Guide to the Rudolf Laban Icosahedron MS.P.027

Processed by Ryan Hildebrand and Audrey Pearson; machine-readable finding aid created by Audrey Pearson; inventory added by Zoe MacLeod, 2020

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Contributing Institution: Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries
Title: Rudolf Laban icosahedron
Creator: Laban, Rudolf von
Identifier/Call Number: MS.P.027
Physical Description: 0.2 Linear Feet(1 box)
Date (inclusive): 1939
Abstract: The collection comprises one 6 1/2" x 7" paper sculpture cutout created by choreographic notation expert Rudolf von Laban to form a human figure within a 20-sided geometric shape (an icosahedron).
Language of Material: English
Access
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Preferred Citation
For the benefit of current and future researchers, please cite any additional information about sources consulted in this collection, including permanent URLs, item or folder descriptions, and box/folder locations.
Acquisition Information
Processing History
Processed by Ryan Hildebrand and Audrey Pearson, 2007.
Historical Background
Rudolf Laban was born December 15, 1879, in Bratislava, Slovakia. After studying architecture at the École des beaux arts in Paris, Laban moved to Munich at age 30 and began his research on Bewegungskunst, or the movement arts. In 1915 Laban established the Choreographic Institute in Zürich and later founded branches in Italy, France, and Europe. His greatest contribution to dance was his 1928 publication of Kinetographie Laban, a dance notation system that came to be called Labanotation. It is still used as one of the primary notation systems for movement in dance. In 1930 Laban became the director of the Allied State Theatres in Berlin but left in 1938 for Great Britain, where he turned to the study of human movement in the workplace. In 1947 he published a book related to his research entitled Effort. He continued to teach and do research in Britain until his death in 1958.
Collection Scope and Content Summary
The collection comprises one 6 1/2" x 7" paper sculpture cutout created by choreographic notation expert Laban to form a human figure within a 20-sided geometric shape (an icosahedron). It is painted red, black, and gold.
The icosahedron is a cubelike structure made up of 20 equilateral triangles whose boundaries form a sphere comprised of 12 corner points. The icosahedron can be visualized as a type of scaffolding to measure the boundaries of one's kinesphere, or area around the body whose periphery can be reached by easily extending one's limbs without stepping away from a specific place of origin. The sculpture is laid in a paper folder inscribed by Laban "To Mr. Vahl-Rubin with Kindest regards. Laban. (England), 6th July 39." Both items are housed in a red, cloth-covered folding case.
The idea of using the icosahedron as the scaffolding of the kinesphere in practicing movement arose spontaneously from the study of movement and dance and is based on the inherent laws of natural movement, which gradually came to light in Laban's professional activity as a dancer and dance-teacher. The sculpture illustrates Laban's theory of space harmony in which clusters of atoms are bound together by simple forces that create an unusual stability when the cluster has the exact number of atoms needed to form a regular icosahedron. Part of Laban's system of Choreutics, the theory of the icosahedron supported Laban's view of human movement as a continuous creation of fragments of crystalline forms. This led him to classify movements as Plato had classified regular solids.
This is the only known icosahedron created by Laban.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Icosahedra
Human mechanics.
Dance -- Archives
Paper sculpture -- 20th century.
Online Archive of California
Laban, Rudolf von -- Archives

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