

mosaic



BY MEMBERS FOR MEMBERS
for lovers of Arabic, North African
and Tribal dance everywhere

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Photo: Peter Chaplin



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**DEADLINE
FOR NEXT
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Ed's Letter

Hello everyone...

"Life, but not as we know it, Jim." I may be mis-quoting Star Trek here, yet this is a time of tremendous upheaval for us all. Suddenly we are facing rapid change and hitherto unknown restrictions on our personal liberty. Shocking though this may be, it is necessary worldwide in response to a threat that exceeds man-made dangers. It's putting our lives into perspective: what is important, what there is to strive for or avoid, desire or resist, personal vs communal, all thrown together. So, we do the best we can, maintaining a positive constructive outlook, rather than buying into mass conscious fear and panic. For every act of greed and hoarding, there are great outpourings of help and support. Earth's air and waters are clearing. This shared experience is a great equaliser. It's brilliant that so many dance teachers and groups are still gathering via the internet to keep spirits up. Carpe diem and dance!

Thank you all who have contributed to this issue of *Mosaic* magazine. I always need a good mix of articles to keep our readers engaged and stimulated. So please do send things to me ... in good time, I ask again!

editor@mosaicdancenetwork.org

See the box below for guidelines on copyright, format and picture resolution.

*Look after yourself well
and be of good cheer*

Liz x

editor@mosaicdancenetwork.org



Article guidelines

- 1 Please use Word docs for your articles. Pdfs can prove tricky to open and edit. Cutting and pasting of text from emails, FB and Messenger is NO-GO!
- 2 Please send your original images separately if possible, not pasted into your text file. Indicate in the text where the images should be.
- 3 If the resolution of an image is too low, this results in a 'pixilated' look. In order for your images to look really great when they're printed, here's a rough guide for the best results:
 - ❖ 250kb-500kb might be usable if printed fairly small
 - ❖ 500kb-1mb is usable, though 1-6mb (or bigger) is perfectGenerally, those taken on a phone at its highest quality setting are OK. So... the bigger the file, the better. Please don't take images from websites if possible, they're generally too small and you could run in to copyright issues.
- 4 *Mosaic* magazine assumes that you will have checked regarding copyright of any images (apart from your own, of course) used within your article. You need to have gained permission from the owner of the images before you use them. *Mosaic* will take no responsibility for any copyright infringement!

Letter from the Chair

Dear dancers,

This is a challenging time worldwide and those affected by coronavirus are in our thoughts. Take good care and hold the planet in love and light as we deal with the challenges ahead.

We are planning to have our AGM online this year on May 20th.

Please let me know if you wish to attend so we can ensure we take up enough coverage for everyone.

Insurance and membership renewal are now at the same time for May, please send your forms, including the GDPR form, preferably online to membership@mosaicdancenetwork.org when you sign up for membership and/or insurance, so we can update the Teachers Listing in the magazine and online.

Our insurance plan DOES cover you for teaching online.

If you are unable to teach in person, please consider teaching safely online. We would love to hear how this has worked for you for our next issue.

Please send articles for the next issue.

If you have some spare time we always need content for *Mosaic*. We rely on your content to fill the magazine. The sooner the better :)

Take every opportunity to try something new.

Go well and happy dancing, Rosie

chair@mosaicdancenetwork.org



Photo: Karen Ralph



MADN Membership & Insurance

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND INSURANCE BY MAY 1ST 2020!

MADN membership brings you a fab deal on insurance!!

See pages 7 and 16 for details.

Twenty Five Years of Dance:

Katie Holland talks to Editor, Liz Newman

Q How and when did you first start dancing Egyptian and related styles? What drew you to the dance? Had you experience in other styles before?

My first experiences were from the age of three for ten years in ballet, tap and modern dances. I was interested from a young age in ancient Egypt and what the hand positions signified in the hieroglyphs. I also loved films like *Romancing the Stone*, the beginning credits of James Bond and *Tales of the Unexpected* with the snake-armed dancing women. I first saw a belly dancer in the U2 video *Mysterious Ways* when I was fourteen and knew immediately that was what I wanted to do. I searched for a year to find a teacher, in the meantime telling my careers advisor at school that I wanted to be a belly dancer. She helped me in my search and eventually I found Sylvia Canetti (one of the original founders of MADN) who became my first teacher when I was fifteen. At that time,

she was sixty-three. Somehow, watching her dance I had the realisation that this was something I could do throughout my whole life no matter what.

Q Did any teachers influence you particularly?

All my teachers have had a huge influence on me. I chose who I studied with very carefully. Sylvia, Maggie Caffrey, Anji Jackson-Main (Hilal School) and Leila Haddad had immense influence in my first five years of studies. Starting the dance so young meant that different teachers appeared at certain points in my life as I was maturing, growing and evolving. I feel this gave me a very special connection with each of them as they also steered me in all aspects of life, often because they were much older than the teenage me and I was very lucky to glean from their lived

“steered me in all aspects of life...”

experiences as well as the dance. One person who showed me how to dance the ‘heart-body’ connection was Hossam Ramzy.

I recently spent a month living and studying with my shamanic dance teacher in India. We were able literally to live, eat and breathe the processes in what felt like a very ancient way of sharing. This, to me is the real study and the true communing form of embodying dance.

Q When and where did you start performing: solo and group?

My first dance performances were in ballet, tap and jazz at the age of four. We had an annual stage show to impress our parents and present what we had spent the last year of Saturday mornings learning while they had a lie-in. I also performed in various talent contests at school and on holidays. My sister, Faith, and I subjected our family and friends to endless home-made dance performances.

My first Egyptian dance performance was aged seventeen with Sylvia. During the



Dancing baladi, aged 18

next three years I gathered my confidence performing at hafas solo and duet, in theatre performances with Anji Jackson-Main and with a ME fusion band. This led to teaching and performing at belly dance events and festivals across the UK and beyond.

Q When and where did you start teaching?

I began assisting Sylvia with her weekly classes when I was eighteen. She was the voice and I was the body. I had to make sure that I physically presented exactly what she was describing. I also collaborated with a friend with whom I performed in the ME fusion band. We taught workshops for cultural events, refugee and women’s groups in the Midlands.

In 2000 I was twenty-one, my son was born and I moved to Worthing, Sussex. As I started to get to know people they began to ask me to teach belly dance classes. There was a huge gap in belly dance teachers and events along the south coast at that time and it made me



Katie and her sister, Faith



Katie and Faith now!



realise how blessed I had been living in Leicester with all the amazing teachers who were hosted in Hinckley in the '90s! I decided to take a leap and begin my own weekly classes. I was so excited when ten people showed up to the first class! Over the next six years I built that up to seven classes a week; the two main Worthing classes had fifty people attending each class! This also led to the creation of my fusion festival Bodies and Beats and monthly hafas.

Q How did you get to live in India for so long and learn Indian dance styles?

Originally I went to India for three months to teach dance and holistic therapies in a retreat centre. I never imagined this would turn into nine years! I had always wanted to learn Bharatanatyam (South Indian classical dance) so it was a perfect opportunity to immerse myself in the dance and culture whilst living and working there. As well as performing solo I managed, choreographed and performed with dancers from England who came for the winter seasons to work with me. I also had my own dance studio where I taught classes and hosted guest teachers. This was the beginning of my now well-known India retreats and the dream for my own retreat centre began.

"dream for my own retreat..."

Q What was your Indian dance training like?

In India or Asia, studying dance is not as simple as just turning up for a class and paying the money. These dance forms are

deeply spiritual and require total commitment. If you find the true teachers, they will not give this information away to just anyone, no matter what money you offer to pay them! It took me around two years of searching to find each of my teachers and each one was well worth the wait.

My experiences into being accepted by my dance teachers in India (Bharatanatyam, Osho, Sufi whirling and Gurdjieff dances), Nepal (Tantric Vajra Yogini dance) and Bali (Balinese dance) were pretty similar.

For a start they do not want to waste their time on a student who won't respect the dance and lineage, or put the effort into practising. You have to prove this to them. So a test begins... you arrange a meeting to discuss your studies. You arrive, they don't show up. You wait two or three hours. You call them. They tell you they can't meet today; can you be there tomorrow at 8am (even though it probably is the most difficult time to travel to them from where you live).

You arrive at 7.45am the next day. You wait until 10am, possibly after helping with some kind of household chore and taking part in a puja (prayers/blessing). Then they might tell you to come again the next day and the next day, or that class starts the next day at a time that suits them and there is no discussion about it and whether you might be free or not. You are expected to drop everything for your class. Sometime after your classes begin they become friendlier and will be open to more conversation and giving you gems of information. Patience is key! You will meet their family; they will meet yours. You assist them with their performances. They won't hide laughing at your mistakes, letting the neighbourhood watch you practise whilst all discussing you in a language you don't understand, making you study with six year olds or telling you to repeat movements until you literally fall over. You aren't given recorded music to dance to until you have proven you know the dance without it and can recite the rhythms/words. Thankfully for me I became firm friends with each of my

mentors and a mutual devotion developed as this was about an exchange of energy not just dance technique. I learnt a huge amount about discipline, cultural respect, dance embodiment, gauging a student's progress energetically and how to learn something so strictly and intrinsically that you know exactly how to break the rules for creating your own fusion dances.

Q How did you begin performing in India and who was it for?

My Indian performance story began like something from a romantic Bollywood film. I had been in India for six weeks when one sunset I was dancing (in normal clothes and no make-up) with some local drummers on the beach in Goa to promote my classes. A man who said he had been watching me whilst drinking a beer at a nearby beach shack approached me. He asked if I would perform at a wedding on his boat that weekend. I said: "Yes" not having any idea what life was about to open up for me. I went along, performed and got my first taste of a crazy Indian wedding. There was another events manager there, he asked me to perform in Mumbai the next week, I also did that and so the roller-coaster began and continued.

continued overleaf...

"patience is key..."



Photo:
© sarahselwood
iancartlidge

Many people don't realise that there are many tiers of shows in India and the entertainment industry is quite a slippery business. I had an extremely sharp learning curve during the first few months of performing there! I quickly had to learn who I did and didn't want to work with in the industry and I worked very hard to build and maintain my reputation. Word spread across the country and by the time I left I was 'on the books' of around two thousand events managers.

Billionaires booked me by personal request for house parties just because they could. I performed for high society: royalty, socialites, government ministers, the rich and famous of Bollywood, new money, old money, the armed forces. At their weddings, family parties, award ceremonies, with classical and fusion musicians, endless multi-national corporates from Sony Asia, to Moët Chandon, to MTV, Fashion TV, Google, Coca-Cola India, etc.

As a side note many people ask me why I didn't dance in Bollywood films. The simple answer is I had many opportunities, however I refuse to have sex with people to further my career.

Q Apart from the obvious differences in Middle Eastern and Indian dance styles, how would you describe the difference in feel of the dance styles?

I had studied belly dance for twelve years when I began learning Bharatanatyam. There were many reasons I wanted to learn this particular classical style, mainly because it is beautiful and challenging. I also knew that it would break me out of any physical body patterning I was developing due to years of being focussed on belly dancing. I felt a huge depth and authenticity in Indian classical dance, this was something I was desperately missing in belly dance. I realised that belly dance was being portrayed as feminine, yet was actually becoming more masculine. In Bharatanatyam, saw the reverence, love and humility students had for their teachers (gurus) and fellow class mates. The devotion to a simple prayer made before class or performing on stage and the lack of ego and competition was refreshing.

