

2008 Quotes

Jawaahir Dance Company

Date: March 2008

Source: MinnPost, website

Writer: Camille LeFevre

Review: Girls Night Out-In: A Look Behind the Screens

At the same time, she says, "People have an impression that women don't celebrate in the Middle East. They're always absent from public spaces and from many dance companies, so you don't see the women's dances. Being able to see what women are like in their everyday life, how they celebrate, and how they value their lives, is as important as the political side."

Hence "Girls' Night IN" offers a rare view of Arabic women relaxed, creative and at play as "tourists are never invited to a women's party," Shore says. Drawing on Persian Gulf styles of music and dance, the choreography includes what Western audiences typically consider belly dancing (and which Shore teaches in her school): traditional, Egyptian-style women's dance.

See a dance sample from a different work, "Halaa," [here](#).

But because Shore has studied folkloric styles from different regions of North Africa and the Middle East, expect a variety of music, costuming and movement. While each area of the Middle East has its own palette of movements, she says, all are based on rhythmic isolations.

The all-women professional group, al Hareem Orchestra, provides the traditional music, while a deejay will spin more contemporary tunes. Clips from MTV, along with Arab rap, hip hop and jazz broadcast in Dubai, will be projected on the Southern Theater's back wall. "This is a modern party," Shore says, "and the Arabic world has been influenced by MTV like everywhere else."

"When Arabic women get together in a safe, female-only environment, their creative energies flow, and they find new forms and styles," she adds. At the same time, "my fascination with this dance form has always led back to its musicality. The music is very close to the roots of why people dance, which is to express their emotion, joy and the fact that they're alive on this earth."

Yesterday's performance was a success. Everyone enjoyed it. A tent was set up for us to change in and we performed outdoors in the basketball/volleyball court. We couldn't have asked for a more splendid evening. The weather was fantastic! We had lots of participation! By the end of the performance, the kids were improvising their own debke steps and combining them with snake arms, hip twists and shoulder shimmies. It became a truly fabulous, though unconventional and eclectic, dance party. As we changed back into our regular clothes and left the camp grounds, we could still hear kids zaghareeting.

Nadilia, Jawaahir Dance Company member
After show at Camp Eden Wood, a day camp for people with developmental disabilities
July 2008

Everyone did a spectacular job. Thanks SO VERY MUCH!!!

Marianne Kreitlow
Entertainment Director, MN Garlic Festival '08

I really enjoyed "Girls Night IN/Out" at the Southern last weekend. I went to the Saturday performance and really enjoyed the live music, dancing to traditional and contemporary songs, and sampling the sweets too! BRAVO!

Nicole

Nicole Buchholz
Education Associate
Young Audiences of Minnesota

The Cassandra School

I was literally HOOKED after my very first class. I would try to get to class early so I could stand right behind her so I could follow what she did - sometimes this worked well, others...mmmm, not always so well ;-)) but I never felt discouraged, only more inspired and determined to learn. The dance just felt natural and right to me. I loved everything about it, Cassandra's teaching of course (she has a wicked sense of humor), the music, the way it makes you feel - everything. It's amazing how one small decision can really impact your life. Now, many years later, I make my living solely from teaching and performing Middle Eastern Dance, I've been to Egypt to study twice, I travel the country studying, performing and teaching - I wouldn't be doing or have done any of that if Cassandra had not started the Cassandra School!!!! I can never say or express how fortunate we are to have her here in the Twin Cities. We would not have the community we have here if it weren't for her and her vision of this amazing art form. - Aliyah Sahar (Leslie)

Cassandra

She blew us away at the Arab Dance Seminar last weekend.

Her performance was. just. amazing. Absolutely everything she did was the exact perfect thing: exactly what it took to help you hear the music through her ears and feel exactly what she was feeling, without the slightest bit of "extra" to distract you from it.

I think her taqsim was one of the simplest I've ever seen, in the most wonderful way. It was like a Japanese flower arrangement: what she could do with just a few movements was more eloquent than what another dancer could do with many.

There was no hint of "look at me!" or "be impressed by all the things I'm layering!" in her performance. What she did took incredible precision and control, but you didn't realize it until afterward. While you were watching, all that you really noticed was how *exquisite* every moment was and how privileged you felt to just watch her raise her arms.

I have got a massive artistic crush.

If any of you are in the Minneapolis area, run run run to her dance school.

Nadira Jamal
October 2008

I am writing to encourage advanced/professional belly dancers in the Seattle area to attend Cassandra's Master workshop.

Cassandra is a true master of Middle Eastern Dance. She has an incredible understanding of this art form as an anthropologist, a musician, and a dancer.

Cassandra is unsurpassed at creating dance that fully embraces the music to which it is performed. I have seen her be amazingly complex and intricate, as when performing to a classical oriental song, and then wonderfully relaxed and playful for a folkloric piece. Her musicality is incredible: Cassandra understands Arabic music as a musician and it is clear that it moves her soul. She uses her wide Middle Eastern dance repertoire to pull out many layers and subtle nuances in the music. She is spellbinding to watch.

Her performances not only awe with her incredible talent as a dancer, but also demonstrate that she is a master at staging. When she puts her technique, musicality, and staging together with her passion and soul, Cassandra's performances transcend into the world of true artistry.

Cassandra is an inspiring teacher. My experiences in her classes have always been rewarding, no matter what level the class was intended for. Though Cassandra is down-to-earth and patient, her teaching style is very demanding. A master class with Cassandra is guaranteed to challenge any advanced or professional dancer. Cassandra turns her students into internationally-known performing artists. I highly recommend studying with her whenever possible.

September 30, 2008
Audrey LaRue (professional dancer from Seattle)