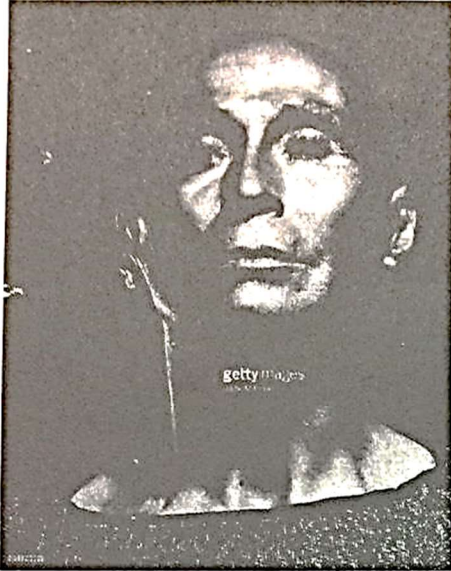


## Source #2 "Who Was Jose Limon?"



**"A man could, with dignity and towering majesty, dance ... dance as Michelangelo's visions dance and as the music of Bach dances."**

—José Limón

### **Synopsis**

Modern dance pioneer José Limón was born on January 12, 1908, in Culiacán, Mexico. His family immigrated to the United States when he was a boy, and he grew up in Los Angeles, California. A move to New York in 1928 brought Limón into contact with the modern dance world. He trained as a dancer and became a major performer and choreographer, eventually founding his own dance company in 1947. Internationally celebrated for his powerful and influential style, Limón died in New Jersey in 1972.

### **Early Years and Emigration**

José Arcadia Limón was born on January 12, 1908, in Culiacán, Mexico. His father, Florencio Limón, was a musician and conductor. His mother, Francisca (née Traslaviña), was the daughter of a schoolteacher. Limón was the oldest of eleven children, four of whom died in infancy.

When the Mexican Revolution of 1910 threatened their safety, the Limón family left Culiacán and took up residence in other cities, including Hermosillo and Nogales. In 1915, the Limóns emigrated from Mexico to Tucson, Arizona. They later moved to Los Angeles, California.

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## **Education and Introduction to Dance**

José Limón graduated from Los Angeles' Lincoln High School in 1926 and enrolled at the University of California, Los Angeles, to study art. In 1928, however, he left his program and moved to New York.

In New York, Limón attended a dance performance by Harald Kreutzberg and Yvonne Georgi and was inspired to begin training as a dancer. He studied with Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman at the Humphrey-Weidman Studio and then danced professionally with their company.

## **Dance Career in the 1930s**

In addition to performing with the Humphrey-Weidman Company through 1940, Limón also danced in a number of Broadway productions, including the musical revues *Americana* and *As Thousands Cheer* (with music by Irving Berlin) in 1932 and 1933, respectively.

In the '30s, Limón also developed his skills as a choreographer. In 1937, he created his first important work, *Danzas Mexicanas*. He also taught dance at a half-dozen colleges around the country.

In 1940, Limón left the Humphrey-Weidman Company to begin a solo career as a dancer and choreographer. He moved to the west coast, where he continued to perform, often with the dancer May O'Donnell. In October of that year, he married Pauline Lawrence, whom he had first met when she was an employee at Humphrey-Weidman.

## **Post-War Career**

In March 1943, Limón was drafted into the United States Army. He initially served as a truck driver in the quartermaster corps, then was transferred to the Special Services Division, where he directed pageants and dance performances.

Limón was discharged at the end of 1945 and became a United States citizen in 1946. He established his own dance company in New York in 1947, hiring Doris Humphrey as his artistic director. He continued to choreograph for himself and his company; his best-known work is *The Moor's Pavane* of 1949, a dance inspired by Shakespeare's *Othello*. Other important works were *The Traitor* (1954) and *The Emperor Jones* (1956).

In 1951, Limón began to work with Juilliard School in New York, where he would teach for the rest of his career.

### **Awards and Honors**

José Limón and Company was the first dance company to travel abroad on a cultural mission under the auspices of the United States State Department when they were sent to South America to perform in 1954. There were other firsts for Limón and his troupe: They opened the first dance performance at the New York Shakespeare Festival Theatre in Central Park in 1962, and they gave the first dance performance at New York's Lincoln Center in 1963.

Limón received such honors as the Dance Magazine Award, the Capezio Dance Award and four honorary doctorates.

### **Death and Legacy**

Limón choreographed until the end of his life, creating at least one new piece every year. His final composition, *Carlota*, premiered in 1972. Limón died of cancer on December 2, 1972, in Flemington, New Jersey. His dance company continues to thrive as the Limón Dance Company; it is part of the José Limón Dance Foundation, a larger entity that oversees Limón's legacy and perpetuates his teaching methods.