

Currently Available Workshop Topics

Belly Dance with Nisaa

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Important Notes:

- By request, some workshops can be adjusted to shorter or longer time frames.
- By request, some workshops can be tailored to specific skill levels.
- Nisaa can also provide choreography workshops. Please contact with specific requests.

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Lectures Nisaa can provide lectures on a variety of cultural and historical topics related to Egyptian dance, including the *awalim*, the *ghawazi*, the emergence and early development of *raqs sharqi*, the evolution of the Egyptian belly dance costume, and more. Please contact with specific requests!

Aesthetic Essentials of Egyptian Belly Dance Egyptian belly dance is more than just a collection of movements. The movements of the dance are embedded within an aesthetic framework that informs all aspects of the dance, from posture and alignment to the interplay between dancer and music. In this intensive workshop, join Nisaa for a deep dive into this less tangible, but no less important, side of Egyptian belly dance. Go beyond the basics of belly dance posture to explore aesthetic aspects of body carriage and movement in Egyptian belly dance, such as low center orientation and the balance between internal versus external focus, and how these aspects inform how the body inhabits and moves through space. Go beyond the mechanics of the movements to explore the aesthetic aspects of how movements are executed and embellished. Discover why layering is about more than just showy technique, and dispel the myth that belly dance is all about isolations. Lastly, go beyond your basic rhythm CD. Explore how Egyptian belly dance manifests the fundamental aesthetic features of the Arabic musical tradition: not just rhythms, but how melodies are structured, why improvisation matters, and much more.

Format: Dance

Length: Four Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Arabic Music 101 Music is the heart and soul of belly dance, so it's important for dancers to have a working understanding of Arabic music. Through a combination of lecture and listening exercises, Nisaa provides a concise introduction to the basics of Arabic music for dancers. Non-musicians need not be intimidated! In this workshop, you'll receive a general introduction to the core elements that set Arabic music apart from other musical traditions. You'll learn to identify by sound and sight some traditional Arabic musical instruments. And, you'll have the chance to explore different styles within the Arabic musical tradition.

Format: Lecture

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

Arabic Music 102 In this follow-up to Arabic Music 101, you'll have the opportunity to apply what you've learned about the core elements of Arabic music. Through a combination of listening exercises and dance practice, Nisaa reviews the basics of Arabic music for dancers and guides you through a dance exploration of different styles within the Arabic musical tradition.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

Baladi Basics The dance known in the West as "belly dance" originated as an informal social dance performed at happy occasions by men and women of all ages. It wasn't until the beginning of the twentieth century that this traditional dance – *raqs baladi* – and its professional variants – performed by the *awalim* and *ghawazi* – were transformed into *raqs sharqi* – the glamorous theatrical style of belly dance that audiences recognize today. This workshop helps you to understand the essential stylistic differences between *raqs baladi* and *raqs sharqi*, as well as the underlying aesthetic and technical elements that unite them. You'll learn to identify the styles of music that call for *baladi*-style dance, and you'll explore when to infuse *baladi*-style dance into your *raqs sharqi* performance.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Baladi Basics: The Baladi Progression The *baladi* progression, or *taqsim baladi*, is an improvisational music style that is unique to Egypt. It emerged among musicians in early twentieth century Cairo in the context of performances at social celebrations such as weddings. It is music specifically meant for *baladi* dance. In this workshop, you'll learn the defining characteristics of the *baladi* progression, and you'll explore how to interpret and express this quintessential Egyptian musical form through dance.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Before Badia: An Exploration of Belly Dance at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries What do we really know about the history of *raqs sharqi*, the Egyptian concert dance form popularly known as belly dance? In this workshop, Nisaa peels back the layers of myth and hearsay to reveal the actual historical development of early *raqs sharqi*. Since 2009, Nisaa has conducted in-depth examinations of primary source evidence, as well as on-site investigations in Cairo, in order to advance knowledge of *raqs sharqi* in its earliest days. This workshop presents the results of this work. Through a combination of lecture, discussion, film, and movement practice, Nisaa sheds light on how and why *raqs sharqi* emerged from the traditional dance styles of Egypt's *awalim* and *ghawazi*. In Part One, Nisaa presents the social and historical background of the dance and provides an overview of its technique, aesthetic, costuming, and performance format from the 1890s through the 1920s. In Part Two, Nisaa guides participants through her reconstruction of the dance as it was performed in the entertainment halls of turn-of-the-century Egypt, based on comparison, contrast, and synthesis of the dance styles of the *awalim* and *ghawazi* in the present day and the professional dancers of the 1930s.

Format: Lecture and Dance

Length: Minimum Five Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Combination Creation Movement combinations are the building blocks of a dance performance. In both choreographed and improvisational *raqs sharqi*, having a toolkit of combinations to draw from opens up a range of creative possibilities for a dancer. In this workshop, Nisaa will teach several useful combinations grounded in the rhythms and phrasing of Egyptian music.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (can be tailored to specific skill levels)

Dancing to Taqasim and Mawawil *Taqasim* and *mawawil* are improvisational musical forms that are common in Arabic music and pose unique challenges for belly dancers. These beautiful and expressive improvisations embody some of the most fundamental and highly valued aesthetic characteristics of Arabic music. Learn more about the features of these musical forms, how they fit within the Arabic musical tradition, and techniques for interpreting and expressing them through dance.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Evolution of Egyptian Style Belly Dance An examination of the evolution of Egyptian belly dance reveals a dynamic art form whose developments mirror those of the cultures and musical traditions from which it emerged. In this intensive workshop, explore the stylistic evolution of Egyptian belly dance over the last century, including the emergence of *raqs sharqi* from earlier dance styles and the trendsetting influences of well-known Egyptian dancers and choreographers, and learn how changes in the dance have corresponded to developments in Egyptian music.

