



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

José Limón and Pauline Lawrence Limón photograph files

1910?-1972?

*MGZEB 95-5500

Processed by Karen Nickeson.

Summary

Creator: Limo_n, Jose_

Title: José Limón and Pauline Lawrence Limón photograph files

Date: 1910?-1972?

Abstract: Personal photograph files of José Limón and Pauline Lawrence Limón.

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<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

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Preferred citation: The José Limón and Pauline Lawrence Limón photograph files, Collection number: *MGZEB 95-5500, Dance Collection. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Processing note: Processed by Karen Nickeson; machine-readable finding aid created by Karen Nickeson.

Creator History

On January 12, 1908, José Arcadia Limón was born in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico. His father, Florencio Limón, was a musician, conductor, and the director of the State Academy of Music. Limón's mother, Francisca Traslavina, bore eleven children (four of whom died in infancy) of whom José was the eldest. The toil of so many pregnancies resulted in her death at the age of 34. After wandering from one northern city to another, Limón's father finally moved the family to the United States to escape the terror and violence of the revolution in Mexico. José was seven when he and his family left Mexico for Tucson, Arizona. Eventually, the Limóns settled in Los Angeles. Graduating in 1926, Limón was an excellent student in high school and intended to pursue a career as a painter/artist. He enrolled at the University of California at Los Angeles and took art classes at a private studio. He soon abandoned his studies, however, to journey to New York. Three friends, Don Forbes, Perkins Harnly, and Fernando Felix, who had introduced Limón to contemporary and avant-garde art in Los Angeles, had moved to New York

and prompted Limón to do the same. While in New York, Limón's passion for a career in art dissipated, and a chance visit to a dance concert by Harald Kreutzberg and Yvonne Georgi inspired Limón to undertake a career in dance. Don Forbes and Perkins Harnly recommended that José study with Charles Weidman (whom they knew from their youth in Lincoln, Nebraska) at the Humphrey-Weidman Studio. From 1928 to 1940 Limón was a pupil and dancer with Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. In addition, he performed in Broadway shows, such as Normal Bel-Geddes' production of *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes, J. P. Envoy's musical revue *Americana*, and Irving Berlin's *As Thousands Cheer*. In 1940, Limón left the Humphrey-Weidman Company to embark on a solo career as dancer and choreographer. During the 1930s Limón had choreographed a half dozen pieces and had taught dance at Bennington College, Temple University, the University of Pittsburgh, Colorado State College of Education, the University of California at Berkeley, and Mills College. On the west coast in 1940-41, he continued his teaching and performed many concert engagements with May O'Donnell as his partner. On October 4, 1940, José Limón and Pauline Lawrence were married in San Francisco. Limón had met Pauline thirteen years before, when he first attended classes at the Humphrey-Weidman Studio. Pauline was the receptionist there, as well as accompanist, business manager, and costume designer. After his marriage Limón returned to New York as guest artist of the season at the Studio Theatre, where he performed leading roles in many works directed by Doris Humphrey. He also appeared on Broadway in the leading dance role of *Rosalinda*. In March 1943 Limón was inducted into the army, although he did not become a U.S. citizen until 1947. At first, Limón served as a truck driver in the quartermaster corps but then received a transfer to the Special Services Division. He directed and performed in dances, pageants, and shows. During his off-hours, he rehearsed for concerts that he performed with Dorothy Bird and Beatrice Seckler on his furlough. When he was finally discharged, Limón organized a new company with Doris Humphrey as choreographer and artistic director. José Limón and Company became the first dance company sent abroad on a cultural mission by the United States State Department. Under the auspices of the American National Theatre and Academy and the State Department, Limón first made a tour of South America, then a tour of Europe in 1957, a tour of South and Central America in 1960, and a tour of the Far East and Australia in 1963. The José Limón Dance Company also toured the Soviet Union in 1973, just after Limón's death. Since 1948 the Limóns spent every summer in residence at the Connecticut College School of Dance, and each year Limón appeared at the American Dance Festival held there. From 1954 until his death, Limón was a member of the dance faculty at the Juilliard School of Music. José Limón and Company opened the first dance performance at the New York Shakespeare Festival Theatre in Central Park on September 4, 1962. While artistic director of the American Dance Theatre, Limón gave the first dance performance ever at Lincoln Center in 1963. Honors that Limón received include a second Dance Magazine Award in 1957, the Capezio Dance Award in 1964, and four honorary doctorates from Wesleyan University, Colby College, the University of North Carolina, and Oberlin College. José Limón was a consistently productive choreographer and an active dancer until 1969. His first choreographic efforts began in 1931 with Eleanor King, and from 1949 to 1972 he choreographed at least one new piece each year. He received commissions for choreographic works from the American Dance Festival, the Empire State Festival, the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes of Mexico, and the Federal Arts Council in the United States. Perhaps his greatest achievement was the formation of a modern dance company able to survive the death or retirement of its founder. His was the first to remain as a performing unit after his death on December 2, 1972. --from *R-*MGP Limón, José, 1908-1972. Papers, ca. 1927-1972 by span class="persname">Nancy Shawcross, 1980/span>

