



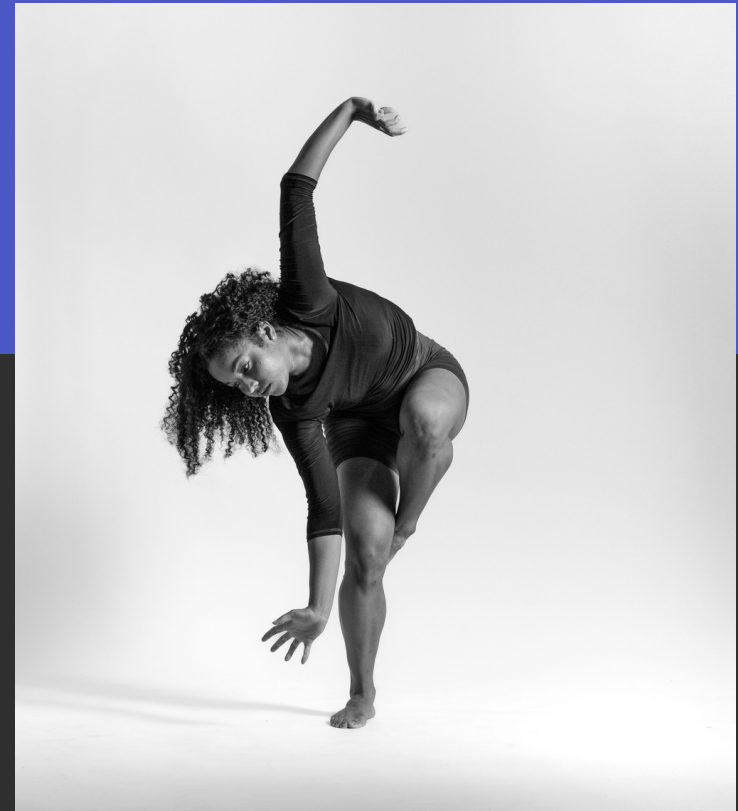
Limón

Limón2
Performance Engagement
LaGuardia Community
College
November 14, 2025

WHO IS THE LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY?

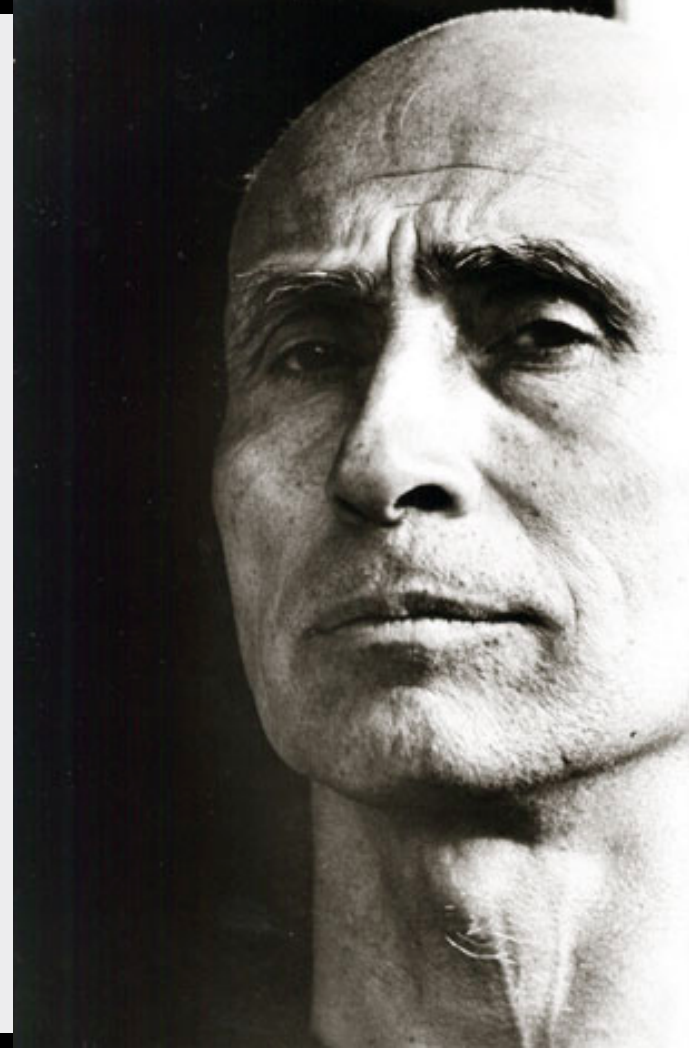
Founded in 1946 by José Limón and Doris Humphrey, the Limón Dance Company has been at the vanguard of American Modern dance since its inception and is considered one of the world's greatest dance companies.

Acclaimed for its dramatic expression, technical mastery, and expansive, yet nuanced movement, the Limón Dance Company illustrates the timelessness of José Limón's work and vision.



