



## Biography: Artistic Director, Cassandra Shore

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Cassandra Shore began performing Middle Eastern dance in 1975, as a student of Jamila Salimpour, and quickly became one of the most popular and respected performers in the San Francisco Bay area. Her intensity, musicality and technique set her apart from the average performer. Cassandra brings to dance lyrical grace, musical focus, and a sensuous quality of movement that brings mere technique to life.

Cassandra relocated to Minneapolis Minnesota in 1977 for performing opportunities. She opened the Cassandra School in 1978, in response to numerous requests for classes from women who saw her nightclub performances and were inspired to learn. In 1980 she was able to obtain some early videotapes of Egyptian soloist and folklore group performances, and recognizing their expertise and knowledge, she traveled to Egypt on her first research trip in 1981. She has since returned over a dozen times for dance and cultural research, as well as exploring virtually all North African countries as well as Turkey and Greece in her search for cultural understanding, authentic techniques, and inspiration.

Ms. Shore's dance background prior to her focus on Middle Eastern dance was primarily in the Wigman and Graham styles of Modern dance. Her modern dance education contributed heavily to her unique vision of Middle Eastern dance and innovative ways to use it in choreography. She has also studied Jazz, Flamenco and Tai Chi Ch'uan. She continues to study other dance, not as a formal study, but for her essential continuing education and inspiration.

Cassandra is a student of the finest teachers and choreographers the Middle East and the USA has to offer. This list includes Mahmoud Reda, director of the Reda Group, Cairo, Egypt, and former Under Secretary of Culture; Mohammed Khalil, director of the National Folklore Group of Egypt; Vivian Hamamjian, former member of the Caracalla Ballet, Beirut; Ragia Hassan, choreographer to Egypt's top dance stars and former member of the Reda Group; Ibrahim Farrah, director of the Near Eastern Ensemble, NYC, the first professional US performing company in Middle Eastern dance. Those are but a few names from a stellar list. Most importantly,

she has continued to work at her craft and seek knowledge wherever available.

Cassandra realized the artistic limits of the nightclub stage, seeking out theatrical venues for her emerging and unique choreographic ideas. Influenced and encouraged by the great choreographers and teachers in her field who were putting their work on the stage, Cassandra formed "ad hoc" performing groups of students, for performances. In 1989 she held auditions to form Jawaahir Dance Company in order to be able to have a repertory of traditional, modern and fusion works of Middle Eastern and contemporary dance.

Through her dedication, devotion and discipline, Cassandra has earned worldwide acclaim from the masters in the field as a master teacher, star performer, and creative artist in the field of Middle Eastern dance. Her work has been rewarded with grants, commissions and awards. She offers workshops, intensives, concerts and master classes worldwide. She was honored in 1996 to be chosen to be the only non-Arab dancer to perform at the *Maharajan al-Fan*, the annual festival of Arabic arts held in New York City and the Brooklyn Museum. She performed new choreography based on the legend of Majnoon Leyla set to contemporary Palestinian composer Simon Shaheen's *Sama'i Kurd Shaheen*.

Cassandra teaches and performs regularly in worldwide locations such as Helsinki; Los Angeles; London; Houston; Cologne and Düsseldorf, Germany; Vienna, Austria; New York City; New Zealand; Morocco; Miami, FL.; and more too numerous to list.

Cassandra is the mainstay at three residential "dance camps" held yearly in the US. First established in 1985 in Traverse City, Michigan, the camp has expanded to locations in Washington, Florida, Morocco and New Zealand, through the efforts of its directors, Mary Lynn Buss and Jean Courter. The Cassandra School offers 28 classes a week in Minneapolis, Bloomington and St. Paul, from beginning to professional levels in technique, choreography, performance skills, dance conditioning, and Arabic language and culture studies.