

**A Phoenix Rising from the Ashes:  
Self-Expression in the Work of Rudolf Laban  
and Mary Wigman during the Weimar Years**

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Like other art forms during the Weimar years, German theatrical dance underwent dramatic change in the 1920s. A period characterized by widespread unemployment, social dislocation, weak government, and a general sense of distress, the Weimar era also witnessed an important search for national identity. Artists such as Mary Wigman and Rudolf Laban stood at the forefront of the effort to create a new German dance that was part of this modern and distinctly German quest. Dancers of the Weimar Republic wanted to forge a new identity for their art, much like the identity they were forming for themselves as citizens of the new Germany. It was this struggle to discover who they were as German citizens within this new political and social framework that supported the creation of their dances and provided them with a unique environment in which they could create their work.

The Weimar Republic, the first parliamentary government in Germany, existed between the years of 1918 and 1933. During this time, not only did the country's newly developing democracy provide sufficient funding and support for the arts including dance, but it also refrained from regulating the content of dance works. Dancers and choreographers experienced a strong sense of freedom and a respect for individuality, both of these ideas becoming strongly associated with

Weimar art, though they soon disappeared with the triumph of Hitler and the National Socialist Party in 1933.

World War I exacted a huge toll from Germany's population, and its consequences deeply affected public morale. According to dance historian Dianne S. Howe:

German men between the ages of seventeen and sixty were conscripted into the military. The carnage of the war was indiscriminate and impersonal. The Germans lost nearly two million people; half of its "lost" generation were either killed or maimed. The impersonality of the war was seen in the obliteration of distinctions of age, sex, or class by the massive artillery bombardment and sustained blockades. Human life was not the only casualty of the war; the altering of reality by words for expediency in the production of propaganda led to a deep wondering of truth of language. It could no longer be counted on to convey truth.<sup>1</sup>

During World War I German citizens lost their sense of personal identity.

Absorbed into the masses, they were faceless individuals who could be killed or

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<sup>1</sup> Dianne S. Howe, *Individuality and Expression: The Aesthetics of the New German Dance, 1908-1936* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 7-8.

wounded indiscriminately. The art of the Weimar Republic, including the new German dance, reclaimed the idea of individuality and expression of self, counteracting the devastation and loss of “das Ich,” – the “I.” It was an era, according to scholar Suzanne K. Walther, defined by “political turmoil, social change, and cultural innovation.”<sup>2</sup> Though the works of Wigman and Laban varied in content and movement idiom, they shared a commitment to personal expression and emotion characteristic of the Weimar Republic. However, self-expression was often represented in a way which detracted from the individual. Wigman’s use of the mask hid the face of the individual while Laban’s movement choirs absorbed the individual into a larger group. Ultimately, self-expression was achieved most cogently in forms that abstracted and depersonalized emotional content, by shifting emphasis to the movement and away from the individual’s personal interpretation of it.

### **Rudolf Laban**

Laban, a dancer and choreographer, is best known for the creation of Labanotation, the most widely used modern system of dance notation, as well as for teaching many leading dance artists of the early twentieth century including Wigman herself. In addition, Laban created dances. Though his dances represented the prevailing idea of self-expression, they did so in a context that also

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<sup>2</sup> Suzanne K. Walther, *The Dance of Death: Kurt Jooss and the Weimar Years* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academics, 1994), xv.

took attention away from the individual. Laban worked extensively with movement choirs. These were large groups of often untrained dancers from all walks of life who came together to perform. Their movements were set and rehearsed, but not highly technical, by allowing the expression of the individual to shine through. In fact, the dancers were encouraged to reveal themselves through the movement. Laban was interested in having his dancers express themselves through movement in a large group setting, ultimately fostering the expression of self but losing the individual in the overall presentation of the dance due to the sheer number of dancers performing at the same time. In this way, the individual was encouraged to express himself through the steps and dance framework created by Laban, though the expression was often masked or hidden.

Laban's group dances stood apart from the dance works of his contemporaries in part because they included up to one hundred individuals or sometimes even more – quite different from the solo or small group works favored by Wigman and others. Moreover, Laban's dancers came from all walks of life, many having no formal dance training at all. As Howe explains, "Laban represents another line of *Ausdruckstanz* with his development of the group dance into the *Bewegungschor* (movement choir), a group of amateur dancers joined together by the joy of movement."<sup>3</sup> Here it is particularly noteworthy that the common thread of Laban's movement choirs is not a codified technique or

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<sup>3</sup> Howe, 28.

virtuosity but rather the mere love of movement, a love that individuals young and old, male and female, athletic and unathletic could share without discrimination.