“extremely sharp learning curve...”



Something that struck me in my first Bharatanatyam lesson were these simple yet poignant rules...

Where the hand goes, the eyes follow
Where the eyes go, the heart follows
Where the heart goes the true essence of the dancer shines through'

Q What was it like living in Bali and learning dances there?

Bali is a stunningly beautiful place to live. Learning Balinese dance was a challenge mainly because of the structural positioning of the body as it is so different from belly dance and Bharatanatyam. It was like re-learning and finding yet more new muscles all over again. The dances have a different kind of rawness and edge to them. Religion in Bali is a combination of Hinduism, Islam and Animism and this comes through strongly in the dance and daily traditions there. With all my dance teachers there have been synchronistic

events in the way I found them. My Balinese teachers are husband and wife which was amazing because they taught me the masculine and feminine aspects of the dances simultaneously.

I was led to them one day when I was lost on my scooter and had an intuition to drive down a small lane. A man suddenly appeared asking: "Do you want to learn Balinese dance?" "Yes", I replied. He pointed to a nearby house telling me the most famous teachers in Ubud lived there. It turned out I had driven unknowingly to their house and their grandparents were two of the most renowned Balinese dancers of all time performing for the royal family and being muses for orientalist artists of the time!

Q When and how did Awakened Bellydance first emerge? What were your aims in offering these courses?

I have had a series of spiritual awakenings in my life. These began at age seven when my interest in ancient Egypt first sparked. In tandem to my dance studies, I have also studied various energy medicines and dance therapy. After my first kundalini awakening when I was twenty-eight it became obvious that I had a soul path in this life to 'do something healing' with belly dance. What that something was took me another eight years to discover, develop and master.

I wasn't sure where it was taking me, only that there was an inferno within me pushing me onwards to share what was activating in my body through the belly dance movements. My aim first and foremost is to bring women together in an authentic sisterhood of trust. Through

“do something healing...”



this their body begins to self-remember, release, heal and empower itself. Working with the movements, breath, brainwaves and music we can create alchemical transformation within ourselves. The true alchemy where *we become the gold*.

Q How has AwBd evolved over the years?

AwBd is a naturally organic, conscious process. As I and the other facilitators evolve, so AwBd evolves and vice versa. Personally I have found that the more willing I am to work on myself the more dynamic and arrow-like the process becomes. The key as a facilitator is in being willing to go fully into the process yourself. This then has a knock-on effect with all who are drawn to your sessions.

“go fully into the process yourself...”

Q Tell us about how you found your Sirius Centre in Bulgaria. It sounds like such a fascinating adventure! Does this feel like home now?

It certainly has been an adventure. It's the fourth country I've lived in and I am again learning about another culture, language and dances. Having Sirius as a retreat centre is really a dream coming true for me.

We have now been in Bulgaria for three years, after nine years in India and two years in Bali. My reasons for moving there feel quite magical. During meditations in Bali I kept seeing the same image of a white stone circle, a lake and mountains. After one and a half years I discovered it was Rila Mountains in Bulgaria. The stone circle was in fact people dressed in white taking part in a yearly festival of a sacred dance called Paneurhythmy. After some research and several dream visions about Peter Deunov (the man who created it in the 1900s), I decided Bulgaria was calling me. I moved there after never visiting before and of course began studying Paneurhythmy, Bulgarian folk dances and chalga dance.

There is an old legend that a being from Sirius is buried on Rila mountains, hence the name.

Q What are the aims of the Sirius Centre? What sort of courses are run there besides your own?

At Sirius we aim to share authentic, affordable, extraordinary teachings, trainings and cultural experiences not

often found on the tourist trail; whilst bringing like minds together and supporting local businesses. We host all kinds of courses and trainings, as well as tailor-made holistic holidays for solo travellers and families. We are a few minutes' walk from Kabakum beach and close to Varna town and airport. The space consists of four villas, a studio and swimming pool.

Q Looking back now over 25 years of dance and adventure, are there any specific events, realisations and learning that are special to you?

By absolutely trusting and following my heart I have always been in exactly the right place at exactly the right time.

Q What advice would you now tell your younger self of 25 years ago if you could?!

“Everyone is a reflection of an aspect of you.”

Q How are you combining your dancing with Steve Nobel's 'spiritual' courses? Going to Egypt must be so exciting.

I am super excited about this project. I have always known I would dance in Egypt in a spiritual context. I waited

twenty-five years for it to manifest (for me and Egypt to be ready for one another) and so here we are. Steve works with guided meditations whereas my work is mostly movement based, so we complement one another perfectly. There are little known ancient Egyptian teachings called 'The Nine Bodies of Light'. They form part of the AwBd theory.

There is a theory called morphic resonance from scientist Rupert Sheldrake, it is:

“the idea of mysterious telepathy-type interconnections between organisms and of collective memories within species. It enables memories to pass across both space and time from the past” and accounts for phantom limbs, how dogs know when their owners are coming home, and how people know when someone is staring at them.”

Steve and I are taking a group to Luxor where we will work with the energy of the temples, Gods and Goddesses

“always known I would dance in Egypt...”

through energy activations, AwBd and who knows, maybe access the morphic field of ancient Egypt.

Q What next: plans for dance teaching, AwBd, working with Steve, travelling... any surprises?????

I have developed a new facilitator training working with 'The Nine Bodies of Light' which forms a 'next steps' course in AwBd for those who wish to go deeper into integration and illuminate their being more brightly. Every year I am traveling and sharing more around the world. This year so far will take me to Lanzarote, Turkey, UK, Bulgaria, India and Germany. There is a new AwBd online course. My personal studies continue and I am currently deepening my shamanic work alongside my own self-care. I am also very lucky to be furthering my Sufi Whirling adventures with the amazing Ziya Azazi.

Thank you, Katie, for sharing so openly with readers of Mosaic magazine. I can see that you'll be inspiring many of them! I wish you all good fortune with your ventures.



Sirius Home-stay:
www.facebook.com/siriushomestay
www.awakenedbellydance.com

Is This Your First Time Teaching Online?

MADN update

With the recent coronavirus changing the way everyone thinks and operates, our regular classes may not be viable in real time with the teachers and students we dance with.

Taking our dance online may be a new venture for many of us. It may also be an opportunity that could help us in the future bringing groups together in new ways. When the snow and ice or travel prevents a physical class, the internet may be a solution bringing us together in adversity.

MADN Insurance covers us for online teaching.

Here are some tips to give you a headstart:

- 1 Give yourself extra time to set up the technology and leave a little more time in case there are any glitches along the way.
- 2 If your internet is not as steady as you might like and it is cable, consider plugging a computer directly into the cable port (ethernet). If you are using your phone find the best reception spot possible in your house and set it up so it stays in one place.
- 3 Create a space in your room suitable for dancing and test that you can be seen clearly. Either ask your students when they are online, or a screen where you can see yourself in a window alongside your students or reverse the screen to look at you (selfie mode).
- 4 Consider focusing on technique and decide whether you are going to use music or not. It may be helpful to practice technique or a routine without music then add the music.
- 5 Play the music on your side if you are teaching and expect a second or so delay in what you are watching from your students. If this is a one-to-one class play the music one side or the other, not both at the same time and remember the delay.
- 6 Have an awareness that other people may be nervous or their technology may have issues. To avoid stress, ask your students or teacher to say if the technology freezes, etc. and allow extra time for the class and unforeseen blips like this. This takes extra time, but you are not travelling to class so it is all relative.
- 7 Consider sending or asking for a video or written follow up of the class syllabus and routines danced so practice is easier at home.
- 8 Look at how other people teach successfully and learn from them.
- 9 Consider your forum. It may be helpful to use Skype or Zoom or video cam to carry out the dance session. There are companies like Powhow that could also be beneficial and may give you a long-term source of classes and revenue.
- 10 Teachers: prepare your lesson and call out your health and safety reminders. It may be helpful to teach, then watch as your students repeat so you can spot posture and technique as this may be different from you being in the same room.
- 11 Class payment can be done by Bacs, giving your sort code and account number for a direct payment is safe as this is just for the purposes of paying in. (We checked with our bank before doing this on the MADN website, but do talk to your bank if you have any questions.) You can also use PayPal or means of your choice. Value the virtual classroom.
- 12 Make time for chatting and enjoy a good laugh especially if you find everyone is more tense or serious. A fun warm up, making some silly noises or laughter yoga may help. Allow emotion to flow through the screen.
- 13 If the technology fails, take a moment and consider postponing, or make a group call and ask all to put their phones on loudspeaker and call the technique and routines people know well. Take notes and improve the experience next time.
- 14 Renew/join MADN Insurance for May when you update your membership and please fill out the GDPR form so we can update our teachers listings. Feel free to network on our Facebook page and website and help one another.
- 15 Enjoy the opportunity to try something new and think in a different way.

Photo: Clem Onojeghuo Photography on Unsplash

Happy Dancing!!

MADN Membership Application

Membership year: 1st May – 30th April and costs £25. For overseas members the cost is £35 for the year.

Please note you cannot be insured by MADN if you live abroad.

PLEASE NOTE THAT IF YOU ARE INSURED BY MADN YOU MUST KEEP UP YOUR MEMBERSHIP OTHERWISE YOUR INSURANCE WILL BE INVALID.

Your details (please print):

Name

Address

..... Postcode

Phone Email

Website Stage name

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS – please tick (✓) **UK:** £25 – one year ☐ **Overseas:** £35 – one year ☐

DANCE EXPERIENCE – please tick (✓) all that apply

Performer ☐ Student ☐ Teacher ☐ Event organiser ☐ Musician ☐ Trader ☐

GDPR Permissions and Sharing Information

Welcome to MADN

We operate with the understanding that, as a member, you have given us permission to use your data to manage your subscription and for membership related business.

We will never share your information with third parties apart from our printers to enable you to receive your magazine!

Where you have given MADN permission to use your image, you also have the right to withdraw consent.

At MADN we do all we can to ensure your data is safe and only shared on a need-to-know basis. We hold your information online on password protected computers and share it among committee members as is deemed appropriate for running the organisation smoothly. Where hard copy is necessary, this is

kept in a secure place and will be destroyed securely after seven years or as is appropriate.

You can request to know all information we hold on you at any time and we will produce this.

Teachers Insurance: MADN shares your insurance information with the brokers as is necessary to enable us to provide you with insurance.

You can opt out from any of the above at any time.

Note: we will endeavor to inform you should changes to the above occur.

With thanks for taking the time to read and answer the questions below.

GDPR Permissions

Teachers: Please state clearly the county and towns where you teach and include your teaching name if appropriate:

.....

Please let us know the following: Y for yes / N for no... keep it simple!

1. Do you want to be contacted by:
(please tick all that apply) email ☐ post ☐ phone ☐

2. If you would like your name to be on the
the useful links page Yes ☐ No ☐

3. If you would like your name to be on the
MADN BnB hub page Yes ☐ No ☐

4. What information do you want made publicly available?
(please tick all that apply)
phone ☐ mobile ☐ email ☐ website ☐ address ☐

We do not encourage personal emails as this may open you up to phishing, etc.

5. Any links you think would be of benefit to
our members? Yes ☐ No ☐
Please state

.....
.....

