

Mary wigman

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Through her simplification and breaking down of theatrical and aesthetic dance, Mary Wigman stands as one of the most inspirational figures of 20th century dance. Her unique use of theatrical elements such as masks, sound, costume and movement created an evolution of dance that was never seen before. Her use of the character, The Witch, changed the world's views on dance forever, and inspired a revolution of artistic quality all around Europe.

In this essay I will discuss whether or not The Witch in Wigmans work stands as an interpretation of her role in society, and her aspirations for future dance forms. Mary Wigman's Witch Dance epitomized the breaking away from conventional concepts and traditions. Through her modernistic choreography she captured the true essence of dance. There was no conformity or theatricality to it. Instead, she used elements that would speak directly to the audience (Muller, 1986, pp. 173-184). The archaic image of the witch expressed the elements of Wigman's own identity.

She expresses her modernistic identity in her breaking away of the social and cultural boundaries that besieged her time error. She also physically identifies herself as a witch, absorbing the viewer with the magical essence of her imagination. Through her movements she was able to personify this strong presence of the witch (Gunhild, 1992, pp. 35-49). She stressed the common association of the image of a witch with that of fear and apprehension of losing control over both body and mind.

This fear was created to be extended to the audiences watching the piece (Chritiane & Finnan, 2006, pp. 76-84). One of Wigman's most praised techniques in dance was her use of breathing. She believed that a dancers expression could be built to a climax simply through the pace and tone of

their breathing. Through inhalation and exhalation the dancers were able to create both tension and tranquility. In addition to this her dance techniques were also highly revolutionary.

Wigman did not believe that dance should be performed merely for entertainment purposes (Chritiane & Finnan, 2006, pp. 76-84). She diverged herself from the conventional practices of dance, such as ballet, and formed her own unique dance language that stripped away the aesthetic movement that was generally accepted at the time. The movement which she used in her pieces was unrestricted and she made use of percussion instead of traditionally orchestrated aesthetic music (Muller, 1986, pp. 173-184).

This made the audience focus more on the properties of the dance itself than the external features of it. Wigman's dances hypnotized the viewer with its powerful yet highly abstract choreography. Her use of repetitive gestures in her choreography helped to carve their cultural roles. She broke away from conventions by pulling away from the aesthetics of ballet. She did this by avoiding following fixed choreography, dancing barefoot and using eccentric music and percussion (Gunhild, 1992, pp. 35-49).

The cultural context in which Mary Wigman's lived was a very restricted and conservative society. Wigman grew up in Germany during the Weimer republic. This was a time of extreme change in Germany. Ausdruckstanz had been ubiquitous in Germany from the start of the 20th century, and there was a definite cultural and social revolution taking place. Along with this was the reign of feminism taking place worldwide. These ideologies and social changes showed up significantly in Wigman's choreography. Before Wigman, dance was primarily based on sexuality (Jiyun, 2007, pp. 27-437). Exoticism

was instrumental in the audiences appeal to it. Wigman broke away from these ideals by performing characters which held modernistic significance (Muller, 1986, pp. 173-184). Before Wigman, women were often portrayed in dance as modest and simple characters. Wigman changed this view by primarily using female dancers and depicting females as strong and powerful beings. Wigman's performances challenged the static social dynamics of the time. She created an atmosphere of respect between the female dancers and herself.

She allowed for a strong female subject in her pieces that provided females, who were previously oppressed, with a firm identity and place in society. Previously, male choreographers had objectified woman in their choreography. Wigman aimed at individualizing women and breaking away from the sensual image that they previously conformed to (Valerie & Lahusen, 1990, pp. 8-10). Wigman's choice of using the witch figure in her choreography was partly influenced by her attempt to emphasize the roots of dance and highlight feminist ideals.

Through her dances she strove to elevate her art to a new culture and change her own identity to that of a goddess. The witch figure stood as a solution to the concept of Ausdruckstanz (Valerie, 1998, pp. 298-304). This concept introduced a confliction between the desire to have their dance accepted by society but maintain a strong level of originality at the same time. Wigman's dance focused primarily on raw and natural movement to truly capture the fresh expressiveness of her work.

Through her work she hoped to portray a new vision of life. She wanted her work to be characterized by its dark and somewhat masculine nature. She

explored the different ways in which the body could express itself (Valerie & Lahusen, 1990, pp. 8-10). She tried to use freedom of movement in expressing her sensuality and accepted that improvisation was the first step toward composition. The important thing about Wigman's choreography was that even those who misunderstood it were inspired by the energy of her performances.

The audience seldom failed to recognize the energy and life in Wigman's choreography (Gunhild, 1992, pp. 35-49). The witch in Wigman's choreography represented the overcoming of human mortality and deficiencies through her new religion of dance. The dances were not sets of beautifully displayed images, but were created through disfigured movement that held no consideration for the viewer's enjoyment. She ripped the space apart through her dance and engaged in the emptiness and diversity of the space.

In conclusion, Wigman played a truly inspirational role in the modernization of dance in the 20th century. It would seem that Kolb's statement regarding the feminist and demonic quality would be true with regards to the time error that she found herself in. The Witch not only represented woman as a powerful figure, but it highlighted the abstract quality of her dance. Wigman changed the face of dance forever through her diverse and unconventional ways of thinking. The way she broke away from conformist ideals still serves as inspiration to the dance we have today.