Laban's implementation of the movement choir challenged what had previously been considered theatrical dance both in Germany and across the globe. As an unimpressed John Martin of the *New York Times* wrote about Laban's movement choir following the 1930 Munich Dance Festival:

For two hours without pause fifty or sixty dancers – men, women and children – stamped and jerked about upon the stage of one of the huge exhibition halls in the Ausstellungspark to the accompaniment of piano, drum or gong; or with no accompaniment at all, under the leadership of Laban representatives from six German cities...nowhere in this artificial, formless milling, is there the slightest indication of the natural expression of any instinct whatsoever. It is all cut and dried, substituting exertion for energy, persistent pouncing for rhythm, and lacking completely the spirit of play and those delightful, crude but shapely figurations which grow out of it in all the folk arts that are genuinely folk arts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Howe, 29.

Here it seems clear that because of the large number of people, an element of the collective is lost; the idea of the German Volk, the collective German people united as one, becomes hazy. Similarly, the individual is overshadowed by the large and diverse group performing identical movement. Finally, the movement was performed in a very different way by each of the dancers, making the choreography appear unpolished.

According to dance historian Fritz Bühme, the goal of Laban's group dances was not:

precise symmetry, precision, discipline, and clean appearance, but an organic togetherness, composition according to different types of movement, expression of spatial tensions, incorporation of the individual as an irreplaceable, necessary part of the complete development of a group movement. Unity not due to symmetry but equality.<sup>5</sup>

In this way, the glue that held the work together was the individual. It was the differences in the way specific people interpreted and performed the movement that made Laban's movement choirs unique and set them apart from other German expressions of the "free dance." Laban's work both highlighted or spotlighted the individual and masked him among a larger crowd of dancers.

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<sup>5</sup> Howe, 28.

Laban, a representative of the *Freier Tanz* (free dance) and *Laientanz* (non-professional dance) side of the *Ausdruckstanz*, differed from Wigman and his contemporaries who were more closely associated with *Absoluter Tanz* (absolute dance).<sup>6</sup> Both *Freier Tanz* and *Laientanz* added an inherent freedom from executing movements exactly as the leader showed them to the dancers to the work. Constraints such as pre-composed music and highly structured and perfected choreography were taken away, and the expression of the movement became the most important factor of the dance work. This is not to say that there were no rules established for the execution of such dances. Individuals were expected to maintain both a sense of musicality and a percussive quality in their movement, and were also expected to follow the movement leader to the best of their ability. The rules, rather than governing particular contrived movements or rhythmic structures, actually prompted the individuality of the dancer and freedom of expression within the form and did not force any particular codified dance technique upon the dancers.

Although Laban's *Freier Tanz* was often performed without music, this did not mean that the dance was lacking in musicality and self-expression. The movement of the dancers was what created the rhythm of the dance, rather than the individuals conforming to a pre-conceived musical form or structure. In this way, the individual or the group of individuals fueled their own fire. They were dancing how they really experienced and at the pace that their individual bodies

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<sup>6</sup> Howe, 30.

felt the movement. This freedom added a sense of authenticity to the work and a natural quality that could not have been so clearly exemplified had the dancers been constricted to a set rhythmic structure. However, when music was used, it was often live, percussive music created by piano, drums, or gong. This elicited strong and highly expressive movement from the dancers.

As still photographs of Laban's group dances suggest, costuming was one of the elements that helped to unify the group. Although individual costumes may have varied slightly, they were constructed in a similar style for everyone. In a photograph of Laban's 1923 dance tragedy *Gaukelei*, eleven individuals are dressed in similar tunics though the patterns and colors vary. The dancers also wear similar makeup and headpieces, it is clear that they vary for each individual.<sup>7</sup> Similar dress created a blanker canvas in which the movement rather than the superficial appearance of the individual speaks directly to the audience.

