth Taylor) in an otherwise straightforward production of Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

For the film director Stephen Daldry, who has known Mr. Move for years, it was always clear that he was an incredible actor with or without the wig. "The wonderful thing about Richard's performance as Martha is that it totally transcends the genre," Mr. Daldry said. "He manages to make a piece of work that totally upsets all

Gia Kourlas is the dance editor of Time Out New York.

Martha Graham Like You've Never Seen Him



Josef Astor (above); Robin Holland (right)

your preconceptions about drag. Although there's great comedy in it, he's actually doing something else: It's a serious and intellectual exercise."

Mr. Move, who refuses to give his age ("A lady never tells," he said in his falsetto Graham voice), is also a serious choreographer. He directed "Move-opolis!," a nonstop four-hour show in Lille, France, that featured 16 Greco-Roman wrestlers. "It was my version of a circus," Mr. Move said. "It took place in an old airplane hanger." His full-evening work for Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project, "The Show (Achilles Heels)," a modern staging of the Greek myth, will be

presented by the Baryshnikov Dance Foundation during its forthcoming tour.

But even with such steady outside work, Mr. Move says he will never abandon Martha. He stars as Graham in "Ghostlight," an independent film directed by Christopher Herrmann that opens at the Pioneer Theater on June 23, and he has written a play with Lisa Kron that features his one-man portrayal of Graham.

Since his last presentation of "Martha @" in 2001 at Town Hall, he has taken the show on the road to cities as varied as Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Rome, where he delivered his monologues in fluent Italian. "We came up

Richard Move as himself, below, and as Martha Graham in "Martha @," which returns to New York this week.

with an incredibly right translation that included verb tenses that were no longer used," Mr. Move said, "but might have been spoken by a rather extremely eccentric well-educated woman 50 years ago."

The show's absence in New York was largely related to money issues; the cost of self-producing, he said, was exorbitant. Though he had been invited to appear at many of New York's dance theaters, Mr. Move said, he felt that presenting the series in a conventional space would tamper with the show's inherent magic. "I had this idea to keep 'Martha' in special environments and out of the dance-company model of having a New York season once a year and all the infrastructure that goes with that," he said. "I wanted her to appear like she did all those years in a special and unusual way."

He cautioned that fans of the show, especially in its early days, might notice a change in Martha's general mood. "Her vulnerability and her fear are more present now," he said. "The humor is still there. I want to send up things when it's appropriate, but I feel like her loneliness has entered the picture a little more. But it's just as loving. You can't not love a subject you've dedicated this much time to. It's impossible."

Mr. Move, who grew up in rural Virginia, is just as striking without his makeup. Finely arched brows and a halo of streaky blond hair frame his wide, angelic face; despite his large frame, he is a picture of graceful

refinement. Dangling from his right wrist is a chunky silver bracelet that he never removes; it was a present from the former Graham dancer Linda Hodes.

"Here's why boredom does not equal Martha Graham," he said. "I'll have a moment with Linda Hodes, and she'll pull out a beautiful piece of jewelry that Martha gave her and give it to me. I think she understands that I'll treasure it."

While Mr. Move avoids trivializing

Graham's life, he is haunted by her in a dream. "I'm in the back of a cab driving up Park Avenue at night," he said. "We're moving along in an normal fashion, starting and stopping, and the taxi speeds up and runs lights. There's one near-collision after another, and then I feel a little gloved hand on mine, and I look over and it's Martha and she's smiling at me." Mr. Move roared with laughter. "And then I wake up. I have no idea what it means."





MARTHA, MY DEAR

The closing of the Meatpacking District's beloved club Mother last June couldn't stop choreographer Richard Move, who first glided haughtily onstage, black bun and all, as the divine Martha Graham in *Martha @ Mother*, in 1996. He and copresenter Janet Stapleton are simply taking their act to Town Hall, with the first show set for January 20. Part impresario and part impersonator, Move is a New York fixture—a

testament to the fact that dance can be serious and hilarious at the same time. "Martha has renewed my faith that art is communicative and transformative," says Move, who is also the director of *LES MIZrahi* (Isaac Mizrahi's new one-man Off Broadway show) and star of the forthcoming docudrama *Martha's World*. "That sounds like a Martha quote! I can't separate us, I guess."

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC OGDEN

THE WEEKLY GUIDE

MARCH 3-9, 2005

NIGHT & DAY



FOR THE LOVE OF Martha

Choreographer-performer **Richard Move**
pays tribute to legendary Martha Graham > **UP FRONT**

• SAGE FRANCIS: HIP-HOP'S
UNDERGROUND HERO > **POP MUSIC**

• 'BE COOL,' TRAVOLTA IS BACK
AS CHILI > **AT THE MOVIES**

• MARS VOLTA'S 'FRANCES
THE MUTE' > **ALBUM REVIEWS**

ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

'MARTHA@': GRAHAM EXPERT DELIVERS SHORTHAND
VERSION OF CHOREOGRAPHER'S BEST WORKS

By Janice Steinberg

NEW YORK — Richard Move wasn't the first person to do a takeoff on Martha Graham. That honor belongs to Ziegfeld Follies star Fanny Brice, who called her 1935 spoof "Rewolt."

"It was inspired by the period of Martha's she called the 'long woolens' period that was all about women in revolt, basically," says Move, interviewed in his apartment 40 stories above midtown Manhattan.

Wearing a track suit and a multicolored knit cap, the 6-foot-4 Move looks nothing like the 5-foot-1 choreographer he'll impersonate at the Lyceum this weekend — until you notice his expressive eyes and the lithe grace of

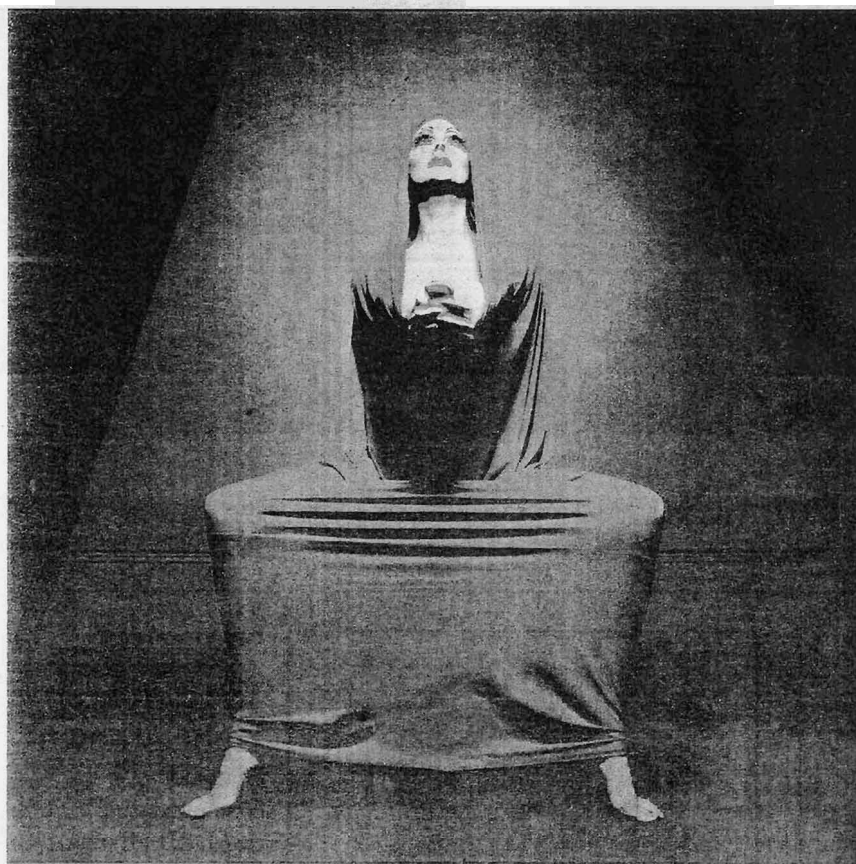
his gestures as he fixes a cup of tea and settles into a sofa covered with purple faux fur.

"Can you imagine what it must have been like to see Graham's 'Heretic' in the 1930s?" says Move, whose cabaret-style "Martha@" is being presented here — as is the Martha Graham Dance Company the following weekend — in the La Jolla Music Society's "American Movement" festival.

"It must have been extraordinary, but also extreme, and probably easier to satire then than now, because now of course we know it's great art and the dance equivalent of that period of modernism."

