

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)