

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

vealed that the Cremonese masters used a unique type of varnish. After duplicating the varnish, he stripped and refinished several modern instruments whose sound, he maintains, has been improved.

Is a Nagyvarius as good as a Stradivarius? It's too early to tell, says Alper. Violins take up to 40 years to attain their best tone quality. Although some enthusiasts think that Nagyvary's violins already rank among the greats, most musicians feel that his instruments will have to undergo long scrutiny "from those who make their living playing them."

### *The Grande Dame Of Modern Dance*

"Martha Graham" by Anna Kisselgoff, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Feb. 19, 1984), 229 West 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Martha Graham, at age 90 "the most famous dancer and choreographer in the world," is still going strong. Though Graham herself stopped performing in 1969, she continues to choreograph startling new works for the New York dance company that bears her name.

Graham virtually created American modern dance in the late 1920s. Along with Picasso and Joyce, declares Kisselgoff, chief dance critic for the *New York Times*, she has been one of the supreme innovators of 20th-century art. Rebellious against the strict formality of classical ballet, Graham pioneered a style that was raw and powerful, "more jagged



*Martha Graham as she appeared in a 1940 performance of Letter to the World.*

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and filled with tension than even Picasso's forms," Kisselgoff observes. Inspired by the dances of American Indians and other primitive peoples, Graham stressed constant motion in her performances and avoided the fixed positions and poses of classical ballet. Standardizing her repertoire of movements in a training regimen (the "Graham technique") allowed her to pass on her style to disciples, establishing a permanent alternative to ballet.

"I don't want to be understandable, I want to be felt," Graham declares. Her chief principle is that dancing expresses emotions that people will not or cannot express in words. The quintessential Graham movement begins in what she calls "the house of the pelvic truth." The dances are often direct and erotic, enough so that in 1962 two congressmen protested in vain against State Department subsidies for her troupe's cultural exchange tour in Europe. Since Graham herself stopped dancing, however, her company's performances have been without a "mesmerizing focus" and have become cooler and more studied.

Cooler or not, Graham is far from retirement. Last winter saw the premier of two new Graham works. And while some of her younger colleagues now believe that dance should be cerebral and more formal [see *WQ*, Summer 1983, p. 33], Graham continues to insist that dance be a direct form of communication between performer and audience.

### *Subsidizing The Arts*

"Arts Funding: Growth and Change between 1963 and 1983" by Kenneth Goody, in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Jan. 1984), Sage Publications, 275 South Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212.

It is no accident that Americans no longer associate artists with bleak garrets but with chic Soho lofts. Growing audiences have made painters, musicians, and others in the arts more prosperous. Moreover, reports Goody, a Rockefeller Foundation consultant, arts contributions by government, corporations, and foundations have soared.

In 1963, these three types of institutions gave a total of \$40 million to the arts. By 1982, that figure had risen to over \$940 million, an 800 percent jump even after inflation. One reason for the surge was the creation in 1965 of the federal government's National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which last year distributed \$131 million to individuals and organizations—painters, film makers, symphony orchestras, dance troupes. And state governments appropriated \$129 million for the arts in 1982, up from only \$2.7 million in 1966. Also between 1966 and 1982, foundation support grew from \$38 million to \$349 million, corporate contributions from \$24 million to \$336 million.

Today, foundations and corporations each supply about 36 percent of the nation's organized arts funding, while the state and federal governments together provide 28 percent (versus seven percent in 1966).