If Move sounds like a Graham scholar, it's

SEE Move, 6



"Playing with gender roles and perceptions is one of the final frontiers in terms of what can ruffle people's feathers," says Richard Move. *Josef Astor*

(Move's) focus in "Martha@" is on that "grande dame" personality ... and on Graham as a 20th-century cultural giant whose influence he feels is often not given its due. ...

MOVE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

certainly not what he had in mind when he first donned the persona of the ultimate dance diva at a meat-packing district cabaret in the mid-1990s. "You know how people have five-year plans? I just wanted to get through the first show!"

A decade, two New York Dance and Performance (Bessie) Awards, and a film ("Ghostlight") later, however, Move has become a historian of the choreographer who performed her first original work in 1926 and left a legacy of 181 dances by the time of her death in 1991.

"From the first show, people started coming out of the woodwork to give me books, stories," he says. "(Things like) 'Did I ever tell you about the time Martha threw a jar of honey at me in the studio?'"

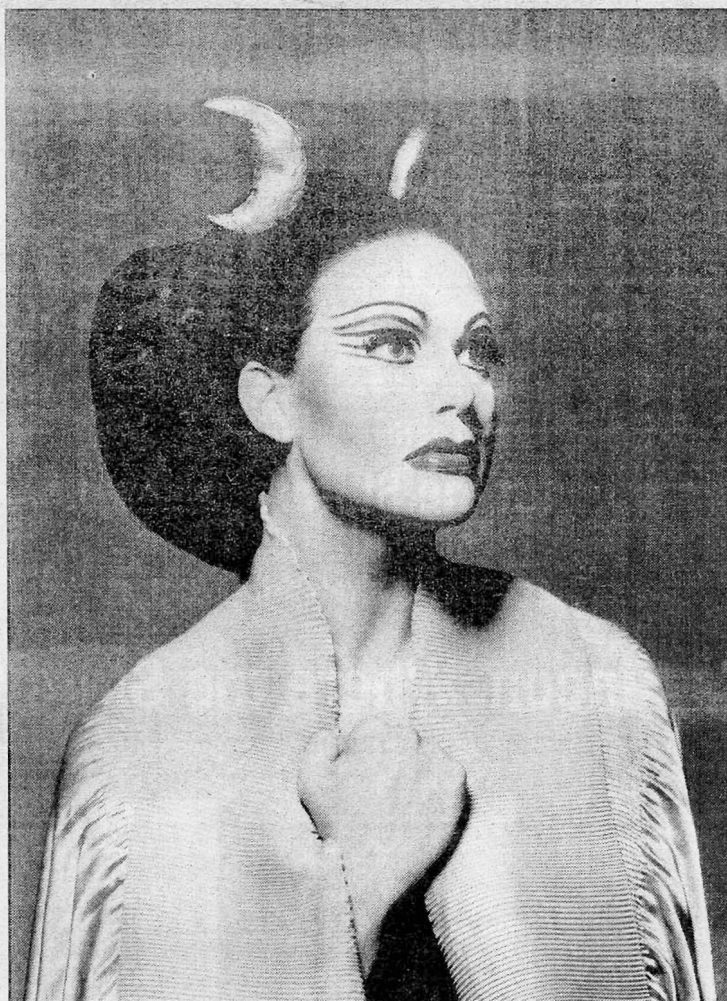
Move, in his mid- to late-30s ("A lady never tells her age!" he insists), has also received enough memorabilia to make his apartment a small but exquisite Graham museum. Showing a visitor around with Southern graciousness (he grew up in rural Virginia), he points out photographs of Graham with Gloria Swanson at Studio 54 and with Pope John Paul II, and another of Graham in full stage makeup hung in the bathroom next to a photo of a handsome young couple, Move's grandparents. (Also displayed in the bathroom is one of Isadora Duncan's scarves.)

A pencil drawing — of Graham dramatically posed in her stretchy "Lamentation" costume — could be the basis for a class in American dance history: The drawing was done by Kenneth Shopen at the groundbreaking Bennington (Vermont) School of the Dance, where Graham taught, and it was previously owned by choreographer Alwin Nikolais, who gave it to choreographer Murray Louis. Louis gave it to Move.

He performs "Lamentation," as well as several other classics, in "Martha@," although he's quick to describe his dancing as "Cliffs Notes" versions, for instance a four-minute distillation of a 25-minute dance. He always has an expert demonstrate Graham's signature, pelvic-centered technique. In San Diego, that will be Denise Vale, who was a principal with the Graham Company for 10 years.

Move also, in the cabaret spirit of the show, features local choreographers — he was delighted when a messenger came to the door with a video of work by Nancy McCaleb and Sadie Weinberg, which will be performed here.

Move's only live experience of Graham was seeing her take a bow after a performance by her company in the 1980s. Exposed to Graham technique in a high school performing arts mag-



Richard Move has been immersing himself in the persona of Martha Graham since the mid-1990s. *Josef Astor*

DATEBOOK

"Martha@" starring Richard Move

8 tonight and tomorrow,
7 and 10 p.m. Saturday, 3 and 7 p.m. Sunday
Lyceum Space Theatre, Horton Plaza
\$27-\$35
(619) 544-1000

net, he was drawn to its "poetry and philosophy," but in college at Virginia Commonwealth University, he learned that she was considered passé. (The two former Graham dancers who became the leading choreographers of the next generation, Merce Cunningham and Paul Taylor, both actively rejected her theatricality.)

Move, however, was entranced by the "extreme, kooky, eccentric, magnetic person" he saw in the Graham film "Dancer's World." "I remember thinking, 'Who is that woman who is like this oracular priestess, goddess, mad religious leader?'"

His focus in "Martha@" is on that "grande dame" personality ... and on Graham as a 20th-century cultural gi-

ant whose influence he feels is often not given its due — for instance, her collaboration with Aaron Copland, who, on commission from Graham, composed the score for "Appalachian Spring," being performed here by the Graham Company and in Move's abridged form. (The "American Movement" festival celebrates both Copland and Graham.)

"People think Aaron Copland is more important than Martha Graham," Move says. "I want to explain to people that Martha said, 'Oh, Aaron, dear, do you know that old Quaker hymn, 'The Gift to Be Simple?'" He sings the first line of the hymn, which Copland wove through his Pulitzer Prize-winning composition. "Martha's the one who said, 'Let's use the Quaker theme.'"

Move's knowledge of and respect for Graham are what inspired Mary Lou Aleskie, president/CEO of the La Jolla Music Society, to include him in the "American Movement" Festival. (His show is being co-presented by LJMS and Sushi in collaboration with the San Diego Repertory Theatre.)

"I was so taken with Richard's ability to interpret with knowledge and passion, without his own personality being imposed on Martha," says Aleskie, who met Move last year through the Baryshnikov Foundation. (Mikhail Baryshnikov has been a strong supporter of Move's work.) "I thought he would be an important element in helping to illuminate Martha and her legacy."

LJMS is breaking new ground by making the first official connection between the Graham Company and Move, a relationship that at one time involved a "cease and desist" letter from the Graham Trust. He surely raised some hackles, as well, during the four years when the company didn't perform due to litigation over the ownership of Graham's work, which ironically left Move the one person representing her artistic legacy on stage.

Proud of afflicting the comfortable, Move feels it took several years of doing "Martha@" to understand why some people find it so disturbing. "I have felt that playing with gender roles and perceptions is one of the final frontiers in terms of what can ruffle people's feathers. I think it's the core of criticism of me and the show," he says.

"And the Martha show pushes even more buttons because unlike, say, the Dame Edna show or whatever, Martha is deeply sexual. Her work is deeply sexual, and it's sexual from a woman's point of view."

Along with ruffling feathers, "Martha@" has also opened doors for Move. Recent projects include starring as Graham in the film "Ghostlight," and choreographing the Amy Sedaris film "Strangers With Candy" (being released this year) and "The Show (Achilles Heels)" for Baryshnikov; first done by the White Oak Dance Project in 2002, it's being remounted next fall by the new Baryshnikov Dance Foundation.

For a run of "Martha@" in Italy last fall, Move, who's fluent in Italian, translated the entire script. "The speeches in Italian are stunning, like the one from 'Night Journey' — in English, it's 'torn by her passion, her terror, her fear, her unbridled lust, her wanton desire. ...'" He spits out the words in Italian, and you expect the sofa to catch on fire.

And he just got back from hosting (as Martha) the ceremony for the Nijinsky Award given by the Monaco Dance Foundation, sharing the stage with Prince Albert and Princess Stephanie. "None of this I could have ever predicted!"