Scope and Content Note

The photographs in this collection were separated from the papers of José Limón cataloged in (S) *MGZMD 24. At that time, images representing Limón's choreography and many photographs of Limón were integrated into the appropriate *MGZE/A files and into (S) *MGZEB 81-1284 Limón choreography: Oversize photographs. The remainder of the photographs here are the personal files of the Limóns in their possession in their final years. The collection is divided into two series: I. José Limón photographs;

II. Pauline Lawrence Limón photographs. In fact, images of Pauline Lawrence Limón (PLL) are included throughout the José Limón (JL) series. Her files include only the photographs which predate her marriage and those not associated with the Limón Company. The early photographs of JL include childhood pictures such as one labelled "mother and son 1910," a print reproduced in 1936 by a Los Angeles studio. They also include college-age shots and many with unidentified friends and family. The military service file includes portraits, as well as photographs of JL in Special Services productions. The later informal shots include color snapshots of others such as Betty Jones and Pauline Koner. Folder 6 includes a small photo by Arthur Todd of JL with Igor Youskevitch, Alvid Ailey, and Rudolf Nureyev. The photographs of the farm at Stockton, NJ are snapshots of the Limóns on their property, with neighbors and others, and some of the farm buildings themselves. Among the studio shots and portraits (folders 13 and 22) there are photographs by Thomas Bouchard, Gerda Peterich, Estelle Wolf, Lipnitzki, Arthur Todd, Pamplona, Walter Reuter, Helen Hewitt, Oleaga, Peter Basch, Cedric Wright, Beth Bergman, Warren Ballard. See folder list below for additional photographers represented in the collection. Photographs of artwork include images of the sculpture of JL by Anita Weschler exhibited at the Whitney Museum in 1940?. Four newspaper notices are filed with the photographs in folder 32. Other artists include E. W. Miles, Donald Forbes, and Beatrice Paipert. The company tour photographs consist of publicity shots, receptions and poses with local dignitaries, and snapshots of local scenes. There are several photographs by Rosa Covarrubias in the Mexico file. The dance works files supply little documentation of the work of JL. There are a number of miscellaneous images of works produced in Mexico by other choreographers during the 1950s or 1960s. The Pauline Lawrence Limón series includes many informal photographs of the Denishawn Company during their Far East tour. Among the dancers pictured are Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Pauline Lawrence.

Arrangement: I. José Limón photographs. II. Pauline Lawrence Limón photographs

Key Terms

Titles

Choreographic offering (Choreographic work : Limón)
Dances (Choreographic work : Limón)

Subjects

Dance companies -- Mexico
Dance companies -- United States

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographic prints

Names

Limo_n, Jose_
Covarrubias, Rosa, 1895-1970
Gough, Arthur
Humphrey, Doris, 1895-1958
Lawrence, Pauline
Mitchell, Jack, 1932-
Pavlik, Robert
Shawn, Ted, 1891-1972
St. Denis, Ruth, 1880-1968
Swope, Martha
Woodford, Charles Humphrey
Denishawn Dancers

