



## José Limón: An Unfinished Memoir

*José Limón*

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Both as a dancer and a choreographer, José Limón electrified audiences from the 1930s to the 1960s. With his striking looks and charismatic presence, he was American modern dance's first male star. Born in Culiacán, Mexico, in 1908, the eldest of twelve children, he came to the United States when he was seven. In 1928, after a year at UCLA as an art major, he left for New York. Here, he attended his first modern dance concert and discovered his destiny.

He spent the 1930s with the Humphrey-Weidman group. Then, in the 1940s, after a stint in the army, and with Doris Humphrey as artistic advisor, he formed one of the outstanding modern dance companies of the postwar era. His greatest works -- The Moor's Pavane, La Malinche, The Traitor, A Choreographic Offering, There is a Time, Missa Brevis -- extolled a humanism that endeared them to audiences the world over. Although Limón died in 1972, all these dances remain in the Limón Dance Company's active repertory.

This memoir was commissioned by Wesleyan University Press in the late 1960s. Left unfinished at the time of Limón's death, it stands on its own as a Joycean account of the coming of age of an unusually perceptive dance artist. Limón writes with eloquence of his Mexican childhood. And of the numerous figures he memorializes, from Martha Graham to José Covarrubias, none is more luminously evoked than Doris Humphrey, the "goddess," "nymph," and "caryatid" of his life. Sensitively edited by Lynn Garafola, the book includes a complete list of Limón's works, richly informative notes, rare photographs, and a detailed bibliography. This is the single most important book on Limón and a riveting memoir of modern dance during its golden age



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