

Mary Wigman: Revolutionary Expressionist Dancer and Teacher



Mary Wigman (1886-1973) was a trailblazing figure in the world of modern dance, revolutionizing the art form with her groundbreaking expressionist style. As a dancer and choreographer, Wigman explored the depths of

human emotion and experience, pushing the boundaries of physical movement and theatrical expression. Her legacy as a pioneer in dance pedagogy continues to inspire and shape contemporary dance practices.

Early Life and Influences

Born in Hanover, Germany, Mary Wigman's formal dance training began at the age of 20. Initially drawn to ballet, she soon became disillusioned with its rigid technicalities and lack of emotional depth. In 1913, she encountered the groundbreaking work of Rudolf von Laban, a visionary choreographer and dance theorist who emphasized the expressive power of the body. Laban's teachings sparked a profound shift in Wigman's artistic vision, leading her to abandon ballet and embrace a more organic and expressive approach to dance.



Mary Wigman (Routledge Performance Practitioners)

by Mary Anne Santos Newhall

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Expressionist Breakthrough

Mary Wigman's unique style emerged within the context of Expressionism, an artistic movement that emphasized the inner world of emotions and subjective experiences. Expressionist dancers sought to communicate abstract emotions and ideas through raw and exaggerated physical gestures. Wigman's dances were characterized by intense physicality, contorted limbs, and angular movements that seemed to rip through the fabric of space. Her groundbreaking choreography was a far cry from the graceful and balletic traditions of the past, and it ignited a revolution in the dance world.

The Wigman School

In 1920, Mary Wigman established her own dance school in Dresden, Germany, which became a renowned center for modern dance training. The Wigman School emphasized the development of physical and emotional expressiveness, encouraging students to explore the depths of their inner lives and translate those emotions into movement. Wigman's rigorous and transformative teaching methods influenced generations of dancers, including many who went on to become prominent choreographers and teachers in their own right.



Revolutionary Performance Practices

Mary Wigman's performances were electrifying and unforgettable. She often performed in bare feet, discarding the traditional ballet slippers, and her costumes were minimal, emphasizing the raw and human qualities of her movement. Her dances were often performed with minimal or no musical accompaniment, allowing the pure physicality and emotional expressiveness to take center stage. Wigman's performances were not merely technical displays but profound explorations of the human condition, leaving audiences deeply moved and inspired.

Choreographic Masterpieces

Among Mary Wigman's most renowned choreographic works are "Hexentanz" (Witches' Dance), "Totenmal" (Dance of Death), and "Erwartung" (Expectation). In "Hexentanz," Wigman embodied the primal energy of a witch, her body contorting in a frenzy of movement that captured the essence of ancient and untamed feminine power. "Totenmal" was a haunting and evocative exploration of death and mourning, with Wigman's expressive gestures conveying the depths of human loss. "Erwartung" was a deeply personal and introspective work, delving into the complexities of female desire and longing.

International Impact

Mary Wigman's influence extended far beyond the borders of Germany. She toured extensively throughout Europe and the United States, captivating audiences with her groundbreaking style. Her work inspired and influenced countless artists, including Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Merce Cunningham, who would go on to shape the development of modern dance in the 20th century. Wigman's commitment to artistic innovation and emotional expression left an indelible mark on the world of dance.

A Legacy of Dance and Education

Mary Wigman's legacy as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher continues to inspire and shape contemporary dance practices. Her pioneering work in expressionist dance paved the way for a new era of artistic expression, emphasizing the inner world of human emotion and the transformative power of physical movement. The Wigman School continues to train dancers, passing on her unique pedagogical approach to future generations. Mary Wigman's indomitable spirit and revolutionary artistry will

forever be remembered as a testament to the boundless creative possibilities of the human body and the enduring power of dance.



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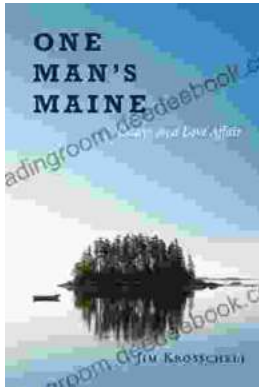
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