

Currently Available Workshop Topics

Belly Dance with Nisaa

www.bellydancewithnisaa.com

nisaa@bellydancewithnisaa.com

314.599.0506



Important Notes:

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

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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. This is a workshop not to be missed by serious students of *raqs sharqi!*

Format: Lecture

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

Arabic Music 102 In this follow-up to Arabic Music 101, students have the opportunity to apply what they'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 students through a dance exploration of different styles within the Arabic musical tradition. Not to be missed by serious students of *raqs sharqi!*

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 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 (including *taqsim baladi* and *sha’abi*), 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 (All Levels)

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, learn the defining characteristics of the *baladi* progression, including the distinctions between “tet” and “awadi” styles, and explore how to interpret and express this quintessential Egyptian musical form through dance.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

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 Four Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

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 Middle Eastern music. In addition, students will have the opportunity to practice creating their own dance combinations.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All 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. Learn more about the characteristics 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 (All Levels)

Desire and Disdain: Egyptian Belly Dance in Social and Historical Context The dance form known in the West as “belly dance” occupies an ambiguous – even contradictory – position in the Egyptian consciousness. While the dance is widely beloved – and participated in – by ordinary Egyptians at festive occasions like weddings, professional practitioners of the art are generally stigmatized in mainstream society and viewed as “fallen women.” This lecture traces the history of the dance from the eighteenth century to the present and explores the complex role of belly dance and its professional practitioners in Egyptian society.

Format: Lecture

Length: One Hour

Target Audience: General

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 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: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

From *Café Chantant* to Casino Opera: The Evolution of Theatrical Performance Space for Belly Dance Most aficionados of Egyptian belly dance are aware of Badia Masabni and her famous night clubs, and without a doubt, Badia's clubs occupy an important place in the history of *raqs sharqi*. However, Badia's clubs were neither the first nor the only venues of their kind. In reality, clubs like Badia's grand Casino Opera were the culmination of a trend in Egyptian entertainment venues beginning in the late nineteenth century, and the transformation of *awalim* and *ghawazi* dance into *raqs sharqi* was already underway in the earlier, lesser-known *cafés chantants* or *salat* of Azbakiyah and Imad ad-Din Street. This lecture explores how developments in popular entertainment and performance space in Cairo impacted the evolution of belly dance and ultimately gave rise to what we now recognize as *raqs sharqi*. Special attention will be paid to the *sala El Dorado*, one of the better-documented entertainment halls from the pre-Badia Masabni era.

Format: Lecture

Length: One Hour

Target Audience: General

Improvisation, Choreography, or Somewhere in Between? Choosing Your Performance Style *Raqs sharqi* has its roots in individualized, improvisational dance. However, both choreography and improvisation have their place in the dance, and a well-rounded dancer has the ability to choose the approach that best fits the performance at hand. This workshop includes a discussion of the advantages and challenges of both improvisation and choreography, a consideration of where different performances fall on an "improv-to-choreo continuum," and a de-mystification of both improvisation and choreography through practice exercises and activities.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

Introduction to Awalim Dance The *awalim* of Egypt are a class of female dancers separate and distinct from *raqs sharqi* performers. The dance style of the urban *awalim*, along with that of their counterparts, the rural *ghawazi*, provides a glimpse into what belly dance may have looked like prior to the influence of the *raq sharqi* pioneers of the early twentieth century. In this workshop, participants will explore the history of the *awalim* and learn the basics of *awalim* dance, music, and costuming. This workshop focuses on the style of the *awalim* of Cairo's Muhammad Ali Street. Some of the more spectacular aspects of their dancing, including acrobatic feats and balancing acts, will be discussed (and they will be practiced, if the workshop is restricted to advanced students). Finger cymbals are optional, but helpful!

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

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* of Egypt are a class of female dancers separate and distinct from *raqs sharqi* performers. The dance style of the rural *ghawazi*, along with that of their counterparts, the urban *awalim*, provides a glimpse into what belly dance may have looked like prior to the influence of the *raq sharqi* pioneers of the early twentieth century. In this workshop, participants will explore the history of the *ghawazi* and learn the basics of *ghawazi* dance, music, and costuming. This workshop largely focuses on the style of the Banat Mazin of Luxor, the best known family of *ghawazi*, but provides information about other, lesser-known *ghawazi* groups as well. Finger cymbals are optional, but helpful!

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

Layering Basics One of the greatest challenges of *raqs sharqi* lies in attempting to capture the nuance and texture of Arabic music. Layering, or executing multiple movements at the same time, is a critical skill for the belly dancer because it provides a visual means to express this musical complexity. In this workshop, explore the musical basis for layering movements in *raqs sharqi*, learn basic layering techniques, and practice musical interpretation through layering. This class is best for those who have a solid grasp of fundamental belly dance movements.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

Music of Um Kulthum This workshop provides an introduction to the repertoire of Um Kulthum, the most revered Arab singer of all time, including an analysis of how her works changed over time and practice with a few of the pieces that she made famous. The music of Um Kulthum is rich, nuanced, and powerful; her music offers both technical challenge and opportunities for exploring emotional expression. Familiarity with her work is a must for serious students of Egyptian *raqs sharqi*.

Nisaa can also provide similar workshops focused on the music of Abdel Halim Hafez, Baligh Hamdi, Farid al Atrache, and Mohammed Abdel Wahab.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

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. Most importantly, you'll gain a deeper understanding of their technique and style by learning and practicing dance combinations.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

Raqs Assaya Basics *Raqs assaya* means “stick dance” or “cane dance.” The practice of dancing with a stick or cane is widespread in the Middle East, but the term *raqs assaya* usually refers to the Egyptian dance from As-Sa'id (Upper Egypt). This workshop provides an overview of the cultural context and fundamental technique of *raqs assaya*. The class will focus on the *sa'idi* style, but other examples of stick dancing will also be discussed. This is a great introduction for students who have little to no experience with *raqs assaya*, as well as a useful refresher of the basics for students who are already experienced with this folk style. Please bring an *assaya* or a cane.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)

Traveling, Turns and Transitions One of the greatest challenges for the belly dancer is to use her performing space creatively and effectively while staying true to the music. In this workshop, you'll learn a variety of traveling steps, turns, and transitions which will allow you to make the most of your performing space while creating dramatic, dynamic interpretations of the music. The importance of connectedness to the rhythms and phrasing of Middle Eastern music will be emphasized.

Format: Dance

Length: Two Hours

Target Audience: Middle Eastern Dance Students (All Levels)
