Guide to the Rudolf Laban Icosahedron

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The UCI Libraries
P.O. Box 19557
University of California, Irvine
Irvine, California 92623-9557
Phone: (949) 824-3947
Fax: (949) 824-2472
Email: spcoll@uci.edu
URL: http://special.lib.uci.edu
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Rudolf Laban icosahedron

Date: 1939

Collection Number: MS-P027

Creator: Laban, Rudolf von, 1879-1958

Extent: 0.2 linear feet (1 box)

Languages: The collection is in English.

Repository: University of California, Irvine. Library. Special Collections and Archives.

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).

Access

The collection is open for research.

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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.

Indexing Terms

Guide to the Rudolf Laban

Icosahedron

MS-P027

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The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

**Subjects**
Human mechanics -- Archives.
Icosahedra -- Archives.
Dance -- Archives.

**Genres and Formats of Materials**
Paper sculpture -- 20th century.

**Contributors**
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