

**CHARLES WEIDMAN'S *BRAHMS WALTZES*  
(ABSTRACT)**

by

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Charles Weidman is one of the four pioneers in the development of modern dance in the United States. However, his works are significant not for this factor alone. His choreographic style is permeated with wit and humor, which also characterizes his personality. Weidman has not received as much recognition as his counterparts Doris Humphrey, Hanya Holm, and Martha Graham. Weidman's contribution to the development of dance deserves wider recognition.

Most of the works by Charles Weidman which have received attention, stem from the phase of his career when he worked and collaborated with Doris Humphrey as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer. However, Weidman worked on his own, during and after his association with Doris Humphrey. This presentation will focus on Charles Weidman's *Brahms Waltzes* as it pertains to my experience in researching and directing this work from the Labanotation score. I will primarily focus on the reconstruction of his 1961 *Brahms Waltzes* and its relationship with Weidman's personality and look at life.

Choreographed as an homage to Doris Humphrey, *Brahms Waltzes* certainly contains elements of the Humphrey style and even short sequences extracted from works of their collaboration years. However, *Brahms Waltzes* unmistakably speaks of Charles Weidman's unique style, personality, and look at life. For example, *Stretch and Snap*, the third in the sequence of sixteen waltzes, is a satirical work based on movements and gestures of the 1930's. This is most evident in measures 23, 31, and 32. *Soft Leaps* directly quotes Doris Humphrey's *Square Dance*; while *Four Square Walk*, a dance about the "joy of getting unmarried," speaks of Weidman's look on life and the institution of marriage. In *Four Square Walk*, the dancers perform the entire dance holding their wrists. The arms held by the wrists limit the dancers' free leg and torso movements. The restricted movement of the arms held by the wrists, which represents the bondage of marriage, is broken only in the last measure of the score.

Throughout this research I have examined primary sources such as Weidman's notebooks and taped interviews, newspaper articles and reviews, and photographs, in addition to the Labanotation score. I have also worked with Rosalind Pierson, former dancer with the Weidman company, who has provided insight not only into Weidman's dance style, but also into his personality.