On a similar note, street clothes or practice dance clothes added a quality of informality to Laban's dances, emphasizing that they were being performed by large groups of untrained dancers.<sup>8</sup> Hierarchy within the piece was blurred, allowing the viewer to focus on the movement of the dancers. Elaborate costumes, by contrast, would have masked their movement or placed it in a themed category, rather than allowing it to be recognized as self-expressive dance.

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<sup>7</sup> Valerie Preston-Dunlap and Susanne Lahusen, *Schriftanz: A View of German Dance in the Weimar Republic* (London: Dance Books, 1990), 100-101.

<sup>8</sup> Preston-Dunlap, 100-101.

The idea of the “masses” in the 1920s was not only represented in Laban’s group dances but also connected to the idea of “mass society.” In Laban’s dances we see a representation of the increased movement toward democratization, which is evident in the treatment of the masses in his work. There is an absence of hierarchy, emphasis on the individual, and the use of the unskilled dancer, ideas representative of Weimar’s political values.

One can clearly see a connection between the work produced by Laban and his dancers and the era in which it was created. The Weimar period supported the emergence of self-expression in the lives of the German people, especially in the arts. Laban’s movement choirs allowed this to happen in a way in which the individuals expressed themselves within the context of a large group, an almost safer context in which the individual could experiment and express emotion without being a solo dancer on stage which the audience’s entire focus would have been drawn to. It is almost as if this movement choir, this collective individuality, masked in a sense what the individual dancers were trying to convey and placed the emphasis on the expressivity of the work as a whole. Laban’s ideas regarding expressive movement paved the way for other dancers and choreographers of the time to create similarly expressive yet highly individual dances of their own.

### **Mary Wigman**

Wigman, who did not actually begin to study dance seriously until she reached her early twenties, received her early artistic training in the fields of music

and poetry. It was this lack of early dance training and resulting openness to movement outside of a codified technique that gave Wigman the freedom to emphasize self-expression in her dances. Having studied under Laban for several years, she adopted many of his dance ideas and practices, while also bringing personal feeling and strong emotion to her work. Unlike Laban (but like many of her female dance contemporaries), Wigman was most interested in the solo dance, the idea of seeing the individual alone on stage, in a display of genuine, dramatic emotion.

The emphasis on individuality is seen most clearly in Wigman's early dances, most of which were solos. Wigman, like many of her female dance contemporaries, was known for her solo work. As Susan Manning sees it:

From the teens through the mid-twenties, Wigman's solos challenged the eroticization of the female performer and the voyeurism of the male spectator. At the same time, her solos projected a mystical aura of Germanness. Thus I read her solos as both feminist and nationalist.<sup>9</sup>

In this way, Wigman is revealing her self, her expression, and her identity as both a feminist and a nationalist during the Weimar era. Wigman rejects the idea of the large corps whether it is a corps of dancers or a corps of soldiers. She encouraged

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<sup>9</sup> Susan A. Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3.

the individual to emerge from a group previously characterized by structure and accuracy and truly express herself as she wanted to be seen, not as something that she was forced to represent. This emergence of individual artists and individual voices was important during this time, especially from a feminist standpoint. The idea of the strong individual, particularly the strong female soloist, dominated in Wigman's dances.

As Wigman herself once noted, the dancer's job should be "to establish a consonance of our innermost feelings and our sensitivity to form, dictated by our own time."<sup>10</sup> Wigman recalls the interwar period, as:

A fighting time, full of rebellion against everything rusty, dusty, and traditional.... The stored-up creative forces broke through. Great work was done simultaneously in all the arts. Everything seemed young and novel, as if nothing had been done before. Extreme contrasts collided, controversies were brought to a head, there was constantly a meeting of minds which bore the most wonderful results. What all of them had in common was the wrestling for a personal message and its artistic expression of universality.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Howe, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Wigman, *The Mary Wigman Book*, ed. & trans. Walter Sorell (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 54.

Here it is important to recognize that though these new German dances were deeply rooted in German history and the individual stories of German people, thus expressing both personal and political thought present in Germany during the Weimar era, there was most certainly a wider applicability of her work on the world stage. Though the new German dance represented a rejection of German history, this rejection was merely a springboard allowing for the self and personal creativity to flourish, an artistic ideal that would reach well beyond the German borders and across countless artistic genres, an expression of self that could be seen in the work of emerging American modern dance choreographers such as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman.

