



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Doris Humphrey papers**

1925-1958

(S) \*MGZMD 28

Processed by [Unknown].

## Summary

**Creator:** Humphrey, Doris, 1895-1958

**Title:** Doris Humphrey papers

**Date:** 1925-1958

**Size:** .5 linear feet (55 folders in 1 box)

**Source:** Charles Humphrey Woodford. Received: 1982?

**Abstract:** Correspondence and writing, 48 letters, including 33 items of correspondence between Doris Humphrey and José Limón and/or Pauline Lawrence; 15 addresses, essays, lectures by Doris Humphrey; 8 items of choreographic and production notes; 23 photographs; and 23 postcards from Denishawn Oriental tour with notes by Humphrey.

**Preferred citation:** Humphrey, Doris, 1895-1957. Papers., (S) \*MGZMD 28, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by [Unknown].

## Creator History

Doris Humphrey, born October 17, 1895 in Oak Park, Illinois, was one of the most important personalities in the American modern dance movement during the first half of the 20th century. Her initial dance training was at the Francis W. Parker School in Chicago. Graduating in 1913, she organized her own dancing school in Oak Park and the surrounding communities. In 1917, she travelled to Los Angeles to enroll at Denishawn and was accepted into the company. At Denishawn she met and worked with not only Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis, but also Pauline Lawrence and Charles Weidman. In 1920 she choreographed four works, *Valse Caprice*, *Bourée*, *Soaring*, and *Sonata Pathétique* (the latter two choreographed with Ruth St. Denis). With Weidman she formed a performing group in 1928, for which she created *Color Harmony*, *Air on a G String*, and *Dance of the Chosen* (later called *The Shakers*). On a boat trip to the West Indies, she met Charles Francis Woodford. They married in 1932 and their son, Charles Humphrey Woodford was born in 1933. In 1934, she joined the faculty of the

Bennington School of the Dance, Bennington College in Vermont. Her choreographies from this period include the trilogy *New Dance*, *Theatre Piece*, and *With my Red Fires*, *Passacaglia in C Minor*, *El Salon Mexico*, and *Inquest*. In 1940, the Humphrey-Weidman Studio Theatre opened in New York City. Owing to a hip ailment, she was forced to retire as a dancer in 1944 but continued as a teacher and choreographer. As artistic director of the José Limón Company, she created *Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*, *Day on Earth*, *Deep Rhythm*, *Ruins and Visions*, and *Theatre Piece No. 2*. In 1948, she joined the faculty of Connecticut College School of the Dance, New London, Connecticut. She wrote *The Art of Making Dances* (published 1959) and *New Dance* (published in *Dance Perspectives* 25). She was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for her book on choreography and the Dance Magazine Award in 1958. That same year she began writing her reminiscences but they remained unfinished at her death December 29, 1959, in New York City.

## Scope and Content Note

Correspondence and writing, 48 letters, including 33 items of correspondence between Doris Humphrey and José Limón and/or Pauline Lawrence; 15 addresses, essays, lectures by Doris Humphrey; 8 items of choreographic and production notes; 23 photographs; and 23 postcards from Denishawn Oriental tour with notes by Humphrey.

**Arrangement:** I. Humphrey/Lawrence/Limon correspondence II. Miscellaneous correspondence III. Addresses, essays, lectures by Doris Humphrey IV. Miscellaneous writing V. Miscellaneous, including photographs, postcards, and program notes

## Key Terms

### Titles

Gift of Charles Humphrey Woodford

### Subjects

Manuscripts -- Collections

### Names

Humphrey, Doris, 1895-1958

Lawrence, Pauline

Limo\_n, Jose\_

## Container List

### I. Humphrey/Lawrence/Limón Correspondence

- f. 1 Pauline Lawrence/Doris Humphrey ca. 1930s (2 items)  
Doris Humphrey/Pauline Lawrence
- f. 2 ca. 1930s (2 items)  
1941 (5 items)
- f. 3 1942 (8 items)
- f. 4 1943 (2 items)  
1944 (2 items)  
1945 (1 item)
- f. 5 José Limón/Doris Humphrey ca. 1940s (1 item)  
Doris Humphrey/Pauline Lawrence and/or José Limón
- f. 6 1950 (6 items)
- f. 7 1951 (4 items)

### II. Miscellaneous Correspondence

- f. 8 Louis Horst/Doris Humphrey 1925 (3 items)  
Robert Gorham/Doris Humphrey (1 item)
- f. 9 Alma Eshenfelder/Doris Humphrey 1949 (1 item)  
Martha Coleman/Doris Humphrey (1 item)
- f. 10 Doris Humphrey/Jean Rosenthal 1953 (1 item)  
Charles Humphrey Woodford/Doris Humphrey (1 item)
- f. 11 Priaulx Rainier/Doris Humphrey 1957 (1 item)  
Doris Humphrey/? (1 item)
- f. 12 Charles Francis Woodford/Doris Humphrey n.d. (1 item)  
"C"/Doris Humphrey (1 item)
- f. 13 Doris Humphrey/Yolande du Luart (1 item)  
Doris Humphrey/? (2 items)

### III. Addresses, Essays, Lectures by Doris Humphrey

- f. 14 "About five years ago, when I was perfectly happy composing for the Limón Co...."
- f. 15 Biographies of Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman (outline)
- f. 16 "The Dance"
- f. 17 "Drama and Dance," (notes) 5/15/56
- f. 18 "A Flower Garden," (poem) 1/20/09
- f. 19 "In the years between 1936 and 1950..."
- f. 20 "Invitation to the Dancer"
- f. 21 "My Dance" (notes and outline)
- f. 22 "New Dance" (notes)
- f. 23 "Preparation"
- f. 24 "Principles of Movement"
- f. 25 "Some Reasons for Low Standards and How to Combat Them"

III. Addresses, Essays, Lectures by Doris Humphrey (cont.)

- f. 26 "The art of ballet and the art of modern dance..."
- f. 27 "Trends in the Dance"
- f. 28 "What is Abstract Dance"
- f. 29-39 Notes & Fragments

IV. Miscellaneous Writings

- f. 40 Interview with Doris Humphrey
- f. 41 Notes compiled by Joseph Gifford for course in dance education taught by Doris Humphrey
- f. 42 Unidentified speech
- f. 43 "The Navajos"; "Mountain-Songs"; "The Hopis"
- f. 44 "Moon Enchantment" dedicated to Doris Humphrey
- Choreographic and Production Notes
- f. 45 Notebook including notes for "Invention"
- f. 46 Doris Humphrey's notebook for 1947-48 class entitled "Advanced Choreography for Teachers and Professional Dancers"
- f. 47 Notebook of Doris Humphrey
- f. 48 Miscellaneous choreographic notes
- f. 49 Dance scenario by Doris Humphrey—"Building of the Cities"
- f. 50 Sketches for "Life of the Bee"
- f. 51 Costume designs for "Modern Savages"
- f. 52 Text for "Woe Unto Them"

V. Miscellaneous

- f. 53 Photographs
- f. 54 Postcards from Denishawn Oriental tour with notes by Doris Humphrey
- f. 55 Program notes