"You know what I say now?" he says. "That I just stay out of Martha's way. Because there's just no telling where she's going to end up next."

Janice Steinberg is a San Diego dance writer.

Move's 'Martha@' odd yet moving

By Jennifer de Poyen
DANCE CRITIC

Watching Richard Move, the 6-foot-something, solidly built actor, impersonate Martha Graham, the diminutive grande dame of modern dance, in his "Martha@," it's interesting to speculate what Graham herself would make of the multimedia cabaret show.

In her bizarre yet fascinating autobiography, "Blood Memory," published the year she died, in 1991, Graham spoke approvingly of satirists like Fanny Brice, who did an early Graham takeoff for the Ziegfeld Follies, and Danny Kaye, who performed with a band of dancers he called the Graham Crackers.

"I've never really warmed



Performer-impersonator Richard Move brings the Martha Graham legacy to life in his compelling "Martha@," a multimedia cabaret show. K.C. Alfred / Union-Tribune

to the idea of female impersonators," she wrote in a typically amused, ambivalent and self-aggrandizing tone, "but then I sort of have to agree with Mae

West, who said, 'What's wrong with it? Women have been doing it for years.'"

This is one of many stories from the historical record that Move has dra-

DATEBOOK

"Martha@," starring Richard Move

7 and 10 tonight, 3 and 7 p.m. tomorrow

Lyceum Space Theatre, Horton Plaza, downtown

\$27-\$35

(619) 544-1000

matized for his entertaining, richly informative and tonally weird show, which continues through the weekend at the Lyceum Space Theatre.

Move, a fervent amateur Graham historian, has culled lots of material — some juicy, some oddly affecting — from Graham's autobiography; the lines that get the biggest laughs are really

SEE 'Martha@,' E5

► 'MARTHA@'

CONTINUED FROM E1

Move manages to eerily embody the dance diva

Graham's "A Dancer's World," the 1957 documentary about her work, is both spoofed and lovingly evoked. Move also offers capsule versions of Graham's dances, at once funny and moving. And there are traces of information from Graham admirers, who have offered up stories, writings and memorabilia in the years since Move's first show.

What makes all of this interesting, and not just to dance enthusiasts, is that Graham really was both a groundbreaking artist who changed the way we look at dance and a larger-than-life personality who mingled with the rich and famous — presidents, Hollywood actors, serious artists, clothing designers. Besides which, Move is a captivating performer, much as Graham was. His show brings Graham's legacy to vivid life.

Like all great female impersonators, Move both eerily embodies his subject and uses his performance to comment on it. Graham had a distinctive way of speaking, and Move absolutely nails it; close your eyes,

and it's easy to imagine those slow, dreamy, carefully enunciated words coming from Graham's own mouth.

Graham was such a diva, especially in later years, that she almost was a drag performer herself, proving Mae West's point about female impersonation. Move's response is not to camp it up — he does not, as a rule, play Martha for laughs. His humor is quiet, appreciative, loving. Call it earnest camp, maybe. Or serious drag.

Throughout the evening, Move serves as hostess and narrator, both on the stage, in a series of fabulous diva-worthy gowns and costumes, and in video segments by the film-

maker Charles Atlas.

He is joined intermittently by Denise Vale, a former member of the Martha Graham Dance Company, who demonstrates Graham's pioneering (and deeply beautiful) technique and performs a series of dances that re-imagine, and faintly parody, some of Graham's great dance works. Vale is a terrific dancer, and she does what Move, whose technique is limited, cannot: She evokes the power and meaning of Graham's work.

In keeping with the cabaret spirit, Move also shares the stage with some local dance artists. Greg Lane and Eric Geiger performed an edgy duet adapt-

ed from Nancy McCaleb's haunting "La Rumorosa," and Sadie Weinberg (looking uncommonly Grahamesque) and Alison Dietterle-Smith presented excerpts from Weinberg's anguished "Mourner's Dance."

No doubt the show plays differently here than it did in New York, the center of the dance world, where Graham's work has been performed almost continuously for 80 years. Move's early audiences there

were full of Graham followers — acolytes and detractors alike — who became part of the show, and fed Move's performance. Still, for local audiences, "Martha@" is a rare chance to encounter the Graham legend in a theatrical setting, which is where it belongs.

Body Snatchers

Richard Move's glorious, goofy homage to Martha Graham; Boris Eifman's distinctly un-Balanchine Balanchine. BY LAURA SHAPIRO

BY TRADITION, a stage is never left completely dark when the show is over: A bare bulb known as the *ghostlight* burns all night. Martha Graham called it "a symbol of all the lives and legends that are still in this theater." Too bad the great pioneer of modern dance couldn't know that after her death she would be awarded her own personal ghostlight, in human form. There's no other category in which to put Richard Move's relation to Graham, no performance mode that adequately describes what he does in her name. Such terms as *drag* and *parody* seem irrelevant. He is Graham's ghostlight: When he shines, the glitter we see is hers.

Since 1996, Move has been staging Graham evenings in New York and around the country, declaiming her fulsome truths about life and art and offering loopy versions of her most famous works, accompanied by dancers he plucks right from the Graham school and company. Now this funny, loving, dazzling homage has been captured in

Ghostlight, a film by Christopher Herrmann that is currently playing at the Pioneer Theater.

Herrmann, who worked with Graham from 1987 until her death in 1991, loosely structures the film as a fictional documentary. Downtown performer Ann Magnuson plays Barbara Rosen, a filmmaker long besotted with Graham

"Could the impersonation of a genius have a longer shelf life than the genius did?"

who's following her idol with a camera crew as she choreographs a new work. There's a story line of sorts involving a financial crisis: there are cameo appearances by Mark Morris, Deborah Harry, and Isaac Mizrahi; but the main

event is *Move*. Rosen watches starry-eyed as Graham—six-four, draped in robes and adorned with jewels, her eyes made up so richly they could be a couple of peacocks—grandly descends a winding stair in a sumptuous duplex. She doesn't greet her guests so much as acknowledge a fresh audience. "The necklace is a gift from the Emperor Akihito," she announces in a breathy, operatic alto, gazing up toward the balcony of a theater only she can see. It's her version of "Nice to meet you."

Move's Graham is a fully realized entity: there isn't a hint of hairy-legged humor in this characterization. Plunging across the rehearsal studio as a crazed and ravaged Phaedra, berating her assistants, flinging wisdom at her company ("You must dance from your vagina!"), or contemplating the city from her rooftop with a bottle of whiskey, Graham towers like one of those giant Buddhas that dwarfs all worshippers. Herrmann includes wonderful sequences of fake historical footage showing the youthful Graham working ardently with her disciples, or racing through a dreamscape in a toga, hair flying in the wind—imagery that seems to be emanating from Graham's own psyche. Move's version of Graham operates as if he'd been able to locate the exact person Graham dreamed of being, the one she carefully placed in the mirror to play the part of her reflection. Is it possible that the impersonation of a genius might have a longer shelf life than the genius did? Much of Graham's work looks sadly dated now, but Move's performance is one for the ages.

Move (as Martha) arrives with company in *Ghostlight*.



Richard Move's 'Martha': A Drag Homage That Soars

By SARAH KAUFMAN
Washington Post Staff Writer

With his wide-set eyes, round face and broad, glossy smile, Richard Move in makeup bears more of a resemblance to Jackie Kennedy than to petite, angular modern dance matron Martha Graham. But as his show "Martha@Dance Place" progresses, Move reveals the essence of Graham and her groundbreaking art in surprising and deeply touching ways.

Move launched his drag impersonation of Graham in 1996 in a tiny club in Manhattan's meatpacking district. The former go-go dancer and club rat had a soft side for Graham's disarming sentimentality about her work, and for her deeply felt frankness about the power of dance and what it could reveal about the human spirit. It was this quasi-religious belief in dance that led Graham to retool the art form into a vehicle of searing expression such as the world had never seen. This serious philosophical side of Graham is as much a part of Move's show, performed

over the weekend at Dance Place, as are the hilarious send-ups of her severe, spare movement style and her diva-esque declarations of self-importance.

"Martha" is essentially a variety show with Graham as emcee, presiding over excerpts from her works and performances by guest artists. Move presents a decidedly outspoken Graham who is acutely aware of her legendary status in the world of art, even if others aren't. The evening begins with Charles Atlas's hilarious film montage of dance snippets, from contortionists to a reconstruction of Nijinsky's "Rite of Spring." Cue the soaring strings of Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring," and enter Move's towering version of Graham—he stands over six feet tall—in a gold-trimmed gown and floor-length cape. "Yes, I am the mother of contemporary dance," he begins, listing various awards Graham garnered throughout her 96 years. "And I am a national treasure"—dramatic pause—"in Japan." His dramatically fringed eyeballs roll.