Format: Dance

Length: Four Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Improvisation in Egyptian Belly Dance Improvisation is an important and valued skill in Egyptian music and dance. Through improvisation, the musician or dancer can fully immerse in the moment and allow feeling to flow through their performance. However, improvisation is a skill that must be honed, and it depends on a solid understanding of Egyptian music. In this intensive workshop, Nisaa will guide you through a range of exercises designed to improve your ability to improvise effectively to Egyptian music. Special attention will be paid to the types of music that are appropriate for *raqs sharqi* performance, and how your improvisation must be tailored to fit each musical style.

Format: Dance

Length: Four Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Introduction to Awalim Dance The *awalim* of Egypt are a class of female professional entertainers separate and distinct from *raqs sharqi* performers. Originally the favored entertainers of Egypt's wealthy elites, the vicissitudes of history transformed the *awalim* into popular singer/dancers who provided entertainment at the weddings and other celebrations of the urban lower and middle classes. The dance style of these performers was much more raw and exuberant than the *raqs sharqi* that would come to prominence in Cairo's entertainment halls and in the Egyptian cinema. Frequently, the dance would incorporate gymnastic feats and spectacular balancing acts, the means by which each entertainer would set herself apart from the others. In this workshop, Nisaa presents an overview of the history of the *awalim* and introduces the basics of *awalim* dance, as well as appropriate musical accompaniment and costuming. Finger cymbals are optional, but helpful!

Format: Lecture and Dance

Length: Minimum Two and a Half Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Introduction to Awalim-Style Raqs Shamadan *Raqs shamadan*, the candelabrum dance, is one of the most unique and spectacular Egyptian dances. Though its exact time and place of origin is unclear, this dance has been strongly associated with the urban *awalim* of Cairo and with the rural *ghawazi* of the Nile Delta since the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *raqs shamadan*, the performer wears a specially crafted candelabrum - the *shamadan* - balanced on her head. She shows off her skill and dexterity by performing feats such as descending to the floor and playing finger cymbals while balancing the *shamadan*. The *shamadan* is also frequently worn by Egyptian dancers when they lead wedding processions. In this workshop, Nisaa presents an overview of the history of this dance style, distinguishing between the original *awalim/ghawazi* style and later theatrical incarnations, and introduces the basics of the *awalim* style dance, as well as appropriate musical accompaniment and costuming. A *shamadan* is not required, but if you have your own, it would be very helpful! Finger cymbals are optional, but helpful!

Format: Lecture and Dance

Length: Minimum Two and a Half Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Introduction to Egyptian Style Belly Dance What sets Egyptian style belly dance apart from other belly dance styles? This workshop explores the answer! Nisaa provides a concise but comprehensive introduction to the core aesthetic and technical elements that merge to form this unique style of dance. This is a useful introduction to Egyptian style belly dance for student and professional belly dancers trained in other belly dance traditions.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

Introduction to Ghawazi Dance The *ghawazi* are a class of female entertainers from Egypt's rural towns and villages. Historically, they have provided singing and dancing at important social occasions such as weddings and festivals. The dancing of the *ghawazi* is dominated by torso-based movements such as hip shimmies, and the *ghawazi* frequently accompany their dancing with finger cymbals. The *ghawazi* of Lower Egypt, like their urban counterparts, the *awalim* of Cairo and Alexandria, also incorporate gymnastic feats and spectacular balancing acts into their dancing. In this workshop, Nisaa presents an overview of the history of the *ghawazi* and introduces the basics of *ghawazi* dance, as well as appropriate musical accompaniment and costuming. Special attention will be paid to distinguishing between Upper Egyptian and Lower Egyptian *ghawazi* dance styles. Finger cymbals are optional, but helpful!

Format: Lecture and Dance

Length: Minimum Two and a Half Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

Manifesting the Music: Musical Interpretation in Egyptian Belly Dance Music is the heart and soul of Egyptian belly dance. Through movement, the dancer provides a visual and physical rendering of the rhythms, melodies, and moods of Egyptian music. In this intensive workshop, join Nisaa for a deep dive into the elements of effective musical interpretation in Egyptian belly dance, including common rhythm transitions and how to communicate them through dance, important elements of Egyptian melody (including the "voices" of various musical instruments, the maqam system, and heterophony), as well as concrete and practical approaches to finding the feeling in the music and conveying it in your dance.

Format: Dance

Length: Four Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)

National Folkloric Dance Troupes of Egypt: History, Technique, and Impact The second half of the twentieth century in Egypt witnessed the rise of two national dance troupes: the Furqa Qawmiyya and the Furqa Reda. The technique and aesthetic of these troupes have had a profound impact on the development of contemporary *raqs sharqi* and have shaped the way that Egyptian dance is presented on stage. In this workshop, you'll learn about the emergence and development of these troupes and the ways in which they've influenced contemporary Egyptian dance. In addition, you'll gain a deeper understanding of their technique and style by learning and practicing dance combinations.

Format: Lecture and Dance

Length: Minimum Two and a Half Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (Intermediate to Advanced/Professional)