DHCA
Jose_ Limo_n Dance Company

Container List

- José Limón
 - Personal photographs
 - b. 1 f. 1 Early photos: portraits
 - b. 1 f. 2 Early photos: informal
 - b. 1 f. 3 Family
 - b. 1 f. 4 Military service
 - b. 1 f. 5 Informal
 - b. 2 f. 8-12 Farm at Stockton, NJ
 - Studio shots
 - b. 3 f. 13 Various photographers
 - b. 3 f. 14 Photographer: Marvin Koner
 - b. 3 f. 15 Photographer: Jack Mitchell
 - b. 3 f. 16 Photographer: Louis Melancon
 - b. 3 f. 17 Outdoor poses. Photographer Hildreth Longmont and unidentified
 - b. 3 f. 18 Stage shots
 - Portraits
 - b. 3 f. 19-21 Unidentified photographers
 - b. 3 f. 22 Various photographers
 - b. 3 f. 23 Photographer: Capden
 - b. 3 f. 24 Photographer: Daniel Lewis
 - b. 3 f. 25 Photographer: Jack Mitchell
 - b. 3 f. 26 Photographer: Robert Pavlik
 - b. 3 f. 27 Photographer: Matthew Wysocki
 - b. 4 f. 28-30 José Limón in rehearsal and class
 - b. 4 f. 31-32 Images of artwork based on José Limón
 - Company tours and appearances
 - b. 5 f. 33 Far East
 - b. 5 f. 34-35 France
 - b. 5 f. 36 Germany
 - b. 5 f. 37 London
 - b. 5 f. 38 Poland
 - b. 5 f. 39 Spain
 - b. 5 f. 40 Sweden
 - b. 5 f. 41 Yugoslavia
 - b. 5 f. 42 United States
 - b. 5 f. 43 New York appearance
 - b. 5 f. 44 Jacob's Pillow
 - b. 5 f. 45 Connecticut College
 - b. 6 f. 46-47 Mexico

José Limón (cont.)

Company tours and appearances (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 48 South America (country unidentified)
- b. 6 f. 49 Argentina
- b. 6 f. 50 Chile
- b. 6 f. 51 Colombia
- b. 6 f. 52 Ecuador
- b. 6 f. 53 Guatemala
- b. 6 f. 54 Peru
- b. 6 f. 55 Uruguay
- b. 6 f. 56 Venezuela
- b. 6 f. 57 Puerto Rico
- b. 6 f. 58 Location unidentified
- b. 6 f. 59 Street scenes

Dance works: Limón

- b. 7 f. 60 Choreographic offering. Photographer: Arthur Gough
- b. 7 f. 61 Dances (labeled Homage to Poland) Photographer: William Vandivert (contact sheets)
- b. 7 f. 62 "Duncan tradition" (from label) Photographer: Arthur Gough
- b. 7 f. 63 Dorothy Bird in Three ballads
- b. 7 f. 64 Voló dances (from label) Photographer: Arthur Gough

Dance works: others

- b. 7 f. 65 Valerie Bettis: Closed door
- b. 7 f. 66 Ruth Currier: Toccanta
- b. 7 f. 67 Lucas Hoving: Tertulia
- b. 7 f. 68 Pauline Koner: Anjelica
- b. 7 f. 69 Guillermo Arriaga: El sueño y la presencia
- b. 7 f. 70 Guillermina Bravo: Recuerdo a Zapata
- b. 7 f. 71 Marta Bracho: Renacuajo paseador
- b. 7 f. 72 Xavier Francis: Imajinarias
- b. 7 f. 73 Rosa Reyna: La manda
- b. 7 f. 74 Unidentified
- b. 8 f. 75-77 Doris Humphrey
- b. 8 f. 78 Owen Jones (childhood friend)

Oversize portraits

- b. 9 f. 79 Unidentified photographers
- b. 9 f. 80 Various photographers
- b. 9 f. 81 Photographer: Martha Swope

Oversize photographs

- b. 9 f. 82 Rehearsal and class
- b. 9 f. 83 Unidentified stage shots

Pauline Lawrence Limón

- b. 10 f. 84 Portraits

Pauline Lawrence Limón (cont.)

- b. 10 f. 85 School photos
- b. 10 f. 86 Studio shot in costume
- b. 10 f. 87 PLL and family, portraits
- b. 10 f. 88 PLL and family, informal
- b. 10 f. 89 Travel shots
- b. 10 f. 90 Family home
- b. 10 f. 91 Family wedding album (not JL and PLL)
Denishawn Far East tour
- b. 10 f. 92-93 Company, informal
- b. 10 f. 94 Travel shots