An excerpt from Graham's "Night Journey," the Oedipus myth from his mother's

perspective, follows. In the space of a few minutes, Move brilliantly caricatures Graham's ferocity of expression, the unrelenting tension and the illicit passion of Queen Jocasta for her own son, wittily depicted by blond hunk Reid Hutchins (a Playgirl centerfold and Move's classmate when both were at Virginia Commonwealth University) wearing only a gold cape and spiky silver thong. "As you can see," Move purrs as Hutchins struts into the wings, "we must always dress the women, and undress the men." If Graham herself didn't pen these words, she must have thought them, given her tendency for just such a division of the sexes in many of her works.

As Move points out in one of his many monologues, Graham, who died a decade ago, was a forceful personality offstage as well. She declined an invitation to dance at Constitution Hall after black singer Marian Anderson had been denied a recital there. She refused to tour in Hitler's Germany. Washington honored her many times: She was awarded the National Medal of Freedom and the Kennedy Center Honors, and she

was the first dancer to perform at the White House. But she was not always appreciated here. Move relates with pride how Graham's ballet "Phaedra" was denounced by Congress as "lewd."

Graham's recollections about performing in a Spanish bullfighting arena—where, as Move tells it, she reveled in its echoes of passion, terror and agony—segued neatly into a performance by local flamenco dancer "La Furia," Debra Belo. Other guests included local choreographer Laura Schandelmeyer in a rambling solo, "Mademoiselle"; brightly costumed performers in a modern version of bhangra, a folk dance from northern India and Pakistan; and leading Washington Ballet dancer Erin Mahoney—looking taller and even more commanding on Dance Place's small stage—in a sharp-angled solo choreographed by Septime Webre.

Webre, artistic director of the ballet company, was a Graham student—for all of three days. "Your floor work is excruciating," he complained to Move in an onstage interview. Move flashed a self-satisfied grin. (Earlier, one of the three Graham-trained women

who are regular members of Move's show had performed a telling demonstration of that excruciating technique, with its whip-lash contractions of the midsection.)

But Move remained the show's solid center, and when he was onstage in his gleaming black wig and regal Halston knockoffs you could look nowhere else. His deliberative, hushed voice was uncannily like Graham's, as was clear when she was occasionally heard on tape, and his deadpan expressions and sidelong glances gave added bite to his pronouncements, most of them taken directly from Graham's writings.

His show is funny and wry, but its earnest moments are what stay with you. Unlike the spoof of "Night Journey," Move paid tender tribute to "Appalachian Spring"—first performed at the Library of Congress—and "Frontier," underscoring their evocations of new love and the expansiveness of the American spirit. In our postmodern age, it is unfashionable to be so openly romantic about one's art. Move's homage to Graham reminds us of how truly pioneering she was, and continues to be.



SaturdayreViews

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2002

www.phil

E8 B www.philly.com

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Review Dance

Martha Graham reincarnated

By Marilyn Jackson
FOR THE INQUIRER

Not everyone admires the monumental choreographer Martha Graham's movement style and personality. Nevertheless, during a nearly six-decade career, her innovations and modernist style earned her a place as one of the most significant artists of the 20th century.

She did what artists are supposed to do: startle us and make us rethink the way we thought things ought to be. Moreover, she did it with courage and sureness. She was the right person for her time.

Now, that time is over, and her choreography looks dated or, as one audience member I overheard say at a Graham-based concert, "Positively Victorian!"

But in 1996, five scant years after her death, choreographer Richard Move reinvented her with his show *Martha @*. Thursday night at the Painted Bride, six members of his company

and special local guest artists accompanied him. The show opened with one of Charles Atlas' amusing film montages.

The lanky Move would have towered over Graham, yet his impersonation of her is brilliant and believable. His swank Graham-like gowns fit like opera gloves, and his flawless makeup is only slightly overdone. Although he wickedly caricatures Graham, he turns what could be a betrayal into a loving portrayal.

He introduces himself as "Martha," the mother of contemporary dance. As the show hilariously progresses, he delicately exposes Graham's brittle self-centeredness, making her seem more the "Mommy Dearest" of dance. Through his emcee monologue, the exaggerated costumes of his splendid dancers and his near-naked love slave, Reid Hutchins, Move pulls together an invaluable and entertaining historical record.

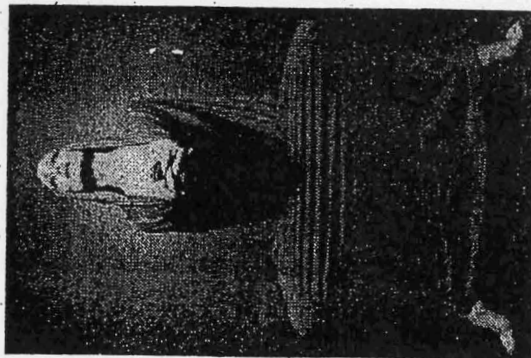
He touches on Graham's pro-

lific output — about 180 dances — that included works such as *Appalachian Spring* and *Lamentations*, which Move performed in an affectionate distillation.

In each city he tours, Move pulls in local dancers. Here, "Martha's" first guest was Akhila Vasthare, an authentic Bharathanatyam (an Indian classical dance form). Vasthare's ornate costume, warm connection to the audience, and intricate, stomping dance steps were in startling contrast to the severity and gravity of Graham's choreography, and even to Jeanne Ruddy's, lighthearted but insipid dance that followed.

A former principal dancer with Graham, Ruddy danced in '60s hip-huggers and an overstated duster to Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now."

Hip-hop artists Clyde Evans Jr. and Ron Wood pulled off the cheekiest moments of the evening with their spectacular flips and falls, splits and slides.



Richard Move impersonates Martha Graham in "Martha @" at the Painted Bride.

Paule Turner, as Medea, gave a sneak preview of *Medea: Love Is the Devil*, singing in hot pink curls and a red plaid kilt. If I must take it at all, I'll take my Graham cracked and reincarnated, like this.

Last performance tonight at 8 at the Painted Bride Art Center, 230 Vine St. Information: 215-925-9914.

The Guardian

Tuesday
October 26 1999
Published in London
and Manchester
www.guardian.co.uk
**Newspaper
of the Year**

Dance

Martha's divine seed

Richard Move

Brick Lane Music Hall,
London

★★★★

When Richard Move first started performing his Martha Graham impersonations in the New York night club Mother, he was issued with numerous cease and desist notices by the Graham estate.

Seeing his show at the Brick Lane Music Hall, it's easy to see why this 6ft 4in transver-



Diva delight ... Richard Moves quivers and quakes as Martha Graham Photograph: Tristram Kenton

tite should so unnerve the official guardians of Graham's work. In his finely trodden line between homage and parody, Move captures a mix of grandeur and absurdity that's very close to how the

late, great choreographer might have been.

Move is a foot taller than his subject and cannot recreate the unique shock of her dramatically ravaged face. But his make-up is perfect, and when

he speaks he gets Graham's voice down to its deepest diva vowels and brittle girlish overtones.

He also possesses her capacity to dominate the stage, and the sequences of Graham in-

spired choreography performed by him and his four dancers are expertly mastered. Jane Dudley, who danced with Graham for many years, was heard to acknowledge at Sunday's show, "Well, they sure can move."

The single male dancer in the show is an exact, comic quintessence of the stiff-legged hunks who played second fiddle to Graham's histrionic heroines while the women (Move included) arch and quiver in intense Graham mode.

However, they also wickedly exaggerate the style's most hectic mannerisms, so that as you delight in their accuracy you're also laughing like a drain. Graham, after all, trod her own line between genius and nonsense, and nowhere more than in her writings, which Move quotes and parodies.

I doubt Graham actually said that her male dancers should walk as if they carried the world's only seed, but she could easily have done.

The show's cabaret format makes it easy for Move to switch between reverence and comedy. What's less successful is his inclusion of other artists in the programme, whose contributions do not quite add up.

The exception is a bizarrely wonderful solo performed by Mark Morris, set to a tape recording of a sleepwalker, compulsively narrating a dream about a balloon flight to the moon. Morris looking deranged in a night shirt, dances a **tragi-comic evocation** of a man lost in cloudy visions, which is also a perfect complement to Graham — whose own greatness was rooted in her lonely, overweening commit-

ment to her art.