WHO IS JOSÉ LIMÓN?

Choreographer and dancer José Limón is credited with creating one of the world's most important and enduring dance legacies — an art form responsible for the creation, growth, and support of modern dance in this country.



WHAT WAS JOSÉ'S EARLY LIFE LIKE?

José Arcadia Limón was born on Jan 12, 1908, in Culiacán, Mexico. His father was a musician and conductor. His mother was the daughter of a school teacher. Limón was the oldest of eleven children!

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 Limón family emigrated from Mexico to Tucson, Arizona. They later moved to Los Angeles, California.



HOW WAS JOSÉ LIMÓN EDUCATED?

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.



WHAT WAS JOSÉ'S EARLY CAREER LIKE?

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* in 1932 & 1933.

In the 1930s, Limón also developed his skills as a choreographer.

In 1937, he created his first important work, *Danzas Mexicanas*. This piece is a collection of 5 solos representing historical Mexican figures that reveal Limón's complicated relationship with his heritage & identity.

He also taught dance at many colleges around the country, including Juilliard, where he would later rehearse his own Company.

WHAT DID JOSÉ DO DURING WWII?

In 1943, José was drafted into the US Army. He initially served as a truck driver, then was transferred to the Special Services Division, where he directed dance performances for the troops. Limón was discharged at the end of 1945 and became a US Citizen in 1946.



WHAT HAPPENED TO JOSÉ'S CAREER AFTER WWII?

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 *Chaconne* (1942), *The Traitor* (1954), *The Emperor Jones* (1956) and *Psalm* (1967).



WHAT WERE SOME OF JOSÉ'S AWARDS & HONORS?

José Limón and Company was the first dance company to travel abroad on a cultural mission under 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.

In 2008, the Company was honored with the White House's National Medal of the Arts for a Lifetime Achievement in Dance.

WHAT IS JOSÉ LIMÓN'S LEGACY?

His dance company continues to thrive as the Limón Dance Company, currently in its 80th year; it is part of the José Limón Dance Foundation, a larger entity that oversees Limón's legacy and perpetuates his teaching methods, which are used globally to train professional dancers.



Limón is a role model for Latinx communities throughout the United States and was one of the most prominent American choreographers in modern dance.

DANCES YOU WILL SEE IN PERFORMANCE

CHACONNE

First performed December 27, 1942 at the Humphrey-Weidman Studio Theater, New York City, by José Limón

Choreography: José Limón

Music: J.S. Bach

Chaconne was developed from a dance form that originated in Mexico. The original form was described as “robust and raucous.” Limón paired the dance with music of the same name by Bach, creating a piece that embodies formal structure with profound feeling, brought on by the powerful emotional quality of the music.

Limón had this to say about **Chaconne**: “I loved doing it - and the ‘Chaconne’ is the most profoundly satisfying thing that ever happened to me. I think I grew up doing it. It said, for better or for worse, everything I had to say.”

Chaconne was originally choreographed as a solo, but you will see a group version!

DANCES YOU WILL SEE IN PERFORMANCE

PSALM

First performed August 19, 1967 at the Connecticut College American Dance Festival by the José Limón Dance Company

Choreography: José Limón

Music: Eugene Lester

Psalm is based on the Jewish story of the Just Men. According to ancient Jewish tradition, all of the sorrows of the world rest within thirty-six Just Men, ordinary people who are unaware of their situation. If they were to disappear, the suffering of the world would multiply and take over humankind. This piece presents the history of one of the Just Men.

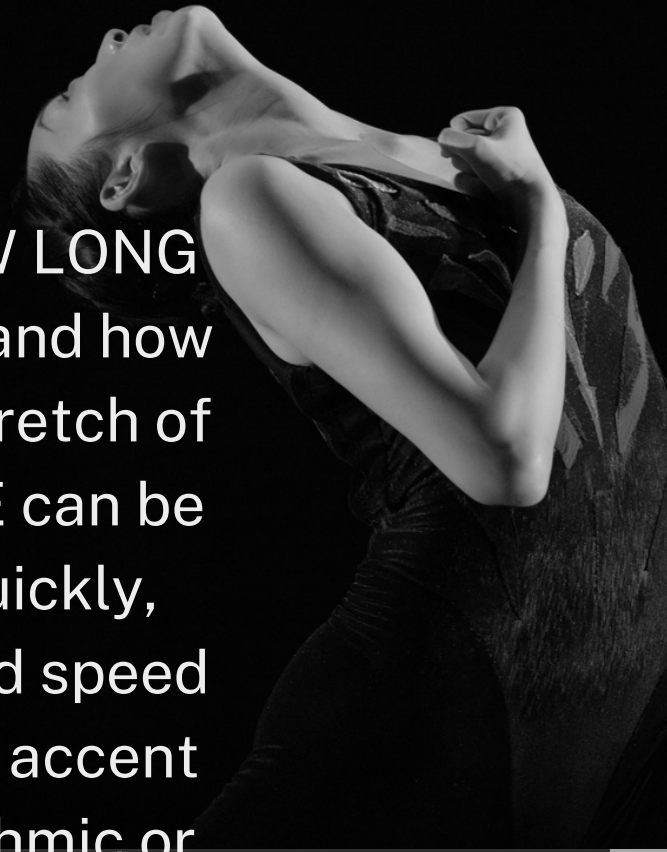
Limón employs rhythmic movement and canon in **Psalm** to convey ideas of urgency, joy, and anguish. He also uses the space and depth of the stage to create an emotionally evocative environment. Can you spot the movement phrases that are repeated in canon?