6. Do you want to be kept informed of MADN
updates and events? Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Should we have a newsletter, would you like
to subscribe to it? Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Are you happy to be contacted for
marketing purposes? Yes ☐ No ☐

9. Any other information you would like to share with us:
Please state
.....
.....

For teachers, your consent is needed for these:

10. Would you like your details included in the Teacher's Listing:

a) in Mosaic magazine* Yes ☐ No ☐
b) on MADN's website* Yes ☐ No ☐

* *please note that you must have insurance to be included on these lists*

PAYMENTS: cheques or postal orders should be made payable to MADN and sent to the address below.

You can also pay online by PayPal on our website: www.mosaicdancenetwork.org

This information is held on computer by MOSAIC, if you have any objection to this please tick the box ☐

We may occasionally disclose this information to other members of MOSAIC. If you have any objection to this please tick the box ☐

By post: Membership Secretary, 9 St. Helens Crescent, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 9HN

Email: membership@mosaicdancenetwork.org

For more information or to download this form visit: www.mosaicdancenetwork.org/membership
or email: membership@mosaicdancenetwork.org

Tenth Anniversary in Torquay

by Jan Piggott



I can't believe that it will be ten years this September since I first went to Torquay with my wonderful students. Conceived as a fun weekend of dance and friendship in a lovely hotel with leisure facilities and beauty salon, it has grown to be so much more. September is such a perfect month for dance as the ballrooms don't have the fierce heat of mid-summer but it's still warm enough to swim in the outdoor pool. Last year as we swam, sunbathed, danced and partied it felt like being abroad on the best holiday.

What have been my best memories? Honestly – there have been so many. Every Friday Teachers' Show & Saturday Student Show have been truly wonderful, often with real surprises. Beautiful classical Egyptian with Serena Ramzy; Galit Mersand's wonderful cabaret performance and yoga classes; Nawarra with her powerhouse performance plus rolling around the floor with her students; Sitara's amazing fanveils and wings; Ishtar with superb Egyptian and Bollywood; Maelle with her speed, power and athleticism; Sacha dancing Turkish beautifully whilst heavily pregnant; Stephi's elegant baladi; Heike and Elisa's stunning duet and Heike's dramatic solos; Kelley Beeston with Kalash Tribal showing strength and sisterhood; my fabulous friend Nikki Livermore with her fun drum solos with John Sleiman and her support always; Samantha Hough's lively skirt dance and sword duet with Layla; Ivor Disney's humour & audience connection; Poppy Maya's grace; Medea Mahdavi's elegant Persian; Liz Newman's angry Arab-Afro-Cuban fan dance (so unlike her smiley self); Afra al Kahira's fascinating

lecture; Charlotte's cat fusion; the fluid fusion grace of Alicia Giampieri; Astra's double Isis wings, beautiful baladi and lively Bollywood; Hazel Kayes making me cry with the grace and fluidity of her veil dance; Bonita not only standing in for Serena last year, but performing so wonderfully after such a long drive; 50s style tap-dance; mermaids; Elvis in the House; Thunderbirds; Game of Thrones; Barbie girl; contemporary and so many more. It's always special when the students perform with their teacher a dance that they've learnt that day. Astra's Bollywood, Katie Holland's welcome dance, Charlotte Burton generously bringing lots of costume pieces for her students to wear for her fusion performance come to mind.

The workshops have covered so many dance styles: Egyptian, Bollywood, Turkish, Moroccan, Nubian, Tribal ATS and Tribal Fusion, Bellynesian, Burlesque, Jazz, Samba, Latin, Props and more. I've probably forgotten to list some but if there's a good teacher and an unusual style, we aim to cover it.

Bittersweet memories of my lovely friend, Yvette, who always supported me, performed in her graceful style (I always thought of her as an English Samia Gamal), taught her never-to-be-forgotten Laughter workshop amongst others and compered the students show each year. I'll always miss her.

Lows – yes, there is a huge amount of organisation beforehand and I'm notoriously technophobic, but I do have a fab team of very efficient helpers during the weekend. There's also the stress and



worry that everything goes well and everyone is happy. Trying to prepare for the unexpected, being alert for any possible problems and providing solutions as well as finding time to catch up with friends and go to workshops myself. So far though, so good.

Partying in the cheesy hotel disco with many of us still in belly dance costumes and other groups of guests dressed as Captain Hook, Cruella de Ville, Cowboys and ballroom dancers. We all dance together in a random and surreal supergroup! Watching some of the girls racing across the children's pool in the early hours of the morning. Fashion shows, party games – two of the most fun were the Magic Flying Carpet relay (scooting across the floor sitting on a towel) and The Fastest Mummy (lots of toilet rolls used!)

The atmosphere of the weekend is the most important element to me. I love the friendliness & the way all the different groups integrate. This year we have been promised cake and fizz, so we can all toast to the next ten years. See you there!



Whirling Queens:

Neo(n) Dervish and the Mash-up Chapter or profound, reflective trance-dance?

by Eva Forrai: *Slow Tornado*

Whirling dervishes have always been a typical part of Middle Eastern culture. Recently, however, whirling has seen a tremendous popularity amongst females of many nationalities, establishing a practice that is bridging the gap between a very specific Sufi ritual (ultimately part of Sunni Islam) and a contemporary feel that combines meditation and self-expression.

In this short piece I will sketch a 'how did we get here' trajectory with the aim of celebrating female presence, power and creativity in the vein of 'stealing their skills'¹ whilst knowing full well that the topic raises many deeper issues about tradition, ritual, religion, culture, art and their diffusion and/or appropriation. What's innovation and progress and what's blatant misrepresentation, a wanton annexation of form divorced from understanding and respecting its origins? Perhaps some of these questions could be dealt with by further contributions at a later point. I'll briefly concentrate on instances that historically produced a certain 'decoupling' or distancing of the form: whirling from its specific devotional origins.

Of course, there are many other, more specific questions that I won't be broaching but are hugely relevant to the topic. Some examples are the place of Sufism and Sufi orders within Islam and in specific countries and their diaspora; Islam's relationship to art, music, their public performance, female participation in them and in public life in general. What I would note, however, is that these are relevant and complex issues but none of them have ever been static over time. And also that often their western perception is

rather different from their actual nature and role in the specific countries.

Traditionally a strictly male activity performed by members of the Turkish Mevlevi order as a religious ceremony, whirling became folk entertainment at Egyptian mawlid (saint's days) as tanoura – by cultural diffusion, due to the Ottoman rule and the prestigious place the order occupied within it. Although still often performed as folk art with religious undertones, it has become standard staple of entertainment shows as well (maybe comparable to gospel), with its high visual impact of props including LED lights and even fire. Those of you in the know are fully aware that tanoura is the kind of entertainment that is allowed during the month of Ramadan.

The Turkish Mevlevi sema (denotes the turning ceremony, literally 'audience'/'concert') itself saw some quite considerable changes. The enforced secularisation of Ata-Türk resulted in the sema-hanes (premises specifically used for the sema ceremony) being shut and public gathering of dervishes banned. The influence of the order that had been considerable in certain periods during the Ottoman Empire waned until the re-Islamisation of power in Turkey that now has an ambivalent relationship with Sufism, the Mevlevi order and its public image: the public semas. The Mevlevi sema became a 'protected' item on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list in 2007². The semas that are accessible to the wider,

non-devout public are NOT religious rituals performed by dervishes but shows imitating and often paraphrasing the sema. The notable exception is the annual pilgrimage to Konya at Sheb-i Aruz (the wedding day) of Rumi (the anniversary of his death), on the 17th December. There, you can see the full ceremony, with full live orchestra, performed by dervishes. Another place where the full sema is performed by initiated turners is the London Lodge of the Mevlevi order in Colet House, West London³.

The spread of Sufism to the West started with universal Sufism⁴ from the 1920s onwards. Then the Turkish, Pakistani and Arab diaspora throughout the century added to the diffusion and popularisation of Middle Eastern/Islamic art, culture and



Slow Tornado Tanoura

Photo: MarianPan

“high visual
impact...”



Slow Tornado Ederlezi

Photo: Agnes Molnár

thought amongst audiences. A mixture of curiosity, new age interests and solidarity all added to the heady mix that saw Rumi⁵ become the most popular poet in the USA and artists such as Ömer Tekbilek the Turkish-Canadian Mercan Dede⁶ (Grandpa Coral) develop into worldwide phenomena. Of course, there have been other Sufi musicians attaining global fame, such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, the Pakistani Qawwali vocalist, but he and Qawwali music represent an entirely different tradition.

Mercan Dede ('Dede', literally 'grandad', an elder or master within the Mevlevi order's language), on the other hand, clearly lays claim to the Mevlevi Sufi tradition by his choice of instrument, the ney, and by his adopted/artist name (his civilian name is Arkin Ilıcalı). He is, though, all about fusion, rework, innovation: he himself uses the sobriquet 'fusion monster'. He's extremely skilful at negotiating the tightrope act of being genuine, authentic, deep, authoritative (it's all in the name) and innovative, dynamic, subversive and of his time. Mercan has tremendous purchase on his art and managed to sell his typically diaspora art to Turkey and do several collaborations with the Ministry of Culture. It was in one of his large-scale Canadian gigs that a western audience perhaps saw a turner live in a western setting for the first time, and it was a female one. She appeared, clad in the traditional white of the Mevlevi order, with a single line of glowsticks at the bottom of her skirt: Mira Burke⁷. Perhaps the archetype of all female turners to come, their godmother, grandmother, nene.

Ziya Azazi⁸, one-time collaborator of Mercan and also part of the Turkish diaspora, is a name that by now is more or less synonymous with contemporary experimental whirling. As a contemporary dancer living in Vienna, he discovered whirling by the late 1990s and built his life work around it. Fame soon followed with his mesmerising piece 'Ember' which featured his flying skirt sporting flames at its edge. These flames of his flying skirt lit the cauldron of the 2012 London Paralympic games. He put in an even more iconic appearance the following year during the Gezi Park demonstrations, whirling half-naked with a gas-mask covering his face, associated with one of the slogans used by the demonstrators: 'Come, come, whoever you are', a phrase attributed to Rumi.

Ziya is another prodigal son of the diaspora who has gained popularity and recognition back in his native Turkey,

collaborating with prestigious orchestras and the Mevlevi dervishes themselves. He set up his teaching practice based on his DIP concept: dervish in progress within, and he's been giving short intensive workshops in whirling, passing his technique and thoughts on. His style can be characterised by turbo turning and turbo skirt work; extreme physicality and dynamism often performed half naked, to music that is markedly diverse with a penchant for some kind of artistic message.

These are hallmarks that are diametrical opposites of the traditional Sufi aesthetics. There are two significant points of intersection: the idea of trance and ascetism. He became a flying ambassador of the art form, traversing the globe many times over and gaining a huge following. The end of the decade saw him set up his two-year teaching programme, DIP TEP, run from the remote idyllic village of Hayit Bükü and its purpose-built domed studio.

Most of Ziya's students are female. His first year intake performed for International Women's Day in 2019 in Istanbul and his second year in-take is entirely female, devoted and fierce: 'The Whirling Queens'. These women are all ages, sizes and shapes: a true representation of woman power! By now, half their members are teaching and performing all over Europe:

*"physicality
and
dynamism..."*

Brussels, Izmir, Leipzig, London, Padua and Torino. No doubt, Amsterdam, Geneva, Istanbul, Nicosia, Rotterdam will follow.