Comic or serious, it is the tilting towering drama of Graham's life and work that Move so expertly communicates. Through him we recognise the scale of an artist who made almost everyone else look safe and small.

Judith Mackrell

At the Brick Lane Music Hall, London EC2 (0171-387 0031), tonight, City Varieties, Leeds (0113-243 0808), November 1, and Sandfield Theatre, Nottingham (0115-952 6611), November 3.

Divine turbulence

Richard Move's 'Martha @'

BY MARCIA B. SIEGEL NEW YORK — Martha Graham wasn't always treated as reverentially as she is now. Surrogate matriarchs appeared in other people's dances as early as the 1930s, and comedians

have parodied her gaudy aestheticism. But the Graham interpretations of Richard Move go beyond send-up. Move, a dancer and performance artist, has been hosting — or hostessing — the "Martha @" series since 1996. Wearing a wardrobe of exquisite knockoffs, Move as Martha stages his own reductions of Graham choreography, and he introduces stellar guests associated with Graham and young artists born too late to have seen her perform. Last Saturday the nonrepeatable show, which is usually installed in a tiny downtown club, played to a packed audience at the 1500-seat Town Hall.

The main attraction was Move's version of *Phædra*, a 1962 epic based on the story of the queen of Athens, who fell in love with her stepson. By the time the original dance was made, Graham was deep into her Greek period, too deep perhaps. *The Legend of Phædra* boasts all the decadent signs and impedimenta that had

become trademarks of Graham's dance theater: the horny characters, the implacable choruses and harbingers of doom, the symbolic props and sets, and, at the center of it all, Martha in gorgeous costumes and eyelashes, writhing with forbidden desire.

Maybe token Grahamism will be our legacy, at least until the decade-long feud over her creative inheritance is concluded. But Move and the cast, including Jennifer Binford as Aphrodite and Amy Piantaggini as Artemis (the two bitch goddesses sparring for Phædra's soul), Rob Besserer as King Theseus, and Reid Hutchins as the toy-boy Hippolytus, gave a believable account of a dance I haven't seen in decades. Some less respectful imitators might be content to mime and mug Graham's iconography, but Move has gathered real dancers who do real Graham movement, and this gives the whole enterprise a historical dimension.

Graham's 1959 semi-collaboration with George Balanchine provided Move with another regal character. Using only one New York City Ballet dancer, Sallie Wilson (Balanchine in turn made a solo for Paul Taylor), Graham devised a climactic tennis game as prologue for the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Move/Martha introduced *Mary's Episode* in a monologue, one of a series of expositions layered to showcase Graham's choreographic intentions and her flowery epigrams at the same time that they delineate a chronic scene stealer. Throughout the evening, a retinue of costumed dancers attend her, handing her the microphone or taking away a prop with obsequious bows as she waves them away. Even the big stars who've come to perform with her get acknowledged only as they reflect her.

She asks Merce Cunning-

ham, "a distinguished former member of my company," to reminisce a bit, and he tells charming stories, none of them adulatory enough to satisfy Martha. She wonders what he's been doing since leaving her company in 1944. He counters that she reminds him of someone he used to know whose name he can't quite remember.

Cunningham, now 81, did his *Chair Solo*, a series of moves he can put together according to the shape he's in on a given evening. As always, he was riveting. He sat perfectly still, looking intently at the audience. With a sudden impulse, he'd change his whole body, including his face. He'd recede into stillness, then begin another move and recovery. Some things were drastic; some were whispers

— a sketchy port de bras, a series of leg brushes, a stirring of the hips. Each new reorientation was filled with a tremendous presence and a depthless calm.

Former Paul Taylor dancer Sharon Kinney performed one of Taylor's first dances, *Epic* (1957), which has attained almost mythic status. In Martha's words, "a series of so-called everyday movements and postures . . . misconstrued as dance," it "ushered in the dreaded postmodern movement."

The audience, for all its millennial sophistication, got restless as Kinney imperturbably stood on one leg and then the other and a telephone operator announced the time in 10-second intervals for five full minutes. *Epic* bore a strange resemblance to Cunningham's *Chair Solo*, a startling reminder that Taylor owed more to Cunningham at that point than he did to Graham. Meredith Monk ("Her teacher was Bessie Schonberg, a former member of my company") sang three of her wordless, evocative songs. Not least of the thrills on this amazing concert was a world premiere by Mark Morris in which he and Lauren Grant danced a sevillana with castanets and Morris developed a sultry attraction to the waiter who kept pouring them glasses of wine.

In adopting a drag-queen persona, Richard Move is playing to the audience for kitsch references, insider dance recognition, and gender-based innuendo. But "Martha @" has an inclusiveness that broadens the show's appeal and its resonance, a generosity of spirit that wasn't often practiced by Move's mentorees.



BEYOND SEND-UP: dancer and performance artist Move has been hostessing the "Martha @" series since 1996

In 'Martha@Summerdance,' he lets her spirit Move him

By **MICHAEL SMITH**
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT
e-mail: life@newspress.com

A drag Martha Graham? It seemed like a dubious idea. The high priestess of modern dance had already become an artifact of lost idealism by the end of her long life; and since her death, her legacy has been further damaged by squabbles among her legal and artistic heirs. What could be the point of another caricature?

Richard Move, who premiered his Graham takeoff at a downtown Manhattan bar in 1996 and has ridden it to glory, neutralized these doubts with a unique mix of sincerity, wit and respect for his model. In "Martha@Summerdance," he affectionately sent up Graham's pretensions but transmitted a profound admiration for her vision and achievement.

Before the show, the audience at Center Stage Theater was greeted by a pricelessly hilarious and exhilarating video collage by Charles Atlas of dance moments mostly from movies, everything from Elvis Presley to voodoo trance dancing, from the Joffrey Ballet's "Rite of Spring" to Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. What was amazing in these clips was the quality, humor and sheer intensity of the

dancing, the like of which is hardly seen anymore. The message was that dancing is fun. We were ready for anything when the lights went down.

Mr. Move as Ms. Graham made a stately entrance in a spotlight, statuesque in an elegant chinoiserie coat over a columnar aqua gown, made up within an inch of his life.

Whipping out a microphone, he greeted the audience. The voice was soft, the diction precise and slightly drawled, the pace deliberate. The pronouncements were a little ridiculous — "There are only two kinds of dance, good and bad" and "Center Stage is where I am," for example — but there was only a hint of dry self-mockery in the delivery, a wry glint of shared amusement in the timing.

This was a homecoming of sorts, said Martha, recounting the facts of her family's move from grimy, gray Pittsburgh to sunny, liberating Santa Barbara when she was 10. She was vice president of the Student Council at Santa Barbara High School and editor of the yearbook. Then she saw Ruth St. Denis dance in Los Angeles and realized she was "doomed to be a dancer." When she bragged about her later accomplishments — George Balanchine called Graham's style "the other classical technique" — she was telling the plain truth.

Mr. Move didn't look like Graham,

though she wore just as much make-up but he uncannily caught and reflected her animating, inspiring spirit, performance more a tribute than imitation. When he kidded her, it was with love.

The evening's dancing consisted of impressionistic renditions of Martha Graham works. These too presented a disconcerting double image. Mr. Move offered a few moves from "Appalachian Spring" with a short length fence and a rope as props. Katherine Crockett, as his "company," demonstrated the Graham technique while Mr. Move described it, using what sounded like Graham's own words. Excerpts from Graham's portrayals of Medea, Jocasta and Clytemnestra followed; these figures from Greek tragedy are "every woman," she declared.

The movement fragments referred to Graham — the flexed foot, pelvic thrusts, angular extensions, fasciculations — without even trying to duplicate her dancing. Ms. Crockett was nothing like a Graham dancer but had a sharp technique of her own and looked great, especially in her first costume, which hugged and revealed her taut body like a silver film. Mr. Move's dancing was more grounded but less technical, his presence was and engaging as he channeled the woman who possesses him, sometimes looking rather Egyptian. Explanations and jokes abounded.

Some of the monologues between dances were on tape, smoothly making time for changes into further examples of Pilar Limosner's wonderful costumes. Here, Mr. Move was more mannered and the stories were more preposterous, but they too may well have been drawn from Graham memoirs.

He ended with "Lamentation: Graham's 1930 evocation of universal grief, visibly bare-chested in a purplish tube of stretchy cloth, no longer making any point of impersonating a woman, wholly serious now, reminding us that dance can have the highest aspirations and reach to express the deepest human experience, which is well worth remembering in our post-ironic time. Summerdance is to be commended for bringing us this soulful entertainment.

