

# PSALM

*“Psalm, restaged by Artistic Director Carla Maxwell is a spectacular piece, and fine evidence of Limón’s gifted way with choral structure and variety... an extremely satisfying technical work.”*

- Chicago Tribune

*Psalm* is a pivotal yet often overlooked masterpiece of the Limón canon. Conceived as an abstract ritual of rhythm and song, it contains some of the most virtuosic ensemble dancing ever created. *Psalm*’s vitality lies in its ability to build upon, and even transcend, its original inspiration. In creating *Psalm*, Limón drew upon a tenant of ancient Jewish belief that all the sorrows of the world rest upon 36 men—the bearers of all burdens. Limón began creating *Psalm* in 1967 after reading André Schwarz-Bart’s “The Last of the Just,” one of the first novels to address the plight of the Jews during World War II. His choreographic notes describe the conception of his work: “The choreographic treatment as I envision it would be an evocation of the heroic power of the human spirit, triumphant over death itself. The objective is to achieve dramatic power through abstract choreographic visions.” *Psalm* was first performed August 19, 1967 at the American Dance Festival, New London, CT and ran in the repertory until Limón’s death in 1972.



*Members of the Limón Dance Company in Psalm.  
Photo: Doug Cody*

*“The big news was the restaging of Limón’s Psalm by Artistic Director Carla Maxwell. Jon Magnussen’s commissioned score was hauntingly beautiful. The dancers flowed across the stage with breathtaking musicality and astonishing, precise speed.”*

-The Salt Lake Tribune

In 2000, Artistic Director Carla Maxwell decided to restage the work in a format emphasizing the commonalities inherent to the human experience. Maxwell invited composer Jon Magnussen to create a new score to emphasize *Psalm*’s powerful and emotional impact. Magnussen, winner of the prestigious Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts’ 1998 Martin E. Segal Award, composed a score for chorus, baritone solo, and chamber ensemble. Completed in 2002, the restaged version premiered at the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympic Arts Festival at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah.

*Psalm*’s vision of faith in the human spirit remains relevant to contemporary society. This theme readily lends itself to discussions and explorations in educational and humanitarian forums, and provides a new vehicle with which to engage audiences on a deeper level.

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