However, the question is still open and unanswered: will a miracle happen and, in addition to acquiring and internalising the Azazi technique as individuals, will a female bond be forged that could show and express an entirely new meaning: that girls make the world whirl around.

Footnotes

- ¹ A concept known in many cultures (Japanese, Greek, etc) referring to a type of learning by the apprentice from the master by shadowing, copying and imitating rather than by explanation and instruction
- ² <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/mevlevi-sema-ceremony-00100>
- ³ <https://londonist.com/2011/08/interview-the-whirling-dervishes-of-west-london>
- ⁴ I avoid the expression 'neo-sufism' since it's used to a different, earlier 'reform' period in the 19th century in the academic literature, however, it is widely used for both universal Sufism and the new-age Sufi-inspired art of Mercan Dede and others. www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Sufism
- ⁵ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumi
- ⁶ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercan_Dede
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- ⁸ <https://www.ziyazazi.com/about-ziya/>

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DIP TEP Second Year

Identifying Instruments of the Middle East and Using Musicality in Your Dance

by Maureen Pemberton

Musical instruments

Middle Eastern musical instruments are as diverse as any other culture, and without them, dancers certainly couldn't dance! Let us look at some of the instruments and their characteristics

Percussion

The dumbec (doubbec, dumbek, dumbak) is a goblet-shaped drum, which gives Middle Eastern music its distinctive beat and rhythms. It is also called the darbuka in Turkish, and tabla in Egyptian Arabic. The Egyptian Hossam Ramzy was one of the best known tabla players ever. He travelled extensively on world tours and spread the knowledge of his instrument.

Playing on the dumbec requires three distinctive sounds: dum, tek and ka, played across the instrument. The following instruments, the tar and the riqq, also produce these sounds.

The riqq (riq or rik) is a small tambourine, traditionally covered in goatskin, and adorned with brass cymbals/zills around its edges

Zills is the Turkish word for finger cymbals played while dancing. Also known as 'sagat' in Arabic, they can play any rhythm that the dumbec, tar and riqq can, plus melodic and other rhythmic ornamentation.

The tar (also known as duf, daf or def) is like a huge tambourine, but without the zills on the edges.

Stringed instruments

The rebaba can vary in shape across the Middle East, Africa and Asia. It can be square or pear-shaped, with three strings. It is played with a bow, like a violin, with the fingers stopping or placing pressure on the strings.

The wooden saz is from the lute family and has a long neck and a round body. It is played in the same way as a guitar.

The oud is also from the lute family, but with a pear-shaped wooden body. The oud is plucked with a risha (Arabic for feather), and may have up to 13 strings of nylon, gut or steel. The neck has no fret, so it is ideal for maqams and quarter notes.

Strings are tuned in unison, usually five, with one string as bass string. The European lute is descended from the oud (al-oud) which means 'thin piece of wood', since this is what ouds are made of.

The kanoun/qanoun is a stringed instrument played flat, (a bit like a hammer dulcimer... without the hammers) which sounds similar to a harp. It is made of wood and fish skin with nylon chord strings that are plucked by the player. Metal keys are used to tune the chords. Turkish qanouns have up to eight metal keys, while Arabic ones have five.

Wind instruments

The ney – this is like a European flute

The kawala – similar to a ney, is also called a shalabeya.

The zumara (zummar) is a reed instrument and is rather like a double clarinet.

The mizmar – used a lot in saidi music and can be likened to an oboe.

The zurna – a horn instrument used in Turkish music and can be likened to a wooden trumpet.

A traditional Arabic ensemble (or 'takht', meaning bed) has four main instruments: oud, ney, qanoun and violin, with a percussion instrument, usually a riqq or a tabla or daf.

Western musical instruments are now very widespread in ME bands: accordion, piano, electronic piano, synthesizer. Guitar and electric guitar are also popular, often, like the accordion, altered to accommodate quarter tones. Violins, viola and cellos are often now used to play many classical pieces, including Umm Kulthum's work. As these are fretless instruments, they are superb for playing quarter tones and maqams.

Other instruments such as saxophones, trumpets, trombones and clarinets are very popular in Arab jazz and jazz fusion styles. Drum sets and electronica are increasingly popular for the modern Arabic pop music (Al Jeel).

Musicality: a dancer's interpretation of the instruments

A skilled belly dancer will aim to interpret the music, recognising these basic modes, says Bennett (2013):

Accordion: hip circles, figure of eights, level changes

Violin: arm moves, hand moves, upper body moves

Tabla/dumbec: hips, describing rhythm and accent. With drum solos, a dancer will fill in the drum work and melody with a mixture of figure of 8s, circles, travelling steps, shimmies, etc to keep a variety of vocabulary.

If one hears both ney and violin, then choose arm moves for the ney, and hips for the violin.

Oud, ney: upper body moves and arms

Qanoun: shimmies

As a rule, violin, accordion, saxophone and keyboards tend to reflect emotions, so develop emotional and lyrical responses or moves to these. The same goes for ney and oud.

ME music often uses a 'question and answer' phrasing, so a dancer may use a set of moves to describe the question which is represented by one instrument (for example, the violin) and answers with another set of movement (possibly the ney). Sometimes, the dancer may simply pause during the question section and dance to the answer.

Finally, when the whole orchestra plays with all instruments in unison (this called the 'lazzmah') the dancer uses travelling steps, spins and turns as well as the question and answer response feature.

“superb
for playing
quarter
tones...”

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An exploration of the Basis of Middle Eastern Music

with an introduction to Classical Music and the Muwashaha to expand a dancer's knowledge

by Maureen Pemberton

Introduction

This is an attempt to understand what creates the basis that enable Middle Eastern and fusion dancers to express themselves, and to help dancers appreciate the art forms of music and rhythms, enhancing his/her style. For the purposes of this article, I will include within the geography: Turkey, parts of the Balkans (where relevant to the Ottoman Empire), the Maghreb (Northern Africa from Morocco to Egypt, including the Sahara) parts of East Africa, Ethiopia and Somalia, Palestine, Israel, Iran, Iraq, the Gulf States, Saudi Arabia and Southern Arabia.

Middle Eastern (or oriental) music as it stands, invariably ancient. It is so rich, complex and sophisticated that this project cannot possibly do it justice, so I will attempt an outline, to get to grips with understanding it. We will explore what a maqam is, then go into the muwashaha and classical Arabic Music.

The Maqam or the base of Middle Eastern /Oriental music

Most musical forms have some form of a scale, out of which melodies are born. Middle Eastern music forms are no exception, except it is all in the detail with some significant differences to say, European or European-derived music. European music uses the scale base, with a specific key, with 12 notes on the scale (A, A sharp/B flat, B, C, C sharp/D flat, D, etc), with about seven notes used within a melody, Middle Eastern music uses a maqam (or maqamat – plural) which lets the musician know what the correct intervals are between the notes of the scale and which notes are emphasised. These intervals are usually a quarter tone, as well as half tones apart. What can sound like dissonance to Western ears, are actually extremely subtle differences in tone. So, the maqam has a system of a full

range of specific notes which can be played or improvised, using quarter tones, perhaps like a specific recipe. There are 24 clearly distinct maqamat, which have developed over thousands of years.

A maqam has specific notes/melodies, designed particularly for it. A maqam could have twice as many notes as a European/Western scale, with quarter tones and half tones. Shira comments it is difficult to play an Oriental melody on a western instrument, unless it has been re-tuned for that purpose. Maqamat tend not to use chords which are a uniquely European feature that arose out of church plainsong during the Middle Ages. Chords, however, occur in Western and Western-inspired music. So, the maqam forms the very basis of musical form and, within this, we have the whole range of musical style says Shira: classical, folk, Egyptian classical, pop music.

In Middle Eastern music, what happens is that one instrument will carry the melody, with another instrument taking that over

later, followed by other instruments taking turns. This gives the music some emotional texture and atmosphere as well as variety. For a belly dancer, given this styling of music and rhythm, it is important that they train their ear to express the music with appropriate movements.

Music, as we know, is not always for dancing. Islamic or religious music is not used for dance, says Shira. She adds that some classical music is not often used for dance. Dancers of raqs sharqi (dance of the east or belly dance) and choreographers such as Mahmood Reda, however, have performed/created performances with Egyptian classical music with its use of the oud (like the European lute) and qanoun,

continued overleaf...



Photo: Ricky Singh Photography on Unsplash



An Exploration continued...

Classical Arabic music and the Muwashaha

I will start briefly with the classical form/style of music. Shira says that this, also known as 'muwashaha' (singular) or muwashahat (plural), sometimes uses a 10/8 rhythm, known as sama'i rhythm. This form is best known in the 10th century Andalusian/Spanish love song *Lamma Bada Yata Thena*. To this day, it has been recorded by many artists such as The Brothers of the Baladi and Reda Darwesh.

Sama'i/sama'ii rhythm: dum (pause) ta (pause) dum dum tek (teka teka)
Emphasis on 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10

Lamma Bada Yata Thena:
When she begins to sway/Her beauty amazed me/ imprisoned me with a glance/she was a swaying branch that commanded me

The Muwashaha in more detail

Muwashaha evolved in the royal courts and under the patronage of the very wealthy in Arab Muslim cultures of the past. The rhythms of sama'i, dulab and dawr were employed by this style. The last two rhythms are relatively unknown in the West. Muwashaha was a form of poetry, spoken or sung to music, with typical instruments of oud and qanoun, as well as riqq and tabla. The muwashaha also has Egyptian/Syrian poetic forms, as well as a North African Andalusian /Nuba form. Many of these forms are music set to poems.

Oriental or raqs sharqi dancers are more likely to dance to this style. It is not so common, says Shira, as dancing to Golden Age classical music/songs (see Egyptian classical section) or pop music/ popular music (Al Jeel/Shaab). In terms of dancing to this form, one often relies on the fusion form developed by the

choreographer, Mahmoud Reda, during the 1980s, says Borek. No one knows what the original dances would have been like with these musical poetic forms. Reda introduced elegant, balletic dance forms, with spins, arabesques, and almost no torso movement at all. He used his imagination and the rich repertoire of movements and vocabulary that he had accumulated for many years.

While it is not essential to use Reda-esque vocabulary for dancing to this form, a dancer could use a fusion of Reda, plus modern Egyptian dance vocabulary. A dancer could even explore or research a reconstruction of Andalusian dance, which probably had elements of Berber, Arab and African dance vocabulary, but we shall never know.

Borek recommends watching some of the YouTube clips of the 1960s film, *Bayn al Qasayn* (Palace Walk) which shows a musical gathering or sahra of an entertainer/courtesan. In this, a sama'i rhythm is employed. The film, based on Naguib Mahfouz' novel, is set in early 20th century Cairo, then under Ottoman rule

Leila Mourad sings a muwashaha *Mala Al Kasat* in another film clip on YouTube (key word: Leila Mourad) with raqs sharqi/oriental dancers in bedlah (two-piece costumes). The film clip opens up with a set of drummers producing the sama'i rhythm dramatically and powerfully. These film clips could help inspire some dance ideas.

As a final note of information, another tradition of the muwashaha sprang from 19th century Egypt in the form of an Egyptian renaissance. We will go in more detail in the next section. It contributed to composer Sayyid Darwish (Egypt) producing music that preceded the long songs of Oum Kulthum and works of Abdul Wahab, the composer. Wahab composed many muwashahat in his early career, says Borek. To date, Syrian singer, Sabah Fakhri, is recording many a song under this tradition.