(The final performance "Martha@Summerdance" is tonight at 8 at Center Stage Theater, upstairs the Paseo Nuevo mall. Tickets, which are \$22-\$25, may be purchased at the box office or by calling 963-0408.)

dance review

VOICE

at's Gone Came Back to the Joyce and Town Hall

IDENTITIES ON THE MOVE

BY DEBORAH JOWITT

» Fans of the "Martha @ Mother" series did their best to turn Town Hall into a club for Richard Move's performance there January 20. The cramped little dive where the series originated had a certain je ne sais quoi, but it was nice to see our cabaret hostess, a soft-voiced, soignée six-foot-five Martha Graham (Move), in a space where her imposing chignon doesn't practically brush the ceiling and her vengeful chorus of Furies is not in danger of hitting the walls.

"Martha" may raise her painted eyebrows or roll her eyes in ladylike dismay at the rampages of postmodernism, but Move presents innovation as well as historical parody. Merce Cunningham dances a brief and riveting chair solo before reminiscing about his days as Graham's second leading man. Meredith Monk unleashes her uncanny voice in some of her compositions. "CrutchMaster" Bill Shannon performs a marvel of soft fluid maneuvers on crutches; it looks like break dancing gone to heaven. And David Neumann and Stacy Dawson convulse us with excerpts from their *Pearl River*, their rivalrous court-and-kill moves set bewitchingly in and out of sync with a martial-arts movie soundtrack.

"Martha" is fond of remembering that Cunningham and Paul Taylor were once her boys, and, as a historical treat, Sharon Kinney (an

early Taylor dancer) revives *Epic*, a transgressive solo from Taylor's 1957 concert featuring stillness and ordinary moves. To the recorded voice of a telephone operator giving the time, Kinney, in a dark suit, performs a range of interesting, clean-cut moves: She squats, assumes a stance, raises an arm slightly, walks to a new spot, and so on. Kinney is deft (although not quite deadpan enough), and the solo, keeping us aware of every passing second, is both maddening and compelling.

In a delicious *pièce d'occasion*, *From Old Seville*, Mark Morris, looking frowsy in a suit, and Lauren Grant, smart in heels and a revealing little black dress, embark on the *Sevillanas*, castanets crackling. Between *coplas*, they repair to a small table and drain glasses, then return to the fray, Morris becoming more visibly lubricated and impassioned, Grant ever cooler and more bored.

Move's "Graham" pieces, like many good parodies, blend love of the subject with a wicked eye for its foibles. A degree of gaucheness or of dislocation lies at the heart of parody; knowledge of the subject has to be thorough, but the rendition can't be a perfect copy of what it sends up. In Move's final appearance in *Lament*, his bare male torso is visible under the famous stretch-jersey tube—as if to remind us that he is not Martha Graham, but has definitely gotten under her skin.

DANCE
February 6, 2001 •

VOICE CHOICES JANUARY 23, 2001

'MARTHA @ TOWN HALL' Practicing the highest form of flattery, the six-foot-five Richard Move *becomes* Martha Graham, only queen-size, and moves his hysterically funny and aesthetically challenging mixed bill uptown. Finally you can revel in Move's witty send-up and breathe clean air and sit in a real theater seat, all at the same time. Guest artists for this once-in-a-lifetime event include Merce Cunningham dancing and in conversation with "Martha," Mark Morris, Sharon Kinney dancing Paul Taylor's legendary 1957 *Epic*, Meredith Monk, David Neumann and Stacy Dawson, and Bill Shannon, a/k/a Crutchmaster. Hurry: Tickets are almost gone. SATURDAY at 8, Town Hall, 123 West 43rd Street, 840-2824. (Zimmer)

Interview

FLAMING CREATURES

In the spirit of Jack Smith, patron saint of the avant-garde, *Interview* spotlights provocative artists who are pushing the outer edges of performance, music, architecture, dance, theater, and fashion

RICHARD MOVE History repeats itself in Richard Move's dance cabaret *Martha@Mother*, as tragedy and farce simultaneously. The six-foot-four sometime bouncer resurrects modern-dance pioneer Martha Graham as the host of a Downtown performance variety show. "It is satirical, but it's a real homage," says Move, who has also danced with Karole Armitage and DANCENOISE. "She was the ultimate radical. She believed what she was doing

could change the world, and it did. Her search for the truth in that uncompromising, religious approach to art fuels me." Graham's estate disavows the series (which begins its fourth season in March), but former Graham company members and dance luminaries like Mikhail Baryshnikov and Mark Morris have actually graced its tiny club setting in New York's meatpacking district. Move is now working on a feature-length film about Graham (directed by Graham

associate Christopher Herrmann and co-starring Ann Magnuson), as well as a possible off-Broadway mounting of the best of *Martha@Mother*. "People identify with Martha as the quintessential diva, with the glamour and the drama," says Move. "*Martha's* really accessible because of her wit and humor . . . and because you have somebody letting you into the psyche of the creative process and the creative artist." (more Creatures page 48)

Text by Evelyn McDonnell

Above: Dancer and choreographer Richard Move pays homage to Martha Graham.

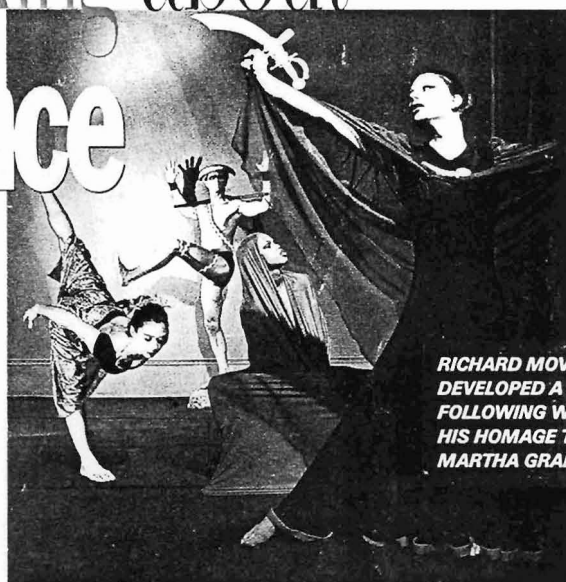
Photo: ANDREW HETHERINGTON

VOGUE

DEC

people are talking about

dance



RICHARD MOVE HAS DEVELOPED A CULT FOLLOWING WITH HIS HOMAGE TO MARTHA GRAHAM.

and then, 'I want to be her' or anything," recalls Move, 30, reaching down to pet Kathy, his pit bull. "That would be a little too weird, even for me." He rolls his neck, in the way that friends of the dance often do, and turns his cheek to the sun, sipping Merlot in profile. "But I began to feel more and more possessed by her brilliance and vision and oracular qualities. . . ."

By the time he was 28 (and six feet four inches tall), Move could deny Martha no longer. His hilarious, technically perfect impersonation, *Martha @ Mother*, named for the baroque New York modern nightclub that hosts it, has become a hot ticket. Here you will see—if you are a Baryshnikov or a

martha after dark

Whenever she was asked to assess her talent, Martha Graham would scoff. Ha! You can have talent and desire and all the right slippers, Graham would insist, "but without a technique . . . you can go out and fall flat on your face."

Graham, of course, never fell—unless she wanted to. Having inspired Baryshnikov, Nureyev, Hawkins, Cunningham, and Taylor, she performed well into her seventies—a deranged, barely five-foot-tall Hecuba, for instance—and was still creating dances at the time of her death, at the age of 95, in 1991. Graham routinely described herself as a goddess flouting mortality, and according to the dancer/performance artist/night creature Richard Move, she is a spirit "begging to be channeled." For years, he resisted the calling. It began, Move says, when he was sixteen—with his first class in Graham technique, where he was taught to breathe from his pelvis. "It wasn't like I just said right there

Francesco Clemente or someone who can somehow snag one of the 60 seats—outrageous abbreviations of Graham's greatest works, often performed by current and former Graham-company members. The monthly series works both as loving homage and as a raucous, rather liberating introduction to the mysteries of modern dance. It belongs, of course, to the newly minted theatrical genre Night of the Living Diva, wherein the Callases and Vreelands and Hellmans and Dinah Washingtons hold forth on this and that, making us love them and hate them and quote them. His contribution is refreshingly technical, satirizing and adoring Martha with the actual tools of her art. "We start from an exacting factual base," Move confides. "That's the only way we can sort of get away with the parody, with the female-impersonation thing." He looks around the café to see who might be listening. "You see, Martha was quite nervous about, um, female impersonators." And, after all, you don't mess with Martha.—BOB ICKES *photo* ▶ 158

"IT'S A CLASSIC STORY," SAYS RICHARD MOVE, KICKING BACK IN HIS SPRAWLING apartment over a sex club in the meatpacking district. "Someone comes to New York from the hinterlands—I'm from rural Virginia—and then invents a whole way of life: a name, a personality, everything." • Actually, Move created two new identities for himself: first as a go-go dancer (born Richard Winberg, he was christened "Move" by the club promoter Michael Alig, who's now behind bars for killing a drug dealer and chopping up the body), then as a keen impersonator of Martha Graham.

