

Channel 58 To Take Intimate Look At Katherine Dunham

The legendary Katherine Dunham is one of America's most respected entrepreneurs in the field of performing arts and is internationally known for recreating and popularizing the so-called primitive forms of dance. Her life and work are profiled in an hour-long special over PBS when DANCE IN AMERICA'S "Divine Drumbeats: Katherine Dunham and Her People," takes an exclusive and intimate look at this dynamic woman on Wednesday, April 16, 8-9 p.m. on Channel 58's Great Performances.

Videotaped in Haiti and Nashville, this detailed and revealing performance-profile is produced by WNET-Thirteen New York. Dance in American is made possible by grants from Exxon, The National Endowment for the Arts and The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, with additional support from public television stations.

An integral element in "Divine Drumbeats: Katherine Dunham and Her People" and one rarely witnessed by outsiders, is the color and pageantry of a traditional vaudon (voodoo) ceremony performed in Haiti. It is there in that West Indies country that the Dance in American cameras also recorded an exclusive interview with Miss Dunham during which



Katherine Dunham
...Dynamic woman

she candidly discussed her long and remarkable career, her early motion picture work in Hollywood, her active involvement in civil rights, her work as an anthropologist and above all her monumental contributions to the world of dance.

During the broadcast, viewers will be treated to vintage motion picture footage from the 1940's when Miss Dunham choreographed and was the featured dancer in a number of musical films. Perhaps among her best-remembers and one which is excerpted for the special, is "Stormy Weather," in which she danced the title number and for which she also was choreographer.

Other classic documentary film footage from that era recounts Miss Dunham's dance company when it was at the height of its success.

An additional feature of the special, videotaped in Nashville, is Miss Dunham's "Rites de Passages," perhaps the best example of her ability to use primitive forms and rhythms as theatrical media. She originally created the score to accompany a lecture she delivered at Yale University and in the special it is performed by members of the original Katherine Dunham Dance Company and the School of the Performing Arts Training Center of Southern Illinois University in East St. Louis, founded by Miss Dunham. The costumes were designed by Miss Dunham's husband, John Pratt.

"I could not have asked for anything more than to have Dance in American bring my work to so many people through television," notes Miss Dunham. "I have worked for so many years to express the heritage of the American Negro through dance. Now I can give some of what I have learned from the cultures of other countries back to my own country."

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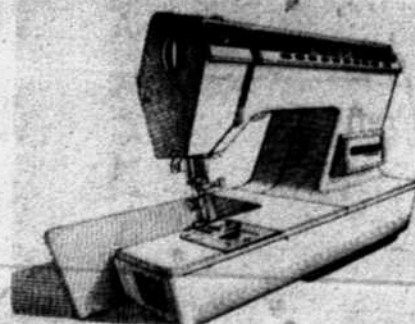
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