

ARTS CALENDAR

A GUIDE TO EVENTS AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Winter 1995

Celebrating the Doris Humphrey Centennial

THE NEW YEAR, 1995, marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of **Doris Humphrey**, a pioneer of modern dance. Dance companies and schools worldwide, including Ohio State, are celebrating her legacy by presenting some of her masterworks to new audiences.

Born in Oak Park, Illinois, Doris Humphrey traveled to California to study with Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, later becoming a leading dancer on Denishawn tours throughout the

United States and Asia. After leaving Denishawn, she and Charles Weidman formed the renowned Humphrey-Weidman Company. There she developed a style and technique of dance based on how she moved as a contemporary American woman. She determined that dance exists in the off-balance movement between standing and falling. This idea of "fall and recovery," inspired by the simple act of walking, was the cornerstone of her powerful and moving dances of social commentary and abstract group movement.

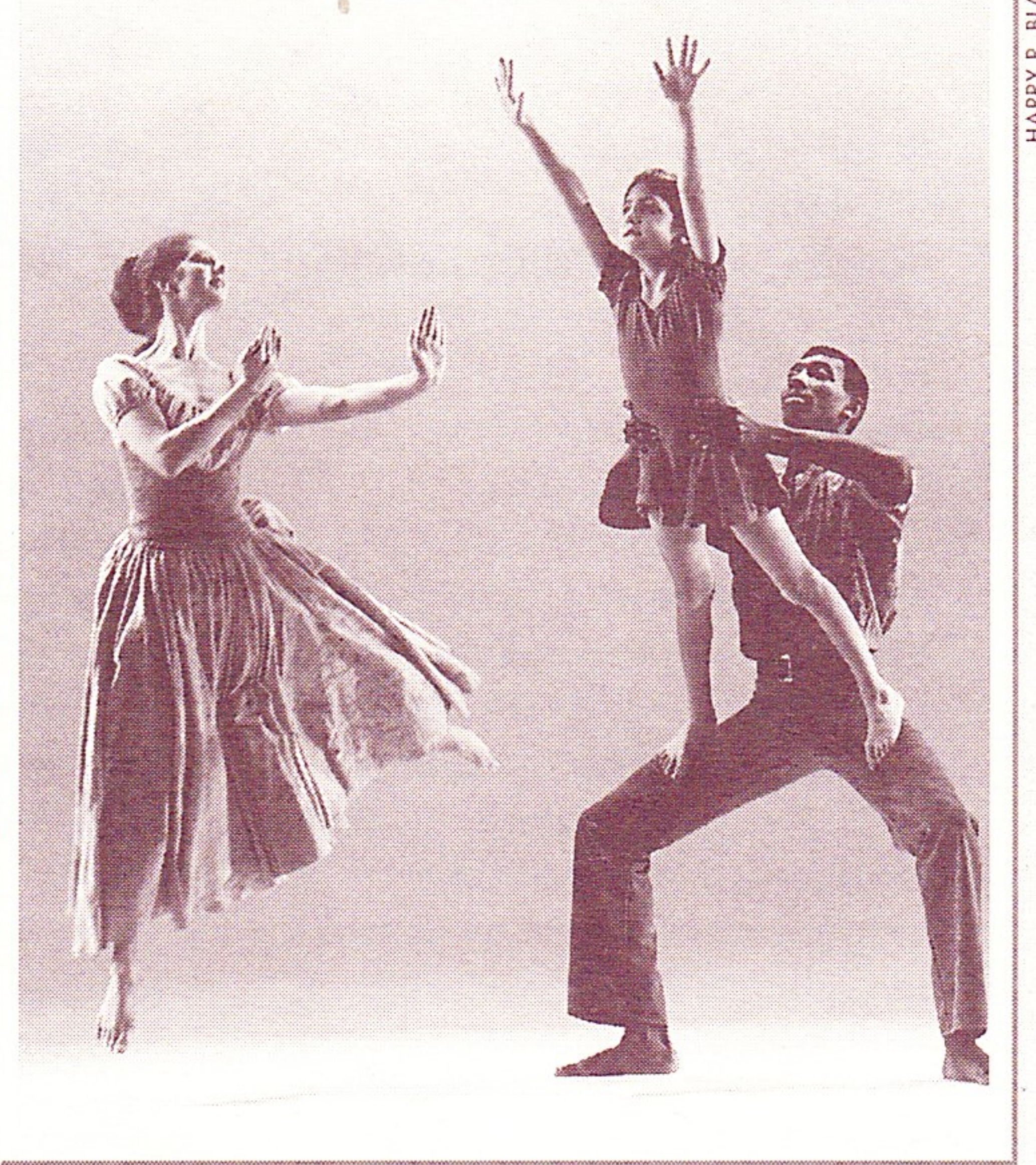
After arthritis in her hip made it impossible for her to create dances for herself, Humphrey became director of the José Limón Company, making dances for her famous protégé and his company. One of these dances was *Day on Earth* (1947), which will be performed by the University Dance Company on its upcoming concert. The theme of *Day on Earth*, Humphrey's last major work, has been described as "the blessedness and sustaining power of work, transcending personal joys and sorrows."

Last summer, in preparation for the centennial, Ohio State's Department of Dance offered performers

and scholars the unique opportunity to study Humphrey technique over a five-week period with Nona Schurman, who danced with the Humphrey-Weidman Company from 1939-44. In addition, a lecture on the early development of the Humphrey technique was presented by Ernestine Stodelle, a Humphrey-Weidman dancer from 1929-35.