His drag riff on the matriarch of modern dance, which comes to Town Hall January 20, has been a cult sensation since its premiere in 1996. Long staged at Mother, a tiny nightclub near Move's home, it has lured a dazzling retinue of guest artists including Mikhail Baryshnikov and played before the likes of Francesco Clemente and Julia Roberts. The show—a cabaret act with arch monologues, clever impressions of Graham's oeuvre, and short dances by a range of luminaries—earned Move and coproducer Janet Stapleton a Bessie Award in 1997.

Move's impersonations gain further resonance because of the bitter contest over Graham's legacy. The pioneering choreographer left her estate, including the rights to her dances, to her longtime associate, Ron Protas.



JOSEPH ASTOR

Last May the board of the Martha Graham Center for Contemporary Dance voted to remove Protas as artistic director. The company shut down a few weeks later, and may never perform again. The school, which also suspended operations last summer, is set to reopen Tuesday under the direction of Stuart Hodes, who began dancing for Graham in the 1950s.

At Town Hall, Move will stage his miniature *Phaedra*, adding a chorus of women and new sets to Graham's 1962 erotic thriller. He's also preparing a solo based on the 1959 *Episodes*, "that strange, historic collaboration" by Graham and George Balanchine for the New York City Ballet. The bill also includes solo performances by Merce Cunningham, Mark Morris, and Meredith Monk. And Sharon Kinney will give a rare rendition of Paul Taylor's *Epic*, a minimalist "anti-

errand into the maze



JOSEPH ASTOR

AS RIVAL
FACTIONS FIGHT
OVER MARTHA
GRAHAM'S LEGACY,
RICHARD MOVE
RE-CREATES THE
DIVA'S SINGULAR
MYSTIQUE

BY CHRISTOPHER
REARDON



JOSEPH ASTOR

dance" whose 1957 premiere left critics aghast.

Move's act has come under fire, chiefly from people who've never seen it. Mostly he's accused of cheapening Graham's artistic legacy by plying the audience with misinformation and playing her creative genius for laughs.

Even before the 1996 launch of "Martha@Mother," lawyers for the Graham Center sent letters telling Move to cease and desist. He made a few concessions (like dropping a photo of Graham and adding a disclaimer to his promotional materials), but the show goes on.

"I have every right to impersonate a public figure like her," says Move, who dwarfs his five-foot-one alter ego by 16 inches. "And as far as confusing the public that they're seeing real

Graham work: You have to be very small-minded to think that's what's going on." He takes pains to ensure that his monologues are historically accurate, drawing on books, videos, and former Graham dancers who call him up with anecdotes. "I won't say, 'Lamentation premiered in 1930' onstage unless I've done my homework," he says. "I'm a scholar now on the subject. I take a lot of liberties, but it's from a point of knowledge."

He describes his dances as "Cliffs Notes versions" that use none of Graham's copyrighted material but evoke its essence. "She has an evening-length *Clytemnestra*," he explains. "I do a 10-minute version where I eliminate the minor characters and just go right for the love triangle and the murders."

The show's tone oscillates between homage and satire. "I just think those two elements are occurring simultaneously in everything I do," says Move. "How could it not be homage when you invest so much time and creative energy?"

Move grew up halfway between Fredericksburg, Virginia—"America's most historic city," he dutifully draws—and the Marine Corps base at Quantico. His father had a long career in law enforcement with the federal government, but Move won't elaborate. ("I'm not allowed to say anything else," he says.) His mother works for a federal court, but he says he's not at liberty to discuss that either.

A high school drama teacher, Frederick Franklin, turned him on to theater, chaperoning trips

to Washington, D.C., to study at the Folger Shakespeare Library and see productions by Martha Clarke, Robert Wilson, and Graham. "I remember Martha Graham taking a bow, held up by nearly naked beautiful men," Move says. "The dance was beyond my comprehension at the time, but I understood it was mythic and dramatic and so sexy and violent. Clearly it was one of her Greek pieces."

At Virginia Commonwealth University, he majored in dance under the tutelage of Kinney, who had danced for Taylor and Twyla Tharp. After graduating in 1989, he worked as a go-go dancer at Manhattan clubs like Limelight, Paladin, Red Zone, and the Roxy. By day, he danced with Mark Dendy and Karole Armitage.

"Martha@Mother" began "out of desperation," Move says. As one of the founders and producers of Jackie 60, a scathing cabaret that took on everyone from Laurie Anderson to Tonya Harding, he was in constant need of new material. One weekend in 1995 he put together a show based on dance legends. Robert LaFosse did Nijinsky. Maxine Sherman did Ruth St. Denis. And Move, for the first time, did Martha. "I thought it was going to be too artsy and obtuse even for our audience," he says.

He thought wrong. As "Martha@" enters its fifth season, he sees no shortage of interest or material. "The booking of guest slots can go on indefinitely," he says. "I'm dying to get Ann Reinking on the show. And Tommy Tune. And with all the young and emerging artists, it's almost limitless."

He also has a wealth of material for his Graham monologues and dances. "She made at least 180 ballets," he says. "I've done 20 of them, maybe 25." Still to come are adaptations of *Dark Meadow* (1946), *Judith* (1950), and *Seraphic Dialogue* (1955).

Move continues to find favor with some of the dancers who knew Martha best: Yuriko, Bertram Ross, Linda Hodes, Mary Hinkson, Matt Turney, and Stuart Hodes. "Those are people who really know Martha," he says. "And they have embraced what I do by telling me little stories or finding me videos. Stuart, who was Martha's partner in the 1950s, has actually performed with us three times. To me, that's the ultimate satisfaction, the ultimate seal of approval." ▢

Photos of Move as a young modern dancer may be viewed at www.villagevoice.com.

DANCE

By WILLIAM HARRIS

DESPITE forensic evidence, the modern-dance pioneer Martha Graham did not die in 1991. She can be found performing, name dropping and introducing guest choreographers the first Wednesday and Thursday of most months at a club in Manhattan's meatpacking district. Oh, she also grew 16 inches and is often mistaken for a soft-spoken, witty man named Richard Move.

Martha@Mother is the event, a satiric character study of Graham as artist, diva and publicity hound — all portrayed by the 6-foot-4-inch Mr. Move in Graham drag — as well as a loving tribute to modern dance and its practitioners. The combination of serious dance and high camp was devised by Mr. Move, 30, in collaboration with Janet Stapleton, 38, the co-managing director at Dance Theater Workshop, New York's premier showcase for young choreographers. Mr. Move and Ms. Stapleton wanted to create an event that fused their shared love for both contemporary choreography and the sweaty energy of the club scene.

"I have lived in both the dance world and the late-night experimental cabaret world," says Mr. Move, who came to New York in 1989 after graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in dance. (Back then, his last name was Winberg.) He has danced with Karole Armitage, Mark Dendy and Pooh Kaye, among others, and created "Jackie 60," a drag revue also presented at the club Mother. "I have an equal respect for the work that can be done at 1 A.M. in a nightclub and something performed at the Joyce Theater, and I don't see one as superior esthetically or more important than the other."