Wigman's work is often characterized by experimentation, improvisation, and percussiveness, which to create a deeply expressive, personal, and well-rounded dance work. She believed strongly in presenting an essence or mood through her dances rather than a concrete narrative. She explains, "The development of a dance work results from the demands of the theme itself and from the demands which the choreographer's personality and momentary disposition bring to the theme."<sup>12</sup> For Wigman, the dance came from within and was not just an external representation of technique and virtuosity, but rather an expression of self. She addressed broad themes such human emotion, nature and other universal issues, as seen through her individual eye. In her *Hexentanz* or *Witch Dance*, one sees the performance of a choreographed work, derived

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<sup>12</sup> Wigman, 122.

originally from improvisation. The dancer moves percussively and reaches her limbs sharply from her center in order to create the gesture, movement quality, and feeling of a witch.<sup>13</sup> As Howe observes, “Wigman’s choreography presented the constituents of the *Ausdruckstanz*, [the dance of expression], aesthetic: individuality, directness, mysticism, and intensity of presentation.”<sup>14</sup> Through the work of Wigman we are able to clearly see a definite change in self, in dance, and in German art as a whole, representative of the *Ausdruckstanz* and the Weimar Republic.

Though it may appear to have been an easy road to develop a distinctly German dance that displayed both the freedom and constraints of the era, a great deal of trial and error and experimentation went into the creation of *Ausdruckstanz*, the dance of expression, and also to its acceptance as an art form. Rudolf Delius explains in his 1925 study of Wigman that experimentation and improvisation should come first and that technique should not be a concern until later in the choreographic process.<sup>15</sup> With this, Delius stresses that the emergence of a German expressionist dance that rejected earlier dance ideologies and focused on modern ideas of expression did not take place overnight. It was rather through self-discovery and spatial exploration that figures like Wigman were able to establish a dance based on emotion and expression rather than technique alone, similar to American solo artists Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, and Maud Allen.

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<sup>13</sup> *Mary Wigman: mein Leben ist Tanz*. 29 mins. Bonn, Germany: Inter Naciones, 199-. Videocassette.

<sup>14</sup> Howe, 96.

<sup>15</sup> Rudolf V. Delius, *Mary Wigman* (Dresden: Carl Reissner Verlag, 1925), 18.

This use of trial and error and experimentation rather than replication of movement characteristic of the past allowed for the expression of the individual to shine through the work.

Wigman, who, as a child, had studied music seriously, was extremely interested in the relationship between the dance and the music to which it was performed. In addition to her study of the piano, Wigman learned eurhythmics as a student of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze in Hellerau. She believed that through improvisation and the development of a movement vocabulary an idea for music would come about, binding the two together and creating a fusion – which she called “absolute dance.” She did not feel that a dance should necessarily be created to an existing piece of music because then the dance becomes more about the music than the actual movement and the motivation behind it, including the personal expression of the dancer. She experimented with less traditional, more percussive sounds, used to support her dancing rather than the dancing supporting the music. This strong percussive support of movement can be seen in Wigman’s *Witch Dance*, the strong, abrupt drumming mirroring and enhancing Wigman’s strong, abrupt gestures.<sup>16</sup> This musical experimentation, combined with Wigman’s physical improvisation, created work that was new, original and representative of the time.

Unlike many female dance pioneers of the 1920s and 1930s, Wigman did not necessarily create work that was specific to women. According to Armin

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<sup>16</sup> Mary Wigman: mein Leben ist Tanz.

Knab, Wigman, “refuse[d] to stress her femininity, to adulterate her dance with naïve eroticism.”<sup>17</sup> Wigman did not support the idea of creating movement that was simply decorative or that was beautiful just for the sake of being beautiful, her work being inherently “ugly” in nature. She wanted her dances to be real and to come from deep within, rather than existing simply as external movement and positions. Similarly, her work was a step away from the ever-present sexualization of women in popular, spectacle theatre. This disjunction with the idea of contrived beauty set Wigman’s work apart from others because it drew on dark emotions characteristic of such an unstable, chaotic time in Germany. She produced work that was gender neutral, removing the emphasis from the individual’s body and placing it on the movement and its dramatic presentation. Following WWI, the role of women in Germany changed dramatically because of the number of men who had died in the war. Women of the interwar period had more of a functional role in society, a role outside the home, many serving as “Trümmerfrauen,” women who sifted through the rubble and rebuilt Germany during the Weimar Republic. Here we see women in an untraditional role, much like the new, unconventional place women had in Wigman’s choreography, a role where their personal voice and expression of self could be seen and heard.

