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American Commemorative Panels: Innovative Choreographers

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Innovative Choreographers



Bob Fosse

WITH THESE STAMPS, the U.S. Postal Service pays tribute to four influential choreographers whose artistry thrilled admirers and transformed dance.

Isadora Duncan (1877–1927) was a modern-dance pioneer born and raised in San Francisco in a time when women were constrained by corsets and layers of undergarments. She dared to dance barefoot in loose-fitting clothes that revealed the contours of her body, as well as her bare arms and legs. She also favored spontaneous, everyday movements, in sharp contrast to ballet, which relied on a straight back, rigid knees, and the mastery of acrobatic techniques.

José Limón (1908–1972) was seven years old when his family came from Mexico to the United States. As a young man, he planned to become a painter, but was captivated by modern dance, then in its early stages of development. Many of Limón's dances were inspired by literary sources; others by politics. Still others sprang from his Mexican heritage. *Danzas Mexicanas* was a suite of five solo dances representing character types from Mexican history.

Katherine Dunham (1909–2006) was born and raised in Illinois. She founded one of the first African-American dance companies and choreographed pieces that combined traditional ballet with modern dance and elements of folk dances from around the world. Dunham technique, as her method came to be called, combined Caribbean and African dance elements with aspects of ballet and profoundly influenced other dancers and choreographers, including Alvin Ailey. Audiences worldwide flocked to her shows.

Bob Fosse (1927–1987) was born in Chicago, Illinois. He took dancing lessons as a child and was a veteran performer by the time he reached his teens. Throughout his career, Fosse moved back and forth between work on screen and the Broadway stage. He directed and choreographed such films and shows as *Sweet Charity*, *Cabaret*, and *Chicago*. Aspects of Fosse's signature "look" included his use of bowler hats, white gloves, hunched shoulders, and turned-in feet.



Isadora Duncan



Katherine Dunham



José Limón

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