Egyptian classical or Golden Age style in more detail

Egyptian classical or Golden Age of the 1940s, was a beautiful fusion of Arabic sounds and Western influences. The

major composers/song writers, such as Mohammed Abdel Wahab and Farid Alatrash, had been educated by different types of musical genres from the East and West. These combined the muwashaha form and structure with contemporary and classical music forms from Europe, along with Egyptian folkloric styles. Mohammed Abdel Wahab composed the now classic favourites *Enta Omri*, *Cleopatra* and *Zeina*. Farid Alatrash was known for his compositions: *Gamal Gamel* and *Habena Me Alli We Oltelu*. These pieces of music have been used ever since then for raqs sharqi belly dance.

Some of these pieces had a format with a musical overture, vocals sung to a different set of melodies, a musical interlude, a repeat to the vocal and then musical overture. They often lasted from 15 minutes to an hour (in many ways a classical North African/Andalusian genre) and used the accordion, violin, nay, flute, qanoun, tabla and sagat. A lot of the music and songs were about past love, longing and regret, such as *Enta Omri* (You are my Life) or *Alf Leyla we Leyla* (A Thousand and one Nights), both sung by Oum Kulthum).

References

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Lots of nazars to keep us all from harm

Elemental Dance/Muscle Memory

Our bare feet on the ground, we
bend our knees
then twist our hips and begin to
move through planes
of air.
Our arms moving as through
water, gently. With fire
in our hearts,
hearing oud and drum we
dance.
We are a tribe of women who
move together as
one.
Now we are in small spaces,
there is no meeting,
yet we are joined one to another
like
paper chains
joining women
who through history danced
these patterns we make
upon the floor.
They danced in palaces, tents,

dark aromatic bars,
dusty squares,
the desert and the mountains.
We
remember them,
their tribulations,
their joys.
We are linked in
our stepping,
turning,
reaching,
spinning.
Arms aloft
we pause,
shimmy,
breathe,
our hearts remember we
are women,
the undefeated tribe.
We will meet again

© Francesca Danu

Review of Workshops with Galit Mersand and Casbah Cafe Showcase

by Hannah Newton

On a typically cold and grey morning in February, it was a pleasure to welcome Galit Mersand to Kidlington for the first time, for a day of workshops and Casbah Cafe Showcase in the evening. Let's just say the weather was the only ordinary thing about the day as the rest, especially Galit herself, was extraordinary! Everyone was greeted with a cuppa on arrival and a little gift as a thank you for coming.

Galit started the day, while energy and enthusiasm were in great supply, teaching a workshop on funky footwork. This also incorporated different footwork from other dance styles such as jazz and tango, giving a hint of extra spice to one's traditional belly dance steps and



Galit workshop attendees

providing tools to add variety to dancing while covering the stage with confidence and creativity.

The first workshop was followed by a lunch break where there was a massive buffet feast, included in the ticket price, as well as a top-up of tea/coffee refreshments. The lunchtime was also an ideal time for everyone to chat, network and make new friends, have a well earned rest as well as the opportunity to peruse the wonderful

sparkly goodies that Sandra from Zara's Zouk had brought with her.

After lunch, Galit continued to keep the fun and funkiness going with an Egyptian pop choreography, which we would have the chance to perform later in the hafla. Again this incorporated a basic choreography which was then given the 'Galit treatment', adding extra flourishes and personality. A lot of technique was also covered and the attendees were excited to share their extra performance piece in the show!

Suhana and Galit



Photo: Alan Long



Galit workshops

There was an afternoon break between the second workshop and the Casbah Cafe showcase starting, giving me and my dad a chance to transform the room into a hafla setting with tables and the attendees the chance to relax and do as they chose in a relaxed setting. The tables were set with nibbles, and each table for the assigned seating, was given a name, this time of different teachers that I have hosted over the years at the old venue.

The evening showcase was full of a wide range of dancers, groups, duets, soloists and a variety of styles and props with all kinds of music. From newbies to professionals, everyone was welcomed by the wonderfully supportive, if a little raucous, audience. The first section featured the hosts' troupe Queens of the Casbah who kicked off the show with the Casbah Cafe anthem – *Rock El Casbah* by Rachid Taha. The popular music continued with a shaabi performance from Alma, complete with jeans and light up trainers, dancing to the classic *Laa*, which sent the audience into a frenzy.

There were other more traditional performances from Nicky who danced her interpretation of a choreography created by the late Heather Burby – it was a lovely tribute to her – and from Suriaya Samarkand who shared her Afghan heritage with both her performances. Casbah Cafe regulars performed twice, one to *Zeina* with a gorgeous array of colourful costumes and later with a sultry and sassy dance to *Ya Rayeh*, plus there was a lovely performance to *Habibi Ya Eini* by Swindon Shimmyer soloist, Osmia. The latter part was filled with rhythm: a Khaleeji inspired drum solo from Charlotte Booth, a Moroccan tribal style from Iridescence, who then later in the show performed a fabulous 20s style jazz number, and finally ending with Galit closing with an oriental number which led into a dazzling drum solo!

The second section was just as colourful and enjoyable with another performance from Queens of the Casbah and a number of soloists, including Karen from local troupe Hathor, who performed a sassy saidi piece, originally choreographed by Zara Abdelrahman. Natalie from the Raq Sharqi Society

“a sultry and sassy dance...”



Zoe and Sari – happy dancers

school of dance, performed; Alyah a dancer on the Oxford and London scene who entertained with her fabulous fan veils and Sahara who came all the way from Bosnia yet again to learn and perform. Her performance was of guest star quality and she absolutely owned the stage with her dance to *Tamr Henna*. The workshop attendees who had learned a choreography from Galit earlier in the day were to close the second section and boy did they make Galit proud!

The third section continued to entertain with a lot of variety, including ITS Brutal Bellydance who took us to the dark side with their metal performance; some sultry shaabi from host Suhana; a sumptuous ooey-gooey baladi from Christine Warwick; a high energy shaabi number from Zoe and Sari, who had recently returned from Cairo – and you could tell since they brought the house down! Luckily the act to follow them was the inimitable and totally fabulous Galit, the teacher for the day and mega star performer – what a finale. Such a charismatic and sensual performance to

the Amina track *Biswish Alay* which was followed by one of Galit's 'greatest hits'... the incredible Coin Operated Boy, which was even more clever and humorous than I remembered. I recall seeing it once at Majma Dance Festival years ago in Glastonbury at the Teacher's showcase and I was blown away – never imagining about ten years down the line I would be hosting this wonderfully dynamic and oh so lovely dancer at one of my own little events – a dream come true for sure!

After the excitement of the finale, there was chance to have a social bop with friends, to have a last minute shopping spree at Zara's Zouk, have a drink and to grab a doggy bag for the way home... it was a truly magical end to a really rather spectacular day.

Hannah's Events is continued overleaf...

“a dream come true...”

I look forward to doing it all again soon. In fact I shall be, as I am hosting a number of workshop days and Casbah Cafe showcase haflas throughout the year.

So check out/like my Facebook page Suhana belly dancer or Casbah Cafe Showcase to be informed of further details or email me at suhanabellydancer@yahoo.co.uk.

Hope to see you at the next one, which will be 2nd May with Carmen Jones!

Algerian Dance Workshops with Leyla Hayat and Casbah Cafe Christmas Afternoon Hafla Review

by Hannah Newton

Following the success of the Leyla's festive visit to Kidlington to teach and perform at my 2018 Christmas hafla, it seemed only appropriate to fulfil the Christmas wishes of many a dancer and bring her back to Oxfordshire! And boy, did she deliver! Leyla is a teacher and performer based in London and her passion is sharing her Algerian heritage through dance. The workshops were held in the function room of Kidlington Green Social Club in rural Oxfordshire, which has good bus links to Oxford and Banbury and trains from London. Just as well, as dancers came from far and wide to learn something new! Buffet lunch and afternoon refreshments were included, as well as tea/coffee and a free gift on arrival. Kookie Kaftan brought along an enticing array of gorgeous goodies: costumes, hip-belts, separates, jewellery and props.

In the first workshop entitled Gasba Chaoui – Connect with Mother Earth, Leyla introduced the dancers to a new style – Chaoui, popular with the Berber population who live around the Aures Mountains in Algeria. The music contains poetic singing and rhythmic percussion, accompanied by a wooden flute called 'gasba'. Chaoui dance is a maternal dance and therefore mostly performed by women. The movements focus on the pelvic region which moves in time with



Photo: Peter Chaplin

the rhythm of the percussion. It is often danced in connection with fertility, birth and rites of passage. Leyla taught the signature movements of the pelvis. All the workshop attendees danced together in a circle, taking female sisterhood to a whole deeper level.

In the second workshop entitled Alaoui Style; Unity, Rhythm and Expression,

Leyla introduced the us to another style of Algerian dance, which is an Algerian ancestral warrior dance, traditionally danced with a lot of shoulder movements to the rhythm of percussion. Traditionally danced by men dancing side by side, stamping their feet to express their attachment to the land and showing their endurance, this was to symbolise unity and to intimidate the enemy. It used to be danced with a rifle but in the present day, the Alaoui rhythms have merged with modern songs and people (still mainly men) often dance it at weddings and other celebrations with a cane. Leyla taught the signature footwork and shoulder movements and we all danced together, either in a circle taking turns to lead under Leyla's kind and patient guidance or in lines opposite each other. I never knew that being a warrior was so much fun. I finished the workshop feeling totally kickass, empowered and a little bit knackered too!

After the second workshop there was quick chance to browse the Kookie Kaftan stall, whilst the room was swiftly transformed from workshop area into Casbah Cafe. The stage back drop had a festive flavour and there was even the opportunity to pose for photos by the fireplace scene, decorated for Christmas. There was also Emma Wheate Price's stall



Ozgen, Casbah Cafe, November 2019



Leyla workshop, November 2019 Alaoui

Photo: Kevin Newton



Alma, Christmas fairy



Leyla, Casbah Cafe, November 2019

Photo: Peter Chaplin

selling cute little gingerbread decorations that had been made to look like belly dancers, complete with brightly coloured hip-belts... perfect stocking fillers!

There was a variety of performances in the hafla: groups like the Swindon Shimmyers, who were temporarily named Santa's Shimmyers to fit in with the festive theme, decked out in beautiful red costumes adorned with white trim. Tattered Lace and Hazzaz glammed up in the festive spirit and Queens of the Casbah performed an attitude-filled skirt and fan dance. There was a number of soloists: locally like Sari, who performed a beautifully emotive piece to Raul Ferrando's *Yearning*, Aradia who performed a magical veil dance, Kay who was aflame with fiery fan-veils

and Karen Bullen who dazzled us with a ribbon fusion number.

