



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

José Limón photographs

1933-1968

*MGZEB 22-0022

Processed by Em Longan in 2022.

Summary

Creator: Limo_n, Jose_

Title: José Limón photographs

Date: 1933-1968

Size: 1.08 linear feet (3 boxes)

Source: Source of acquisition is unknown.

Abstract: José Limón (1908-1972) was a Mexican-born modern dancer and choreographer best known for the development of the Limón technique; dances such as La Malinche (1947), The Moor's Pavane (1949), and The Traitor (1954); and for co-founding the Limón Dance Company. The José Limón photographs, dated from 1933 to 1968, contain negatives, slides, and prints that depict Limón's professional and personal life, dancers with whom he was associated, and performances by the Limón Dance Company.

Preferred citation: José Limón photographs, *MGZEB 22-0022. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Em Longan in 2022.

Related Materials:

José Limón papers, (S) *MGZMD 24. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

The José Limón and Pauline Lawrence Limón photograph files, *MGZEB 95-5500. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Creator History

José Arcadio Limón (1908-1972) was a Mexican-born modern dancer and choreographer who moved to New York City in 1928, where he studied and performed under Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. He married Pauline Lawrence on October 4, 1941, and was drafted into the United States Army Special Forces in 1943.

Limón founded the Limón Dance Company in 1946 with himself as the sole choreographer, while Doris Humphrey served as the company's first artistic director. Limón, informed by and building from the Humphrey-Weidman technique, developed a movement technique that emphasizes the natural rhythms of fall and recovery, weight and weightlessness, and the movement of breath through the body.

In 1954, the Limón Dance Company was chosen by the United States Department of State to inaugurate the new International Exchange Program with a tour to South America. This tour was followed by a 1957 tour of Europe, Central and South America for a second time in 1960, and Asia and Australia in 1963.

In 1956, Limón debuted *The Emperor Jones*, loosely based on a 1920 play by Eugene O'Neill. It tells the story of Titus Jones, a Black Pullman porter who declares himself emperor of an island after escaping a chain gang. Limón wore blackface to portray Jones during its premiere and subsequent performances, defending his decision while on tour in Poland in 1958.

José Limón was an active dancer until 1969. The Limóns resided in Stockton, New Jersey until their deaths. Pauline Lawrence Limón died on July 16, 1971, and José died of cancer on December 2, 1972.

Scope and Content Note

The collection contains negatives, slides, and prints that primarily depict the first twenty years of the Limón Dance Company. These images include dance performances, dancers and choreographers who worked with Limón, worldwide tours, and images from the personal life of the Limóns.

The Performances group is arranged alphabetically and depicts choreography by Limón, such as *La Malinche*, *The Moor's Pavane*, and *The Traitor*. There are also photographs of choreography by Doris Humphrey, such as *Ruins and Visions* and *Ritmo Jondo*.

The Dancers and Choreographers group is arranged alphabetically by name, and contains promotional photographs and professional headshots of dancers with whom Limón collaborated or was influenced by. Some dancers include Pauline Kner, Eleanor King, Lucas Hoving, Betty Jones, Ruth Currier, and Louis Falco. Limón's teachers and influences, including Ruth St. Denis, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman, are present. Prints inscribed to Limón from respective dancers are also included. Some photographers are credited, such as Jack Mitchell, Peter Basch, Gerda Peterich, and Martha Swope.

Limón Dance Company Tours are arranged chronologically and contain photographs of street scenes and group photographs of the Limón Dance Company. Included are photographs of tours to South and Central America in 1954 and 1960, Europe in 1957, and Asia and Australia in 1963. Tours prior to the founding of the Limón Dance Company or featuring other companies are also included.

The Personal Photographs include photographs of Limón in a United States Special Forces uniform and images of the Limón's property in Stockton, New Jersey. The images are arranged chronologically.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged into the following groups: Performances; Dancers and

Choreographers; Limón Dance Company Tours; and Personal Photographs.

Key Terms

Subjects

Choreographers -- United States -- 20th century

Dance -- History -- 20th century

Dance -- Photographs

Dance companies -- Photographs

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Negatives (photographs)

Photographs

Slides (photographs)

Names

Falco, Louis

Humphrey, Doris, 1895-1958

King, Eleanor, 1906-1991

Koner, Pauline

Limo_n, Jose_

St. Denis, Ruth, 1880-1968

Weidman, Charles

Wigman, Mary, 1886-1973

Jose_ Limo_n Dance Company

Container List

Performances

- b. 1 f. 1 *Chaconne*
- b. 1 f. 2 *Concerto Grosso*
- b. 1 f. 3 *Crucifixion*
- b. 1 f. 4 *Day on Earth*
- b. 1 f. 5 *The Emperor Jones*
Content warning: This folder contains a performer in blackface.
- b. 1 f. 6 *Exiles*
- b. 1 f. 7 *Homage to Poland*
- b. 1 f. 8 *Invitation*
- b. 1 f. 9 *Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Mejias*
- b. 1 f. 10 *La Malinche*
- b. 1 f. 11 *Lysistrata* 1930s
- b. 1 f. 12 *The Moor's Pavane*
- b. 1 f. 13 *Nightspell*
- b. 1 f. 14 *Ode to the Dance*
- b. 1 f. 15 *Psalm*
- b. 1 f. 16 *Ritmo Jondo*
- b. 1 f. 17 *Ruins and Visions*
- b. 1 f. 18 *There is a Time*
- b. 1 f. 19 *The Traitor*
- b. 1 f. 20 *The Visitation*
- b. 1 f. 21 *War Lyrics (Three Women)*
- b. 1 f. 22 *The Winged*
- b. 1 f. 23 Unidentified Performance
- b. 1 f. 24 Unidentified Tour 1933

Dancers and Choreographers

- b. 1 f. 25 Bird, Dorothy
- b. 1 f. 26 De Mille, Agnes
- b. 1 f. 27 Falco, Louis 1968
 - b. 3 f. 1
- b. 1 f. 28 Hoving, Lucas
- b. 1 f. 29 Humphrey, Doris 1955
 - b. 3 f. 2
- b. 1 f. 30 Humphrey, Doris and Weidman, Charles 1941
- b. 1 f. 31 Johansson, Ronny 1936
- b. 1 f. 32 Jones, Betty
- b. 1 f. 33 King, Eleanor
- b. 1 f. 34 Koner, Pauline 1953-1960
- b. 1 f. 35 Limón, José

Dancers and Choreographers (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 36 St. Denis, Ruth 1951
- b. 3 f. 3
- b. 2 f. 1 Sechler, Beatrice 1944
- b. 2 f. 2 Stackhouse, Sarah
- b. 2 f. 3 Weidman, Charles
- b. 2 f. 4 Wigman, Mary
- b. 3 f. 4 Unidentified Dancers

Limón Dance Company Tours

- b. 2 f. 5-7 South America 1954
- b. 2 f. 8 Europe 1957
- b. 2 f. 9 Berlin Festival 1957
- b. 2 f. 10 Mexico 1960
- b. 2 f. 11 South America 1960
- b. 2 f. 12 Asia 1963

Personal Photographs

- b. 2 f. 13 1933
- b. 2 f. 14 United States Special Forces 1946
- b. 2 f. 15 Christmas Party 1951
- b. 2 f. 16 Pennsylvania 1963
- b. 2 f. 17 Washington
- b. 2 f. 18 Skiing
- b. 2 f. 19-20 Stockton, New Jersey