It is a rare treat to be able to commemorate this choreographer with performances of her work almost forty years after her death. Because dances have customarily been passed down from generation to generation by oral tradition and demonstration, many masterworks of dance have been altered or lost over time. Humphrey's dances are able to be performed today because they were recorded in dance notation.

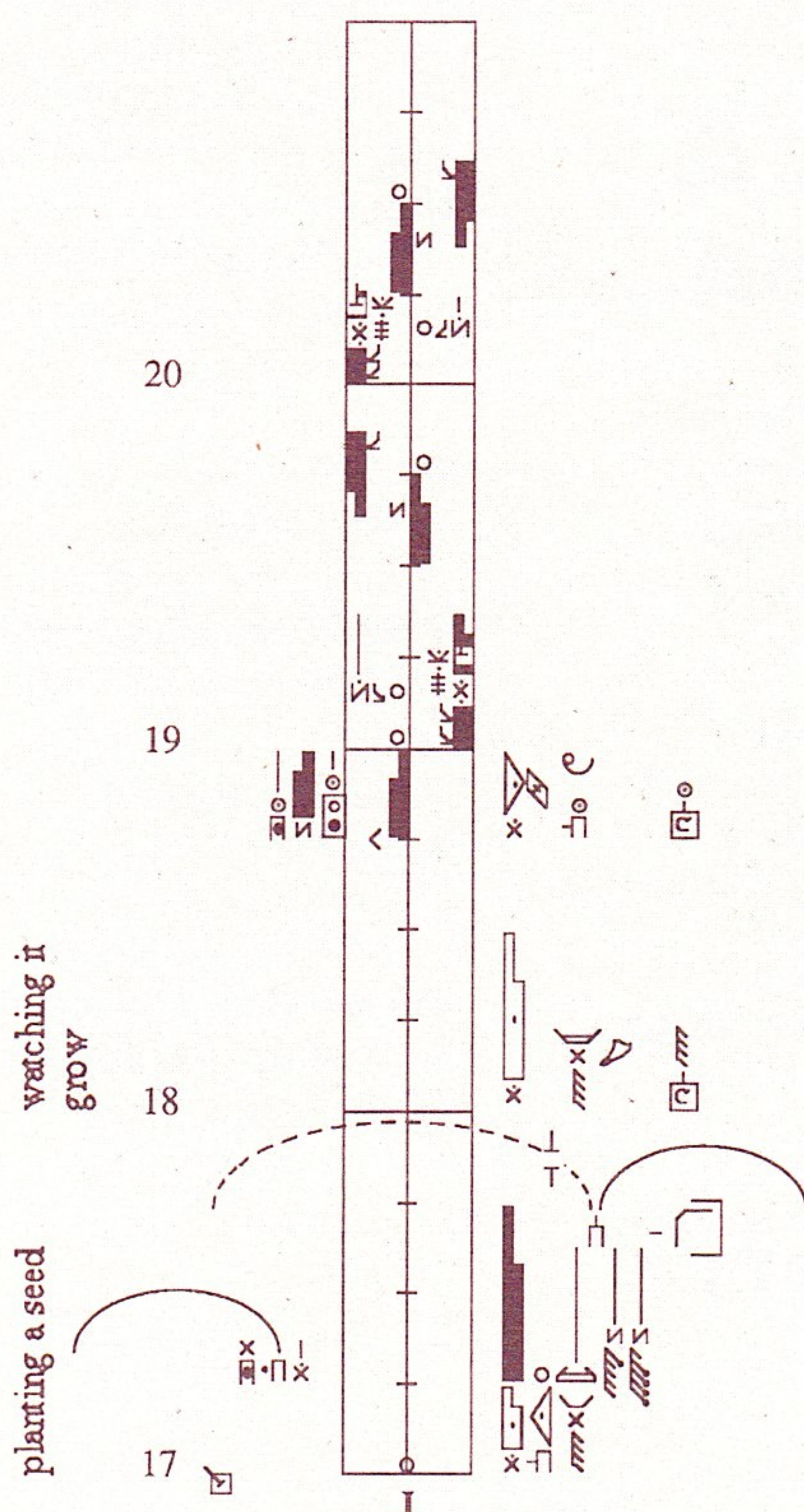
Labanotation, developed in the 1920s by Rudolf Laban, is the system of dance notation that was used to record 17 of the nearly 100 works that Humphrey created in her lifetime. Upon being shown a completed score, Humphrey once remarked, "Now my dances are no longer legend; they are history."



BETH CORNING, MARTHA BLAINE, AND HAYWOOD "WOODY" McGRUFF IN THE 1980 UNIVERSITY DANCE COMPANY PERFORMANCE OF DORIS HUMPHREY'S *DAY ON EARTH*.

Among Humphrey's contributions to modern dance was her book *The Art of Making Dances*, which was published posthumously. This book, which describes her theory and method of choreographing, was the first of its kind and remains the basis of countless choreography classes. For 25 years, until her death in 1958, she herself shared the art of making dances at the Juilliard School and the 92nd Street Y in New York City, at Connecticut College Summer School, and in master classes in schools and colleges throughout the United States. ■

Written by Carol Maxwell, a certified Labanotation teacher and Ohio State graduate student in dance.



A SECTION OF THE LABANOTATION SCORE FOR *DAY ON EARTH*.

Doris Humphrey's *Day on Earth* will be performed by the University Dance Company during its concert February 23-26 and March 3-4.

See calendar listing and highlight on pages 5 & 6.