Other soloists had come from further afield like Noelleen and Victoria from the Midlands, both of whom are creative and spellbinding performers; Samar and Victoria from London who are definitely ones to watch on the UK scene; Charlotte from Berkshire; Osmia from Swindon; Monika and even Sahara from Bosnia. There was such variety with some ATS tribal from Kay from local troupe Ashnah who performed a solo, and from Iridescence. We had some fusion pieces from Fulya and Amira and Tribeulations. Other standout performances, were Alma who opened the show with her amazing light up Isis wings – she looked like a beautiful Christmas fairy atop a tree; Suriaya of Samarkand; Kay and

Hannah's duet to the 2019 smash hit *Mafia*. Of course the highlight was Leyla, our teacher and guest star for the day who absolutely brought the house down with her passionate and empowered performances. Leyla's joy for dance comes from her soul and her smile says it all – it's totally infectious! We were all also treated to a special guest performance from our very own secret santa, Mr Ozgen, who flew in on his sleigh for a brief performance and he got everyone up dancing to Mariah Carey's *All I want for Christmas is You!* Before I got roped into dancing along, it brought a tear to my eye; it was just such a special sight, seeing everyone up dancing, having a jolly ol' festive time – it certainly was the best Christmas gift ever!

A New Year and a New Home for Casbah Cafe

by Hannah Newton

It was with some trepidation that I made the decision towards the end of last year to change venues for my Casbah Cafe events for 2020! I'd had a successful run of seven years hosting 29 workshop days with a variety of teachers and five years hosting 15 haflas at the same venue, Kidlington Green Social Club, which had it's own 'special' qualities. So it seemed a bit daunting to change... however, fortune favours the bold, and so bold I had to be...

I am delighted that the new venue is a lot bigger and brighter and absolutely ideal for such workshop days and hafla

nights. The new venue is Stratfield Brake Sports Ground, Frieze Way, Kidlington, OX5 1UP. It has a large hall area with plenty of space to dance in and a decent floor, kitchen facility, lift, licensed bar, changing areas (the first XIV Rugby team aren't included sadly) with lots of parking and lovely views over the rugby pitch and cricket ground!

Despite the extra space, the feel is still special and intimate and the vibe is warm and friendly from everyone involved: from me, the host, the bar staff

continued overleaf...



A New Year continued...

and duty managers, the visiting photographers and mainly the attendees. The ethos of 'enter as strangers, leave as friends' has remained the same and will continue to do so, with tea/coffee and free gift on arrival for workshop attendees, included buffet lunch and more tea/coffee, plus refreshments and biscuits after the workshops, before another included buffet at the hafla.

The audience at Casbah cafe is the best – such a supportive and encouraging crowd, whether you be a newbie to belly dance or semi-professional, everyone is given the same amount of love and courtesy!

It is a fabulous space and, as one Casbah Cafe regular, who had been to 12 of the other haflas, said to me: "I am pleased you've found us our new hafla home and I think we will all be very happy there".

So keep an eye out on the Casbah Cafe Showcase page on Facebook or contact Hannah Newton direct on suhanabellydancer@yahoo.co.uk to find out more about her next events and let us welcome you in to the Casbah Cafe family!

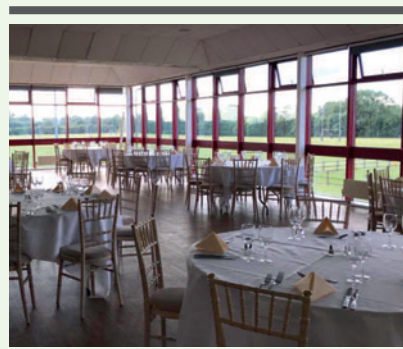
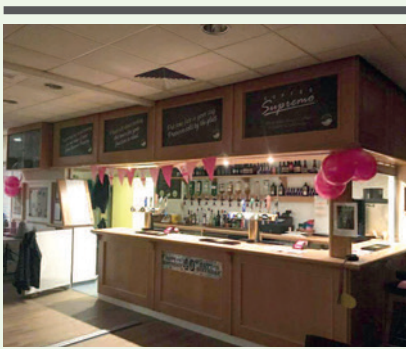


Photo: Alan Long

MOSAIC ARABIC DANCE NETWORK ADVERTISING

Mosaic magazine is issued three times a year:

❖ in April: deadline March 1st ❖ in August: deadline July 1st ❖ in December: deadline November 1st ❖

The earlier you submit your ad the better, to ensure that it will be included!

Advertising rates:

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Submissions of the same advertisement for three consecutive issues carry a 15% discount. (Except inserts.)

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Mosaic magazine covers a wide range of topics relevant to dancers at all levels of ability and experience. It offers information on different dance styles, classes, courses and music in this country and abroad. It includes articles, reviews and debate on issues that affect dancers directly. Many of the subscribers are teachers, who then disseminate information to their classes. So, your advertisement will reach a wide audience.

Please ensure that you submit a prepared advertisement as a word or text file with photos as jpegs or tifs at a minimum resolution of 300dpi. MADN will not compose your ad for you or amend it in any way.

So, please do proof read before you send!

Please send all submissions to The Editor: editor@mosaicdancenetwork.org
You'll receive an invoice, which tells you how to pay and also acts as your receipt.

Do get back to Ed if you have any queries.

Considering Catering for Your Hafla or Event?

MADN update

Introduce food relevant to your event, and you can keep costs low while providing a warm welcome. People love to eat: food helps everyone relax and socialise. Even if people bring their own food to your event you are responsible for ensuring it is safe and you are legally liable if something goes wrong. This is why some companies will not allow you to self-cater at their venue, because they are potentially liable and something going wrong could affect their reputation and their business. Don't be put off! If you own the responsibility of catering, you can ensure that good standards are maintained. Due diligence is key!



Venue kitchen: check that the venue you are using has a certified kitchen with a good hygiene rating (4 or 5 preferably). Make sure that you can cook on the premises, not all kitchens are suitable for cooking in for events. If you are unsure about anything, ask. You can take a City and Guilds basic level two certificate in Food Health and Hygiene in two or three hours and it is not expensive! Whether you are new to catering or need a refresher, it can be helpful to take a course (you can do it online now).

Personal hygiene: sure, we all know to wash our hands, but did you know that there is a twelve-step process recognised by the World Health Organisation for washing hands?! Personal hygiene is essential: clean clothes, tied up hair, clean person and hands, etc. If you are found guilty of causing food poisoning you can be jailed for two years max and receive an unlimited fine. You need to understand food law, hygiene, food-borne illness, hazards, food storage, temperature and control, and more. It is essential that all those handling food be trained

appropriately for the job. Be aware of HACCPs (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) this is basically a system to prevent things going wrong in food prep. It is systematic prevention of contamination from physical, biological and chemical hazards, ensuring that safe food is produced.

Contaminated food: there are a number of food-borne illnesses to be aware of: E. coli, Salmonella, Campylobacter, Clostridium Perfringens, Norovirus and Listeria, to name a few. Good food practice can prevent these taking hold: hand washing, ensuring food is cooked to the correct temperature, storing food correctly and using it in date to name a few safe practices. Be aware of contaminated food. Contaminants can be things, i.e. sequins, hair, metal, plastic. They can be cleaning products and also microbiological contaminants such as bacteria, mould and fungi. Be vigilant, check dates, cleanliness and spot potential hazards.

“be
vigilant...”

Hot and cold: keep your fridge cold at 4°C (39°F) or colder and your freezer -18°C. Heat food to a core temperature of 75°C unless you are in Scotland, where this is higher (82°C). Provided the food won't spoil, you can heat things to a higher temperature beyond this legal minimum. Enjoy stacking your fridge in a safe order. Like most things in the kitchen, it is common sense. Cover food and date label where possible.

On the top shelf store: ready-to-eat food like dairy products, cold meats, pre-packed butter and cream cakes. Then on the lowest shelf raw meat, preferably in a dish or well wrapped. This prevents cross contamination. If you have a domestic fridge, vegetables can be stored in the drawer below raw meat.

Alcohol: a license is required to serve and sell alcohol. If you do want alcohol at your event, you can get round this by letting people bring their own bottle. You also need a license to serve hot food between 11pm and 5am – probably not applicable!



Photo: Sebastian Coman Photography on Unsplash

Toilets and washing facilities: these are an invisible aspect of the venue for your event or hafla. They are massively important, though! The venue owner is responsible for providing enough clean toilets and sinks for attendees. It is still up to you, though, as event organiser, to check that they really are clean, with plentiful supplies of toilet paper, soap and towels. In the present climate of coronavirus fear, checking on hygiene is infinitely more urgent.

Don't be put off by rules and regulations, they are there to help. Prevention, common sense, good safety knowledge and a great menu is a recipe for success.



The Importance of Defining Your Dance: Part 4

by Ne-Kajira

In this last segment, we will finish exploring how the elements of definition apply to the various dance forms and also a brief look at why claiming your own dance form can lead to more performance opportunities.

Costuming

Costuming differs, or should show a difference. Costumes have a **function**: they enhance, complement or visually interpret the movements of the dance to the audience. Many **folk and folkloric** costumes have symbolic meaning and are used to express something about the people, village or region from which they originate. This is why dancers should always only wear traditional costumes when performing traditional dances. This is also why most dancers who perform folk and folkloric dance do a great deal of research and study to understand the people whose costumes and dances they are using: it is the respect for a culture and a people that is required. In folk and folkloric dance, even the movements can be performed in specific ways, so it is even more critical that a dancer be willing to study.

Though the bedlah is perceived as a Middle Eastern dance costume, **American danse orientale** dancers have adopted the bedlah as their costume, with significant differences that are not usually a feature of raks sharqi costuming. Since the late 1960s, the American danse orientale dancer has created in the audience an expectation that she will be wearing a beaded or coined two-piece costume

with a skirt, and will use a 3–4 yard veil that she also wears throughout the initial segment of the dance. She will have a bare midriff and usually be barefooted or wearing dance slippers or foot thongs on her feet. *I Dream of Jeannie* aside, this is the accepted and promoted image of American danse orientale.

Raks sharqi costuming runs a gamut of personal expression: focus is on the emotional appeal of the costume to the dancer and her own sense of self in the costume. At times, this can mean the costume is not ‘flattering’ in the eyes of the beholder, but this is not as important as the heart of the dancer. She wears what she likes and feels good in. Few old-timers can forget the trend for bicycle shorts or the fruit costumes. Yet what mattered to the dancer was that she liked it, and that included that sometimes a dancer might wear something that appeals to her sense of humour or whimsy. Many of the costumes are single piece beladi dresses. Sadly, with the rise of Russian-influenced ‘sexiness’ and the seemingly international trend for breast enlargements, some of the raks sharqi costumes have gone to great lengths to titillate the audience. This has included showing enlarged breasts dominating the visual, mixed with flashes of buttocks teasing the viewer. In my personal opinion, I hope this fad fades and the focus becomes the quality of the

dancer more than the quantity of her flesh.

In **1970s Tribal**, the costumes are elaborate, often more covered than other forms and are designed to evoke ‘tribal regalia’. They may or may not be ‘authentic’, but they are designed to create a tribal perception in the audience as well as complementing the dance movements and form. In most cases, the costuming focuses on a specific region, style or flavour.

In **1970s Fusion**, costuming differs widely depending on the music used and the theme, presentation or concept of the dance itself. A fusion dancer can wear a bedlah and ‘tribal’ costuming, and many cling to this tenaciously. It is also common to find lyrical dance costume types and fantasy costumes, even though the dances fused are related to, or have a foundation in, traditional or classical dance cousins. Footwear depends on the dance presented.

Synthesised Dance is the modern derivative of Fusion Dance. As more and more dancers move away from performing or identifying with traditional, classic or modern belly dance, and blend more and more unrelated dance forms together, the costumes are becoming even more creative and eye-catching. Footwear depends on the dance presented.