With no advertising but lots of word of mouth, and very limited seating, Martha@Mother, now in its third season, has become a hot ticket downtown. The club, at 875

**In Manhattan's
meatpacking district,
a tribute to the priestess
of modern dance mixes
high seriousness
and high camp.**

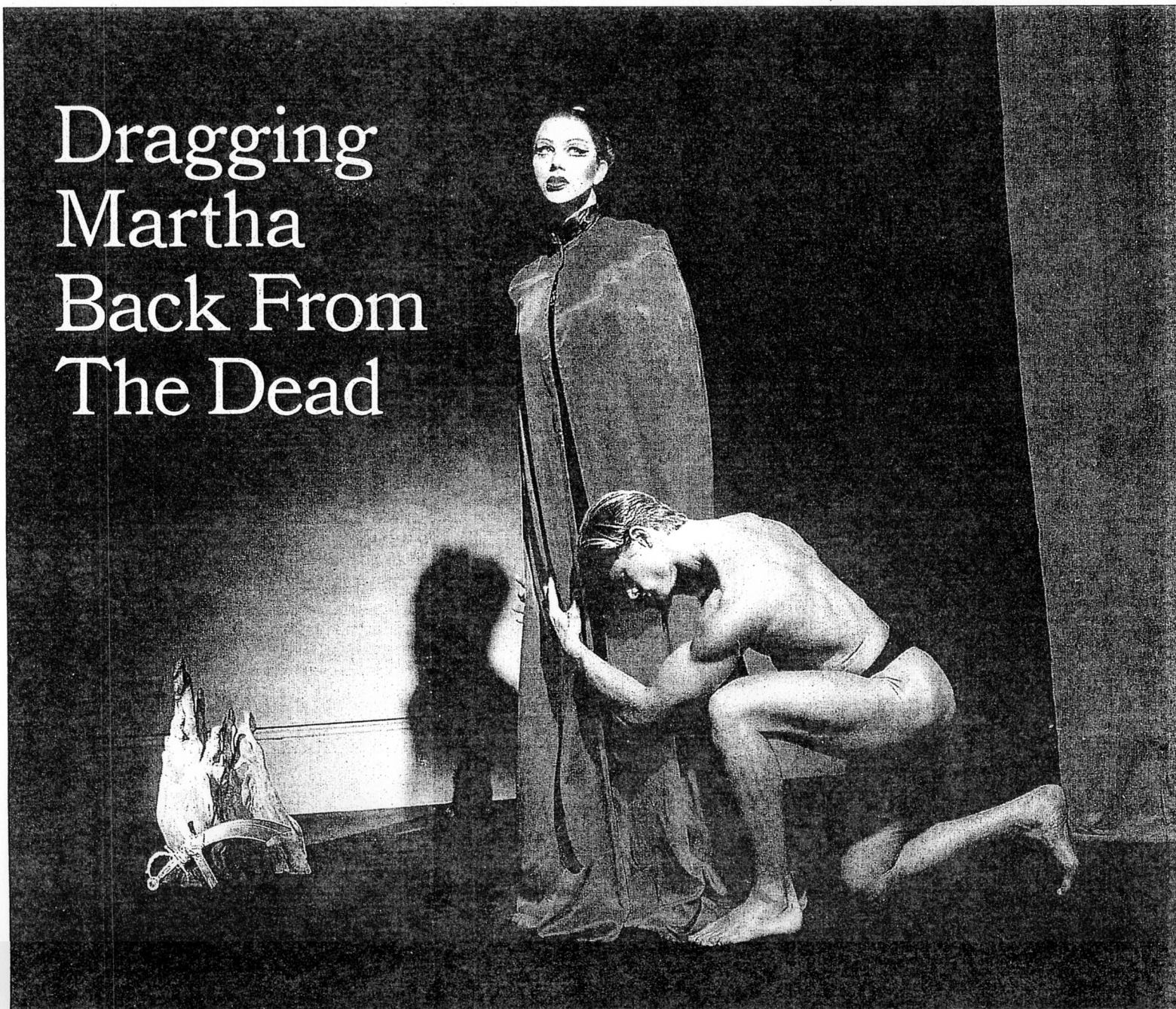
Washington Street at West 14th Street, seats only 60, with room for 25 standees. A second show has been added on Wednesdays in response to ticket demand. Mikhail Baryshnikov has attended, and so have the painters Brice Marden and Francesco Clemente and legendary members of the Graham troupe from the halcyon 1950's — Yuriko, Bertram Ross, Matt Turney, Mary Hinkson and Linda Hodes. Two other Graham company alumni, Stuart Hodes and Gus Solomons Jr., have performed on the 8-by-14-foot stage. "One thing everyone learns once they've performed at Martha," says Mr. Move, "is how much space they've wasted their whole careers."

The format is that of a variety show, with Mr. Move serving as M.C. for works by contemporary choreographers. The evening opens with Mr. Move and his troupe of three women and one man — Reid Hutchins, a friend since college and Playgirl magazine's 25th-anniversary centerfold — doing a takeoff of a Graham dance, often to the music from the film "Psycho." The movement is based on Graham technique and is performed with deadpan seriousness, which, along with some lip quivering and glaring by Mr. Move, gives the parody bite.

"I use Reid to exemplify and personify the Graham hunk," Mr. Move explains. "The men in the troupe were painfully gor-

William Harris writes about dance, art and theater in Manhattan.

Dragging Martha Back From The Dead



Richard Move portrays Martha Graham and Reid Hutchins a "Graham hunk" in the deadpan parody that opens the evening of modern dance called Martha@Mother.

geous and for the most part did very little onstage and had no clothes on. They became props for these fierce women who were doing this incredible movement and were the stars of the show."

What follows is a cornucopia of Martha Graham anecdotes and pontifications, delivered by Mr. Move with deliciously exaggerated diction, that introduce and link the subsequent dance performances. Mr. Move has culled his material from Graham's autobiography as well as the biographies written by Agnes DeMille and Robert Tracy.

"I think people are very moved by Martha's words, because it's very unfashionable to be so sentimental about your art," Mr. Move says. "She equated art with religion. For a lot of dance people who come to the shows, hearing Graham's words rekindles their early years and memories of why they started dancing."

Mr. Tracy actually appeared at the November edition of Martha@Mother, giving a slide lecture about Graham's collaborations with the sculptor Isamu Noguchi. The hipster audience was rapt. Later the same

evening, it howled at the performance artist John Kelly's sly impersonation of Pina Bausch, the moody German choreographer. By the evening's finale, it was gasping audibly at the delicate beauty of a stick figure manipulated by the puppeteer Basil Twist.

"I love Richard's integrity," says Mr. Kelly, who was also featured on the very first Martha@Mother program. "I'm really able to appreciate the Graham choreography by seeing it through this lens of pathos and irony, which is what travestie does. The energy of the choreography on that tiny stage adds to the pleasure. It's time for us to look at Graham anew, both the beauty and the tackiness."

Mr. Move and Ms. Stapleton initially asked their friends in the dance world to participate. Now, choreographers are calling them for a slot. Ultimately, they invite artists whose work they admire. The only restriction they have imposed is that no dance can be longer than 10 minutes. (The rule applies to Mr. Move's group as well.) Choreographers are free to do as they please — show old work or devise something new. Tere O'Connor packed 16 of his dance

students from New York University onto the stage. John Jasperse showed a duet from a dance that will have its premiere in the spring. Every artist is paid a modest fee.

ACTUALLY, the show starts at the door. The ticket taker is a drag king named Willy Ryder, slender and handsome with a tough-guy stance. Once inside, there is a bar and a preshow video collage, compiled by Charles Atlas, featuring historical dance footage, numbers from movie musicals and any film clips in which the name Martha is mentioned, or screamed, as it is in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf." "We wanted to bring a whole environment to the event and not just create a dance showcase," Ms. Stapleton says.

There was one rocky moment. Back in November 1996, five days before the first Martha@Mother, Ms. Stapleton and Mr. Move received hand-delivered letters from lawyers representing the Graham estate, basically asking them to cease and desist. The two had used a photograph of Graham on their flyer, an image given to them by the

photographer. Now Mr. Move and his dancers appear on the flyers. "We took the letter very seriously," Ms. Stapleton says, "and also answered it immediately, assuring them that nobody was performing copyrighted works of Martha Graham. They asked for a few other things, which we were willing to do, including a disclaimer." The disclaimer, visible on the program and flyer, reads: "This event is in no way connected to or sponsored by 'The Martha Graham Entities.'" There has been no correspondence from the estate since.

The next Martha@Mother is Jan. 6 and 7. Appearing on the program will be the mid-career choreographers Molissa Fenley and Lance Gries, as well as José Navas (who is flying in from Montreal), Hope Clark (best known as a dancer in Elizabeth Streb's company), Sandra Kaufman (a newcomer) and Murray Louis, now 72 and the artistic director of the Murray Louis and Nikolais Dance Company. "Martha and Murray will sit on the stage and reminisce," Mr. Move says, smiling. He pauses, then adds, "I love dance, but I'm also happy to trash it." □