Wigman viewed a dancer’s body as an instrument and strongly believed that as such, the individual body of the dancer and the previous experiences of the

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<sup>17</sup> Armin Knab, “Mary Wigman: Visionen” in *Schriftanz: A View of German Dance in the Weimar Republic*, ed Valerie Preston-Dunlap & Susanne Lahusen (Cecil Court, London: Dance Books, 1990), 97-98.

dancer should influence the work that he or she ultimately produced. This was different from the way dance was created in the past, filling in a preconceived idea or theme conceived by a choreographer with bodies of dancers, amplifying no real expression of self. In Rudolf Bach's *Das Mary Wigman-Werk* he says that the dance is and stays bound to the human body and that the body of the dancer serves as an instrument, helping the dancer express herself to the audience. It is with the body, the instrument, that the dancer's soul and inner feelings are expressed. The dancer must be able to control and play this instrument like a singer controls their voice, a pianist plays the piano, or a guitarist plays a guitar. The dancer must likewise master the body like an instrument.<sup>18</sup> Like a musician's instrument, a dancer's body is a means of expressing innermost thoughts and feelings, both personal and more all encompassing. During the Weimar Republic when the German expressionist dance emerged, these ideas were often related to Germany's social, economic, and political conditions.

Though Wigman strongly encouraged the dancer's movement to come from within as a means of self-expression, she wanted movement to exist as an expression separate from the dancer's facial expressions. Because of this desire to see what the dancer's movement had to say, rather than what the dancer's face was expressing, Wigman became interested in using masks.<sup>19</sup> In this way, each dancer would have a facial expression tailored to the piece being performed. Wigman

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<sup>18</sup> Rudolf Bach, *Das Mary Wigman-Werk* (Dresden: Carl Reissner Verlag, 1933), 32.

<sup>19</sup> Wigman, 124-126.

was interested in establishing the mood of her work through the dancer's outward appearance and then developing this mood through the movement she created. In a way, disabling the face as a means of expression really encouraged the dancers to use their movement itself to its fullest expressive potential.

Though Wigman was not interested in developing her own technique because her philosophy of dance was based on individuality and self-expression, she developed a codified pedagogy that she used in teaching the students in her schools. She began her "dance practices," a term she preferred to class or rehearsal, with developing an emotional motif for her students to work with throughout their lesson.<sup>20</sup> This would lead into individual experimentation that would often culminate in a larger group improvisation. Wigman encouraged movement created independently of music, which could then be added to support the dance. She preferred for her classes to be accompanied by modern, percussive music if music were to be used, percussive music often exemplifying a raw, primitive quality that emphasized the unrestricted feeling of the dancer. Wigman soon needed to increase the size of her facilities because so many students were interested in working with her and learning more about her new, experimental pedagogy. As Wigman recalls:

It all started with a handful of students whose number  
grew from year to year. Soon they came not only from

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<sup>20</sup> Isa Partsch-Bergsohn and Harold Bergsohn, *The Makers of Modern Dance in Germany: Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman & Kurt Jooss* (Heightstown, NJ: Princeton Book Co, 2003), 36.

Germany but from all over the world. And when one's knowledge of languages no longer sufficed, there was always the gesture-language of the dance with which one could easily communicate. This everyone understood.<sup>21</sup>

Wigman's pedagogy, though untraditional in nature, held broad appeal to dance students everywhere. Having a chance to bring oneself to the movement rather than mechanically replicating well-defined and technical steps added a sense of ownership to the work. Wigman's pedagogy, though in itself not a codified technique, functioned as a basis for Wigman's choreography, the idea of self-expression serving as the connective language that tied her ideas together and allowed for communication within the classroom.

