

Presenting the "Jewels" of Traditional and Contemporary Middle Eastern Dance



## **Company Biographies**



Peg Deppe (Leyla al-Qamar) first danced with Jawaahir from 1996–2000, then left the company to obtain an MS in textile history with a focus on Medieval Egyptian embroidery. She is currently pursuing a PhD in dress ethnography from the University of Minnesota. A student of Cassandra's

since 1988 and finding her passion for dance rejuvenated in Morocco, she returned to Jawaahir in 2007.



Eileen Goren (Risha) has many years of training in modern, ballet, jazz, tap, international folk dance, ballroom, and Savoystyle Lindy Hop. She discovered Middle Eastern dance in 1987, and joined Jawaahir at its inception in 1989.



Shari Jeziorski (Shari) has explored various dance forms since childhood. She joined Jawaahir Dance Company in 2005 and teaches at the Cassandra School. Shari has a BA in Education and is currently working towards her Masters degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine.



Sarah Jones-Larson (Toha) performed as a child with Philadelphia's Ballet Des Jeunes and New York's Ecos De Espana. Locally, she performed with Zorongo Flamenco and Theatre de la Jeune Lune before joining Jawaahir in 1994. In May, 2007, Sarah returned to Jawaahir

after a year in Philadelphia hosting a radio program on WJJZ. In Philadelphia, she danced with Habiba's ensemble.



Theresa Kane (Theresa) began studying Middle Eastern dance in 1998 after attending a performance of *Shoma* and being struck by the beauty of the movements. She performs regularly as a soloist, teaches, and continues to study extensively with Cassandra as well as dance instructors from around

the world. She joined Jawaahir in 2004.



Kathy McCurdy (Naima) studied ballet, jazz, tap, and modern before discovering Middle Eastern dance. She studied with Tara Auringer in Madison, WI and Dahlena in Chicago, IL before moving to Minneapolis to study with Cassandra.

She is a founding member of Jawaahir, teaches at The Cassandra School, and is the general manager of Jawaahir.



Tina Nagy (Tina) began studying Middle Eastern dance in 1995 and joined Jawaahir in 2000. Since then, she has also become a student of aerial/circus arts and looks for creative ways to integrate her passion for both. She performs regularly in the metro area.



Jenny Piper (Jemora) began her dance career in ballet, contemporary, and pointe at the age of seven. She has studied Middle Eastern dance since 1995, becoming a member of Jawaahir in 2000. She now performs locally, tours with

Jawaahir, and teaches at The Cassandra School in St. Paul.



Helen Voelker (Elena) has been a member of Jawaahir since 1990. She has performed with the Nancy Hauser Dance Company and the Continental Dance Theatre. Helen is a medical researcher at the University of Minnesota.



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## listen With your whole body

## **Apprentice Biographies**



Tamara Borchardt (Samira) studied gymnastics as a child and performed regularly in musical theater productions throughout high school While working as a street vendor at the Minnesota Renaissance Festival in 1993, a friend suggested she take belly dance lessons. Tamara became a Jawaahir

apprentice in 2004.



Tatyana Butkova (Tatyana) started studying Middle Eastern Dance while visiting her home city of Minsk, Belarus in 2002. In 2004 she started classes at The Cassandra School and fell in love with spectacular performances by Jawaahir Dance Company. Tatyana performs at

the Guild of Oriental Dance Festivals, Pratt Haflas, and the Renaissance Festival.



Laura Crocker (*Laura*) was lucky enough to wander into her first Middle Eastern dance class with Cassandra while studying linguistics at the University of Minnesota. She was immediately captivated by the music and movements of the dance, and found that the interplay between the two

was her new favorite language Laura has been involved in dance and music in many different ways since childhood. She began studying Middle Eastern dance in 2005 and became an apprentice with Jawaahir in 2007.



Nadilia Gomez (Nadilia) started dance classes at the age of six. She has taken ballet, modern, folkloric, and Latin dance classes, as well as theater classes, from several instructors from around the world. She took her first Middle Eastern dance class in 2004 and became a Jawaahir apprentice in 2006.



Renee Szudy (Renee) began studying under Cassandra in 1996 and became an apprentice with Jawaahir in 2006. She was drawn to Middle Eastern dance after attending the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) where she saw Arabic women perform social dances. Renee

has a 12-year background in gymnastics.



Heidi Waldron (Zahirah) began dancing with Nadia Sahar in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1995. After relocating to Minneapolis in 1998, she continued her studies at the Cassandra School. In 2004 she became a Jawaahir apprentice. Heidi

currently performs at several Twin Cities restaurants and is an active member of the Guild of Oriental Dance.



Rebecca Wandrei (Rebecca) started taking dance classes when she was 11 and has studied ballet, tap, jazz, modern, ballroom, and Latin. In 2002, she began studying at the Cassandra School, and became an apprentice with Jawaahir in 2006.

Rebecca is also a teacher-naturalist at a nature-based preschool.



Jenna Washnieski (Jenna) began studying Middle Eastern dance in 2003 at The Cassandra School. She never passes an opportunity to learn new types of dance and has dabbled in jazz, hip-hop and salsa.