In **ATS and its variants**, the typical costume is a mix of clothing styles from Asia, the Near/Middle East, and North Africa. Some variants are bringing in gothic, steampunk, Victorian and other costuming elements that confirm the dance as being far removed from its originating root dance, leading to even more possibilities for costuming creativity. Dancers are often barefooted or wear dance slippers; much depends on the overall costuming.

The presentation on stage

Folkloric and folk dance was not developed to be a stage performance art. It was performed for festivals, celebrations, and village events such as weddings, births, celebrations and rituals



1970s Tribal evokes a village feel in an audience while retaining a regional flavour

‘heart of the dancer...’

‘costuming creativity...’



Folk/folkloric dances should be costumed appropriate to the dance and region, not performed in bedlah

of seasonal events. As such, traditional folkdance has a more random feel to it, and the music drives the individual, who responds in kind while still remaining under certain parameters of what is acceptable. However, these dances are now part of stage performance both within their native lands and outside, and the difference in presentation is notable. Some of the differences may include, but are not limited to, the movement pattern of a dance, how a dance is choreographed for stage versus how it is performed in a natural environment, and of course, the function, since stage dance by its nature becomes more 'entertainment' than functional experience.

In **raks sharqi**, the presentation on stage is more vertical than horizontal and is usually done by a soloist, though they might have background dancers performing also. The dancer may walk around the stage as she dances, but there are far fewer 'travelling movements' developed. While a number of walking movements are used, you will seldom see the traveling spins and leaps found in American belly dance. Part of this has been due to the original performance limitations of clubs from which raks sharqi developed.

In **Am/Cab (American belly dance, American danse orientale)**, the stage has become integrated into the range of dance movements. This is because Am/Cab became part of fairs, festivals and non-club related venues, resulting in

dancers finding themselves on large stages. Performing in a small square on a large stage is less satisfying for audiences used to 'the wide screen', so dancers created a range of travelling steps and spins, as well as choreographic sequences in troupe, to cover large areas. With good training, the dancer found herself able to adjust the length of her step, the style of spin and the coverage of a walking spin to accommodate the smaller space. This resulted in Am/Can dancers utilising more horizontal space as well as vertical space in their dances. In addition, Am/Cab started as a solo art, but has become a dance form compatible with group performances, all the dancers usually wearing the same costumes so that the focus is on the dance rather than any individual dancer.

In **Fusion** and **Synthesised** dance, the training from Am/Cab was integrated into movement development and choreographic concepts for troupe numbers. This meant that movement on stage can be a blend of vertical and horizontal movements depending on the skills of the dancer or choreographer, and which style she favours. Some dancers who have studied raks sharqi and moved into Synthesised tend to utilise more vertical space than both horizontal and vertical, but it works because their presentation is suited to the limitation. Both Fusion and Synthesised dance can be a solo art or a group dance. While solos remain mostly improvised (I have known soloists who choreograph their dances, but this detracts from the emotional essence found in the originating dance), group numbers have become more and more inventive and thematic stage shows were developed, leading to **Dance Theatre**.

In **ATS and its variants**, the typical group dance patterns – long diagonals, rotating circles, crossovers, etc - allow a wide range of stage use while also being easily adapted to smaller spaces by reducing the number of dancers in each choreography. This is accommodated by the limited movements in ATS and the repeated patterns. ATS can also be performed as a solo utilising the specific movements that make up the ATS style. I will again mention that the improv style of ATS is based on visual cues known by the dancers that help 'tell' each dancer what is coming next, well-practised and executed.

'focus is on the dance...'

Movements used and how they are executed

How the body creates movement differs in these dance forms. While all dance shares how movement is generated in the body, the presentation of that movement differs. In addition, emotional essence affects movement and its projection. The same movement in raks sharqi can look quite different when performed in American danse orientale, Fusion, Synthesised or ATS. *This is because of the internalisation of the movement in one form while it is external in most others. In addition, the use of space, body carriage and the technical execution of a movement can impact on its appearance.*

In **raks sharqi**, posture is relaxed and natural. The focus is on executing a movement authentically and completely. There is less concern over 'variety' of movement than there is of the skillful execution of each movement as it relates to the music and as the audience expects to see it. Remember that raks sharqi is in essence a folkloric dance, and as such already has established parameters and the audience already has expectations.

In **American danse orientale** and **Fusion**, the posture of the dancer is open but usually more controlled and upright than in raks sharqi. The dance occurs in both expanded horizontal space as well as vertical space, so there are many more movements that are combined with traveling steps. Movements from other related dance forms are integrated into the dance. Because the dancer has greater freedom, she can introduce new combinations and expansions on movements, and bring in theatrical elements that build on movement combinations. These forms also utilise levels more. Because Fusion has far fewer limits regarding function, movements can be expanded upon in new ways. Much will depend on whether the dance is solo or group.



When deciding upon the type of tribal costuming to wear, you have to examine the dance you will perform and which costume best suits the style, the movements and how you will use the stage

continued overleaf...



American Danse Orientale, also called American Cabaret (AmCab), or American Belly Dance, often utilises the bedlah combined with panels, 3–5 yard skirts, harem pants and a 3 yard circular or rectangle veil that is used in a 3–5 minute veil segment requiring great skill, a wide range of veil movements and yes, the zils are usually worn throughout the segment!

1970s Tribal dance does not offer as much variation of movement because the uniformity of the dancers has to be maintained. Dances must be choreographed (with the exception of solos) to evoke a 'tribal' feel, but can still rely on both horizontal and vertical movement. Tribal dances rely more on a group consciousness than on creativity of movement, much like in folkdance. The three levels are also utilised but not as often as in ADO, Fusion or Synthesised. It brings in theatrical presentation to a greater degree because its function – to re-create a 'village experience' for the audience and the dancers – requires a different emotional response from both parties

In **ATS**, there are fewer movements and movement variations. The carriage of the body, with torso more upright, shoulders more restricted, the head and neck held more still than in the other forms give an increased sense of movement restriction.

Part of the reason for these movement differences is tied in with the intent or function of the dance. Raks sharqi is an emotional exchange between the dancer and the audience; the other forms are designed mostly as entertainment art (Am/Cab comes closest to being like raks sharqi in this, due to the long association of Am/Cab with Arabic and Turkish audiences in clubs). While there can be an emotional element if the dancer is skilled, the **audience** is usually different. Most audiences watching Fusion, ATS and its variants, Synthesised or Dance Theatre are not well-versed in the music or the songs used if these are Arabic, Greek, Turkish, Egyptian or North African. Many western audiences do not have the same relationship with other music used (such as New Age, soundtrack, modern rock or pop, etc).

Finally, in terms of choreographic form and structure, there is a big separation of function.

Understanding *why* you are dancing and what you are trying to express and to *whom* is a big factor in intent, function and essence of any dance form.

Raks sharqi is an abstract dance form in that the purpose of the dancer is to embody the *feeling* within the *music* for the *audience*. In other derived dance forms such as **American danse orientale**, **Fusion** and **Synthesised**, *movement* takes

centre stage and the emotional response to the music within the dancer often takes a secondary position (or is not apparent at all) in the dance. There is seldom expectation of the audience having a shared emotional response to the music or dancer, outside of 'liking the performance'.

ATS and its

variants are quite different, as the function of the dance is not really towards the audience at all, but towards the *group*. It is, more than any of the other dance forms, a communal dance whose function is to create a sense of 'sisterhood' *within the dance group*. This is why there are limited movements, set patterns and a focus on group unity over variety or self-expression. Though more groups are performing ATS and variants as entertainment, the dance form itself retains an almost insular feel to it, with the group as the focus and the audience as peripheral to what the group is doing within itself, for itself.

Future opportunities through re-defining a dance style

Finally, and importantly, defining our dance – what we are doing – can often expand or limit opportunities for performance, as well as creating career opportunities from an art form.

'Belly dance' is too often seen in the west as a 'novelty' dance suitable for party pieces or fairground entertainment because we have made it less an art than something we do for exercise or a fun hobby. This is because of our own ignorance about the folkloric roots of the originating dance as well as the lack of our understanding of the dance itself. Another major reason is that we have too often chosen to allow shoddy training and low performance standards in our dance community to dominate under the pretense of 'kindness and inclusivity' for all dancers, no matter how ill-prepared for performance they are. I will repeat, often: there is a reason we have recitals, haflas, shows and full stage shows, and there are boundaries for who should be performing at them and what should be presented.

If we understand that public performances should be limited to



A cabaret costume using a tie-belt for quick changes during a stage show as well as being able to fit different hip sizes as needed

advanced professional level performers, and recitals and haflas are where less skilled dancers should 'cut their performing teeth', so to speak, we could see a rise in performance opportunities and careers in these dance forms.

First, instead of seeing this dance genre as a 'party piece' or 'novelty act', separating them out and perfecting each as a specialised art would create more teaching opportunities, just as happened in break dancing and hip hop, for instance. Lumping everything under the title 'belly dance' creates a confused mish-mash in the eyes and understanding of potential students (and it also indicates some abysmal ignorance on the part of too many teachers).

There is also a limited market for 'belly dance' as an art form or performance form. There are fewer club venues, restaurants hiring dancers and live bands to dance to. This has resulted in haflas being presented to the public, who are confusing them with shows. Remember that a hafla is an informal party. A show is a formal presentation of dance to an audience.

Fusion Dance in the past lent itself well to Dance Theatre and created entirely new audiences amongst people who were not necessarily interested in belly dance but were interested in dance theatre and its unlimited creative possibilities. Many touring groups and performance groups were able to earn a living from dancing. Sadly, as standards slipped, so, too, did interest in watching poorly prepared dancers – but this could be revived! Synthesised Dance and Fusion Dance could, if the dancers worked hard to reach an advanced or professional level, develop entirely new audiences willing to pay a fair fee to watch a professional, well-presented and conceived show. The challenge to dancers, teachers and troupes is to make the commitment to work hard and perfect movement technique, stagecraft and choreography skills, and not allow ego to hold standards back.

As I explore the differences between raks sharqi 'belly dance' and its inspired variants and sub-variants, I am more convinced than ever that dancers in these genres should embrace the differences, celebrate the root inspirations and move forward to develop new venues for their dance forms rather than cling to belly dance venues and performance

‘intent,
function and
essence...’

‘embrace
the root
inspirations...’

traditions. One of the benefits of the new dance forms is that they DO allow this and allow more freedom for venue development **if staged/presented and performed correctly.**

*Let me give a final example of the direction I hope you will decide **not** to take.* On a sunny day recently, another professional dancer and I were visiting a nearby town. I heard the tones of a piece of music I recognised and saw four dancers, all in bedlah and skimpy skirts (and one in a badly fitted bra that had several of us concerned!!!). One was obviously their teacher or 'troupe leader', the other three were students (at least, I hope they were not also teachers!). The costumes on the three were amateur at best, the dancing poorly presented and it was obviously not practised as much as should have been. The movement execution and technique needed much improvement and the professionalism in presentation was absent. Watching the women go out into the audience and try to get people up to dance with them was uncomfortable. I wondered why they had been encouraged to dance that day, since they were not ready for a public presentation. As dancer, I could not help but wonder what the objective of this was. The costumes were not appropriate for the time of day or the venue. To be honest, I

felt chagrined that the audience was not seeing this as a dance form, but as a novelty act that was a bit titillating. Watching them attempt to play the zils was also disturbing... these are musical instruments and should have added to, not detracted from, the performance.

