

MARTHA HILL & THE MAKING OF AMERICAN DANCE

Janet Mansfield Soares. Wesleyan University Press, 2009.

Janet Soares has written an engaging life history of one of the chief behind-the-scenes architects of American modern dance: the venerable Martha Hill (1900-1995). It is unlikely that many dance departments at colleges and universities large and small would now exist without the efforts of Martha Hill.

Wresting dance out of the gymnasium and into the conservatory (for example, Julliard), Martha Hill was, quite literally, on scene at the beginning when modern dance had to fight for a spot within the American arts. That battle goes on and for those engaged in the unfortunate but ever-present need to defend a place for the arts within academia, Janet Soares' *Martha Hill & the Making of American Dance* is both inspiring and necessary reading.

As a selfless educator and administrator, Martha Hill emerges as a devoted promoter of modern dance and also as one of the people who shaped the American consciousness about dance itself. Hill is a rare administrator; and those engaged in artistic pursuits would be well advised to study her selfless dedication to her art. Never a marquee name, Hill remains largely unknown, but this volume will help

to correct that omission and put her deservedly forward. Soares writes: "Though others might have developed loftier ambitions for themselves, Martha [Hill] gladly served whatever was good for the cause of dance, wherever and whenever the opportunity rose."

In this intimate portrait, Soares mixes authoritative and well-researched scholarship with charm, in much the way, one imagines, Martha Hill mixed administrative and educational leadership with grace. Soares' *Martha Hill & the Making of American Dance* is well researched and ably written in dedicated service to dance history.

—Renée E. D'Aoust