

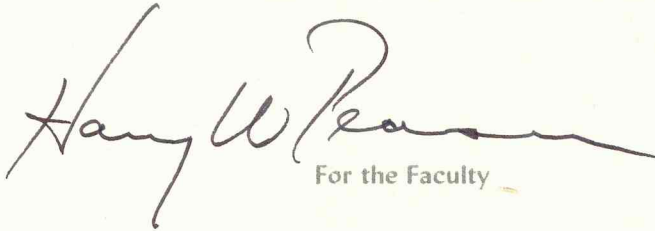
# BENNINGTON COLLEGE

By vote of the Trustees of the Corporation and upon the recommendation of the Faculty, has conferred on

**Martha Hill Davies**

The Degree of Doctor of Letters

It declares her entitled to all the rights and privileges which pertain to that degree here and elsewhere. Given at the College in Bennington in the State of Vermont, United States of America, this fourteenth day of June, nineteen hundred and sixty-nine.



For the Faculty

President



Chairman, Board of Trustees



CITATION  
Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters  
Bennington College, June 14, 1969

MARTHA HILL DAVIES, you hold a rare place in American Dance. As dancer, teacher, collaborator, and administrator you have been the catalyst who has given vitality, structure, and style to modern dance here and abroad. You have brought focus and clarity to an art that was dispersed and fragmented. You have taught our dancers and choreographers to use discipline in the service of their creativity, and you have taught our dance audiences to eschew what is meretricious for what is genuine.

We are proud that it was here at Bennington College that you originated the dance program that qualified and entitled dance to join the other seven liberal arts; and we are proud that it was at Bennington that you first demonstrated your ecumenical powers, when for many summers you brought together dancers of rival schools to advance their common cause whatever their kinesiological differences.

From these beginnings in the Vermont hills, your influence in dance has advanced across the land and found its way into an untold number of schools, colleges, and universities, into hundreds of dance festivals, east and west. Wherever modern dance has flourished, you, or someone you have taught and influenced, have been there providing taste and technique, encouragement and dedication.

MARTHA HILL DAVIES, you have taught us to move and to love the sight of movement; you have taught us how to teach; by your inspiration, imagination, discipline, and verve you have turned the world of dance at Bennington and in America into a distinguished estate. Now, therefore, rejoicing in your achievement, we bear witness to it by conferring on you what we hold very dear, the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters, and by admitting you to all the rights and privileges which pertain to that degree here and elsewhere.

PRESENTATION  
Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters  
Bennington College, June 14, 1969

Mr. President, it is my privilege, on behalf of the Trustees and Faculty of Bennington College, to present as a candidate for the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters, MARTHA HILL DAVIES.

MARTHA HILL DAVIES initiated at Bennington College in 1932 the first academic program for a dance major at any college in the country. She began her career as a dance teacher at the Kellogg School of Physical Education in Battle Creek, Michigan [where she earned her first degree.] Then she taught at Kansas State Teachers' College and at New York University. At first she was a teacher of ballet, but her distinguished career as teacher of modern dance began soon after she came to New York to work for her B. S. from Teachers' College, Columbia University and her M. S. from New York University. She also joined classes at the Dalcroze School of Eurythmics and at Martha Graham's Studio.

By 1930 she was a dancer with Martha Graham's troupe and Director of the Department of Dance at New York University, a post she held simultaneously with her chairmanship of the Dance Division at Bennington until 1951. Most of her administrative work — records, reports, letters — was done on a lapboard on the train trips back and forth between North Bennington and New York. She left both jobs in 1951 to create and head the Dance Division of the Julliard School of the Arts.

MARTHA HILL DAVIES has effected an immeasurable influence on modern dance and the teaching of modern dance throughout the country. Especially through the Summer School of the Dance, inaugurated with her friend, Mary Josephine Shelly, in 1934 at Bennington, and later, when it was moved to New London, MARTHA HILL DAVIES' influence reached into physical education departments in dozens of schools and colleges and began the trend of turning them into training grounds for modern dance.

The summer festivals of the dance, begun at Bennington, swelled the audience for modern dance, educating many spectators in this new art. The list of those appearing in these festivals includes America's most eminent dancers.

MARTHA HILL, Mrs. Thurston J. Davies, was born in East Palestine, Ohio, and was educated there and at Salem, Ohio and Battle Creek. Honorary degrees have been given her by Adelphi College in 1965 and by Mount Holyoke College in 1966. Currently she is a member of the dance panel of the U. S. Department of State's Division of Cultural Affairs, a member of the National Council on the Arts and of the Advisory Commission on the Performing Arts, at the School of Performing Arts in New York.

But this bare account of her career gives little hint of the persistent vision and inexhaustible enthusiasm and energy which MARTHA HILL DAVIES has provided for every enterprise she has undertaken, and for all the hundreds of dancers, students and administrators who have shared them here and elsewhere. For Bennington College she provided the verve, discipline and idealism which has made the dance division here from her day to this a preeminent center of dance education and a model of education in all of the Arts.

I now ask you to give formal recognition to this outstanding service by conferring on MARTHA HILL DAVIES the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from Bennington College.