Psalm originally was an almost 60 minute dance! Today you will see a few sections of the original dance.

ELEMENTS OF DANCE

TIME – (When?)

In a dance, choices about time will include HOW LONG something happens, HOW FAST it will happen, and how time can be DIVIDED – by a short beat, a long stretch of time, etc. To play with the many ways that TIME can be used, think of these actions: twist slowly or quickly, stop suddenly, then pause. Leap many times and speed up, slow down, or leap at an even pace. You can accent your actions by taking a pause evenly (in a rhythmic or patterned way) or sporadically. You can move with your breath leading the timing.



ELEMENTS OF DANCE

SPACE – (Where?)

Choices about space will include position or placement, size, level, direction in and through space, and pathways used to travel through space. To play with the many ways that SPACE can be used, think of these actions: move or pause anywhere in the space, skip on a diagonal through, or toward one side of the space, run or turn in one place or on a particular pathway – curved, straight, zigzagging, wandering. A body part can trace a circle, zigzag or arc, or the range of the movement can be so small it is hardly seen, as big as the dancer can reach, or across the room.

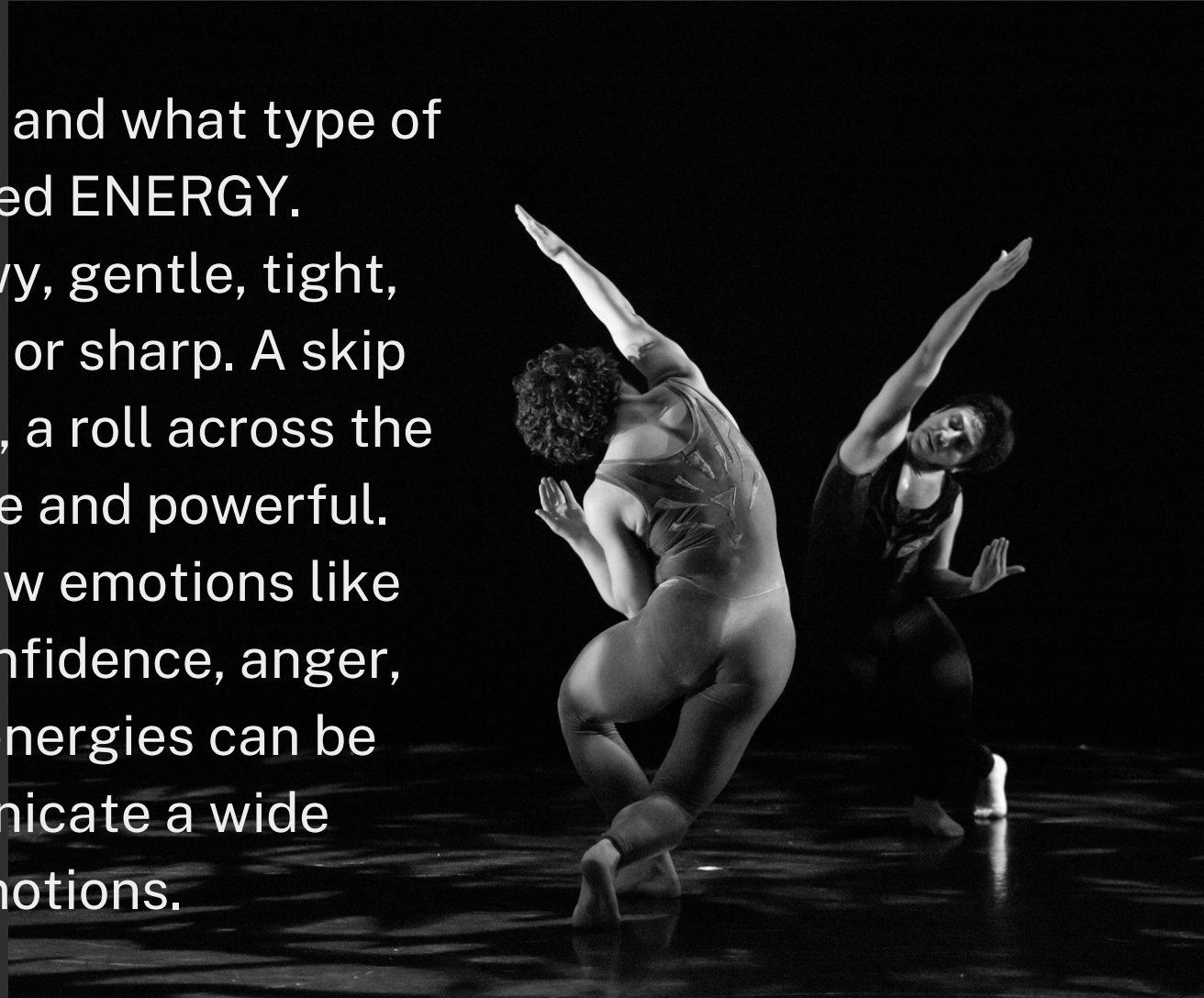


ELEMENTS OF DANCE

ENERGY – (How?)

Choices about how much and what type of force is used is called ENERGY.

Movements can be flowy, gentle, tight, loose, heavy, light, hard or sharp. A skip might be smooth or light, a roll across the floor could be explosive and powerful. Energy choices can show emotions like happiness, sadness, confidence, anger, joy, confusion. These energies can be combined to communicate a wide spectrum of emotions.



WHAT TO EXPECT: CHACONNE

WHAT WILL I SEE & HEAR? At the performance, you will watch Chaconne, the dance that José Limón created in 1946, with music by Johann Sebastian Bach. You will see the dancerS moving slowly and quickly through the space, depending on their musicality, and using gestures to “speak” to the audience through their movements.

More importantly – what stands out to YOU when you watch? What elements of space, time and energy were most interesting to you?

WHAT IS A GESTURE? Any movement created by a body part to express meaning and ideas. Gestures may tell a story, show an emotion, or express a thought - all without speaking.

WHAT IS MUSICALITY? The knowledge, skill, and sensitivity to artistically perform to music, or to be able to sense the qualities of music and share them through performance. Musicality was very important to Limón as he choreographed Chaconne, and he tried to reflect in his movement what he heard in the music. Listen and watch closely - where can you see the music and the dancer performing together?

WHAT TO EXPECT: PSALM