Though the idea of self-expression as well as the desire to create a dance representative of its time lay behind the creation of Ausdruckstanz, they also led to its demise. The Weimar Republic generously supported the arts, and artists were free to create works as they wished. Because the Germans were influenced so greatly by the war, one sees a clear expression of this connection to the political state of the time and desire for self-expression in the artwork of the Weimar Republic. When Hitler came to power, he and the Nazi party established the Reichskulturkammer, or Cultural Arts Department, which strictly controlled both

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<sup>21</sup> Wigman, 63.

the type of art permissible and the individuals permitted to create it.<sup>22</sup> Many artists, including Jews, leftists, and others opposed to the new regulations, fled Germany and settled in other countries where they could create art more freely. Surprisingly, Wigman, who was in America at the time Hitler came to power, decided to return to Germany and continue to work there.

Wigman's decision to return to Germany at such a traumatic and unstable time, was both a personal and artistic choice. Though the initial reason for her return was that her boyfriend was in Germany, Germany was her home. Her work was rooted deeply in her homeland, and she continued to draw on it for inspiration. Wigman, writes her biographer Walter Sorell, had always worked creatively in response to:

man, his joys and tribulations, about man in relation to man and his environment... [She danced] about the ultimate things in life: visions, fate, sacrifice, death. Yes, her preoccupation with death has so often been considered characteristic of her Germanic background. But, in fact, it was the artistic realization of those devastating war years, of the upheaval which caused inflation of all factual and spiritual values. Mary Wigman was...so deeply rooted in life, and so strong

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<sup>22</sup> Bergsohn, 34.

and positive a person, that she saw the vision of death  
only as a counterbalance to the dynamic energies of  
life.<sup>23</sup>

This creative environment existed nowhere else, and Wigman had come to rely on it for inspiration. Though modern dance was indeed developing simultaneously in America, this was not a movement in which Wigman herself was interested in taking part, although she did establish a school in New York, under the direction of Hanya Holm, which used her pedagogy and taught her philosophy of dance. Ultimately, Wigman chose to return to Germany because of a romantic relationship, but this move also signified support of her country and her continuing influence in the development of German expressionist dance.

The work that Wigman created during the Weimar years was very different from the choreography that she created under Hitler and the National Socialist Government. During the years between the First World War and the early 1930s, Wigman and her contemporaries were free to experiment as they pleased, producing a distinctly German dance that arose out of the self-expression of the individual. Once their creativity was stifled by Hitler and the Nazi party, the work lost its distinctly German character and the emphasis on self-expression that Wigman and others had worked so hard to develop. Dance was now more closely regulated and controlled by Hitler's state. Similar to the way in which Germany

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<sup>23</sup> Walter Sorell, *The Dancer's Image: Points and Counterpoints* (New York: Columbia UP, 1971), 123-124.

was rebuilt after WWI, dance in Germany experienced a renaissance during the Weimar Republic. Wigman and her contemporaries created German Ausdruckstanz at a time when nearly everything else in Germany was destroyed.

Though the Weimar Republic fostered the creativity of artists throughout Germany including dancers such as Laban and Wigman, and though both used this period to present work whose hallmark was self-expression, they did so in a way that emphasized the expressiveness of the movement itself. In doing this, they minimized the personal aspect of the expression. Laban's interest in expressive movement within the larger group or movement choir encouraged expressivity in general but also took away from the emphasis on the individual. Wigman's work was similar in that the movement itself was highly expressive but on a much less personal level, since she and her dancers frequently wore masks thus minimizing facial expression and heightening the expressiveness of the movement itself. This emphasis on expression, though impersonal, was commonplace during the Weimar period. The chaos and reconstruction following World War I allowed artists to express themselves in their work and provide it with a strong content. Often, however, this work was masked or hidden, limiting the expression of self as this was presented to the audience.

Though the Weimar Republic characterized an era in which the German government both provided room for artistic freedom and even financial aid for

artists, choreographers such as Laban and Wigman used this freedom in ways that tied them to Germany's past. Laban and Wigman both supported the aesthetic in which the dancer revealed his or her expressive self through movement. Yet both also took measures that directly or indirectly undermined personal expression, shifting the emphasis of the work to the movement itself and away from the individual's personal interpretation of it. Wigman achieved this by masking her dancers and Laban by using movement choirs that emphasized the group at the expense of the individual and denying the individual expressive agency. The dances of Wigman and Laban during the Weimar years ultimately fostered both the idea of self-expression and the masking of the personal, while also representing in a broader sense Germany's struggle and search for identity.

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