Now, I realise that it has become unpopular for anyone to criticise someone who wants to dance. Let's be clear, though. *I and many others are **not** saying a person cannot/should not dance. We **ARE** saying, as people who invested long hours and years into our art and as people who danced under the judging eyes of outspoken experts in the genre, that there are **appropriate** venues and times to dance, depending on your abilities, skills, experience, training, dance level and understanding of what you are doing. Necessary points of good judgment and discernment need to be used regarding costuming, music use, impact on audience and who should be performing as a public representation of the art, and so on*

Every student, every dancer, every show, every event is an opportunity to promote the art as a legitimate art form or a disaster

‘unpopular for anyone to criticise...’

for the art, depending on what the audience sees.

What happens in the future is up to the students and dancers who are even now deciding whether to strive to become good dancers and invest in their training, improve movement technique, understand stagecraft, and focus on developing their skills through practice. All this would enable them to present a beautiful dance to new audiences and help create real careers in teaching and performance. Alternatively, if being seen as a novelty act is more important, they could spend money on a pretty costume so they can be seen on stage and not spend time and investment in good training or practice.

So there it is. One depends on your love of the art form itself, in whatever variant; the other on ego or a desire for fun and fitness. **Both have a place** – one on stage and public performance as representatives of dance, the other in recitals as students and at hafas as informal parties. Which will you choose?

Fini

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‘love of the art form...’

2020 EVENTS:

*free listings for members – send to
editor@mosaicdancenetwork.org*

Keep it brief: when/where/what's on/contact details

- ❖ **September 8th-15th:** Funoon Dance Camp, Taroudante, Morocco
www.facebook.com/events/s/funoon-dance-camp-taroudante-m/613471202815085
Contact Nawarra: Nawarradancer@yahoo.co.uk
- ❖ **September 18th-20th:** Victoria Hotel, Torquay
Jan's 10th Anniversary Bellyspa Weekend
Contact Jan: janbelly@hotmail.com and FB Jan's Torquay Bellyspa

be there or be square!

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Belly Dance and the Rhythm of Life

by Rosemary Le Fevre

The connection between rhythm and the brain is a fascinating subject. Studies show that music and rhythm can potentially heal trauma, prevent dementia and help in conditions such as Parkinson's Disease. It can help prevent 'sun-downing' which is when dementia sufferers get depressed and agitated in the late afternoon. It can generally help tackle depression and some mental illness by overriding or creating a new focus.

Rhythm can help

recalibrate the brain. Studies suggest that a possible key to unlocking and releasing trauma is through rhythm which can help regulate the primitive fight or flight parts of the brain.

*“recalibrate
the brain...”*

The practice of belly dance includes several parts of the brain. Music engages hearing and memory centres (hippocampus, frontal lobe). Belly dance has exciting and varied rhythms which can be expressed using the hands and feet. Tapping out rhythms involves the cerebellum. The movement of dance adds the caudate nucleus and the primary sensory and primary motor cortex to the list of brain areas affected. As steps, movements and sequences are learned and implemented, memory can be improved.

Dance is one of several things that helps the body produce the enzyme 'telomerase' which can help prevent telomeres (the DNA caps that protect linear chromosomes) from shortening, which they do in everyone with age.

When telomeres get too short, tissue cells are unable to regenerate and

eventually they perish. It is known that telomerase can slow down the shortening of telomeres.

Recent research suggests that telomerase may even be able to lengthen telomeres. This is potentially exciting news because this means that not only can ageing be slowed, but potentially reversed, at least to some extent. Belly dance also releases helpful hormones such as oxytocin (feel good) and endorphins which act like morphine, inhibiting pain and also make you feel elevated.

As the body ages it loses muscle tone; joints start to stiffen; strength, agility and suppleness decrease. Even the body's amazing capacity to regenerate almost every part, diminishes.

The body can literally start to wear out. Belly dancing through life can help ease these symptoms and even in some cases prevent them. **There is no age limit to dance and it can actively help prevent 'ageing'.** It helps ease the joints and keep the muscle tone needed to do everyday things such as walking, eating and even sitting. Belly dance is a wonderful way to move the body



as it works with the body's inbuilt inclination, unlike a number of other dance styles (wonderful in their own right) which work counter to the way the body does naturally.

Arthritis and spinal degeneration are common symptoms of ageing. Belly dance is a load-bearing exercise and can help increase bone density and prevent osteoarthritis. Even seated, it helps gently lubricate the joints and ease them into action. Elderly people often sit for long stretches of time and, like anyone at any age, this can

exacerbate aches and pains and cause stiffness. Unlike some more conventional movement practices which can be more linear, belly dance ranges through a series of linear and circular movements. Belly dance can ease pain and physical stress. By moving the whole body including the limbs and spine, it can release built-up of tension.

It is not just physical tension that is released. Belly dance and music can help with mental health and ease depression and anxiety. Familiar music can bring back memories, improve cognitive capacity and recall the body to dance as it used to. Unfamiliar music can equally be beneficial as it requires the brain to process something new and stimulates engagement. For some, belly dance and its accompanying music may be unfamiliar

*“ease
pain and
physical
stress...”*



Rosemary in pink!

at first, but if you have regular sessions with the same group it will become part of their memory, short and long term, and thus part of their experience.

Even the bedridden can benefit through gentle and, if needed, assisted movement. Circles and figures of eights, arm and some leg movements can work well with the support of a floor or firm bed. It may be essential to have two people at least to support safe movement or even lifting. For the very ill or frail, listening and watching may be enough to help stimulation and healing, even these are forms of exercise and not to be underestimated. Don't assume incapacity is total; some people see and hear far beyond their physical capability.

On this note, just because one part of the body fails to work, it doesn't mean that all things also don't work. Dysphasia is a prime example. A person can be very intelligent, can hear perfectly with no loss of understanding, yet their words come out as a complete scramble of lucid phrases and gibberish. Currently it is thought there is no cure. But we know from research that different rhythms and sounds stimulate different parts of the brain and that neural pathways can be created. Could crossed wires in the brain be bypassed to create a new mode of function?

Belly dance and rhythm is an area that could do with more research in relation to age and the brain. Science is still searching for answers to so many questions. The ageing population is set to increase and the need to study this area has probably never been as necessary or as available to scrutiny as it is now. Belly dance has no age limit, for even the physically incapable can hear, see or feel the dance. There are possibly more belly dancers in the realms of the elderly than ever. So what better time than now to bring belly dance and related exercise to this demographic.

The emotional aspects of belly dance must not be forgotten! As well as actual chemical changes that occur as you dance that benefit mood and outlook, the very act of tying on a sparkly hip-belt cheers the little girl in you who loves to dress up. Dancing is a form of play... and how often do adults just play for the delight of it? What a life-affirming hobby! If you set yourself goals to make particular gains, it gives purpose and structure to the dance, feeding your self-esteem as you progress. Dancing with like-minded others is a

*“belly dance
has no age
limit...”*

great way to socialise. Positive group energy is known to be very beneficial. Remember the wonderful Yvette Cowles and her Dance Yourself Happy classes. An atmosphere of acceptance, shared activity and common goals fosters supportive actions. All age groups can mix while dancing, giving a common bond between generations. Friendships may well grow within the group that then extend beyond the dance class. So dancing, in turn, enriches and nurtures the rhythms of everyday life.

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Spring 2020

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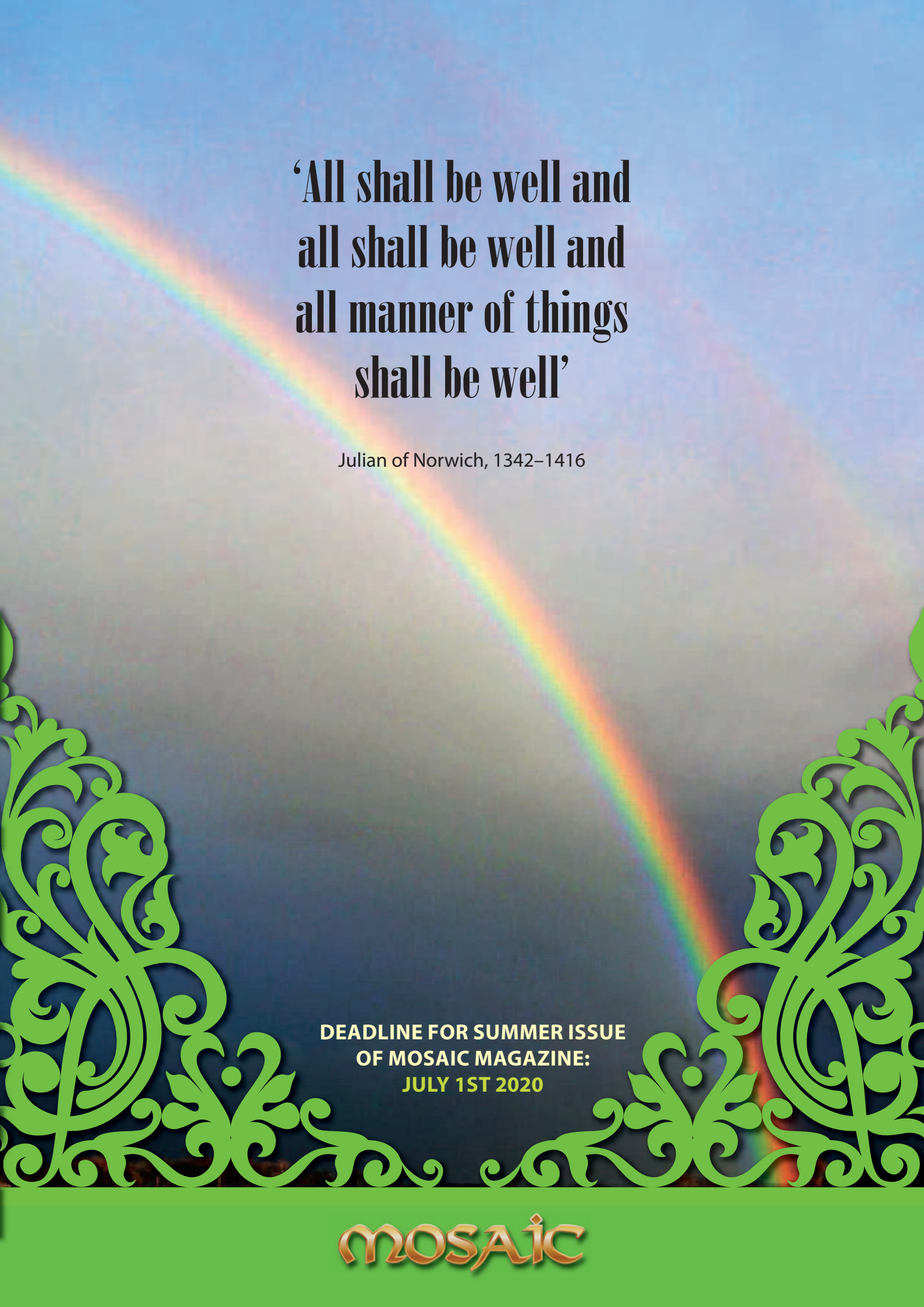
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**‘All shall be well and
all shall be well and
all manner of things
shall be well’**

Julian of Norwich, 1342–1416

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