WHAT WILL I SEE & HEAR? At the performance, you will watch *Psalm*, the dance that José Limón created in 1967, with original music by Eugene Lester that was recreated by Jon Magnussen in 2002. Dancers enter the stage in groups, performing rhythmic movements in canon. They set the stage for the Just Man - he who bears all the suffering of the world. The piece explores his life, and how he unknowingly withstands his role to protect humankind.

More importantly – what stands out to YOU when you watch? What elements of space, time and energy were most interesting to you?

WHAT IS A CANON? A movement or phrase that is performed by dancers at different times in sequence. They may perform it one after another at the same time, or wait until one finishes to begin the next repetition.

WHAT IS A HERO? A person who is respected for their outstanding courage or noble qualities. Sometimes, when a hero goes without recognition for their deeds, they are considered an “unsung hero.” How might the Just Man be an unsung hero? Who are some unsung heroes in your life?

PERFORMING TODAY: LIMÓN2

Limón2 is the second company of the José Limón Dance Foundation. A 'second company' means that the dancers are at the beginning of their careers and are performing as professionals for the first time! Limón2 brings together young talent, the iconic works of José Limón, along with today's most exciting up and coming choreographers. The treasured spirit and humanistic legacy of José Limón lives on with Limón2!



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHILE WATCHING DANCE

First impressions: What are some words to describe what you saw?

Emotional response: What feelings did the dance evoke for you?

What moments or movements stayed with you after the dance was over?

How did you observe the use of **Space**?

(levels, spatial patterns, pathways of travel / body parts, etc.)

How did you observe the use of **Time**?

(Duration of something / repetition / canon, speed, rhythms, arhythmic ideas)

How did you observe the use of **Energy**?

(Quality of movement; was it powerful? light? thick? what emotions were conveyed to you?)

What production elements (the music, lighting, costumes) helped to tell the story for you, or what you perceived?

OTHER RESOURCES

Excerpts from Psalm (2:09 min; 2019)

<https://vimeo.com/352335135/de0f20411f>

José Limón performing Chaconne (:45 sec; 1948)

<https://www.facebook.com/LimonDance/videos/10156312322433678/>

Limón: A Life Beyond Words Documentary (1:00 hour; Spanish subtitles)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bieQXkz7a1M&t=84s>

Limón: A Life Beyond Words Documentary (8:00 min; Spanish subtitles)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rShlvxW7NQI&t=206s>

CONTACT US WITH QUESTIONS, OR TO DANCE WITH US AGAIN!



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