

Performance Costuming Guidelines for Students

Basic Costuming for Raqs Sharqi

- The basic costume for raqs sharqi is the badlah, which generally consists of a bra, a belt, and a skirt. The midriff is usually, but not always, bare.
- In many current costume designs, the belt and the skirt are combined into one piece. The skirt is heavily embellished at the waist/hip area, so there is no need for a separate belt. Nisaa recommends that first-time student performers invest in a bra/belt set (or a more economical alternative – see below) that is separate from the skirt. This offers more versatility, because the bra/belt set can be paired with a different skirt to create a new look without investing in another complete costume.
- Beware “bargain” bra/belt sets! Cheaper bra/belt sets are often poorly constructed and hard to alter to fit properly. If purchasing a bra/belt set, invest in a well-constructed set that can be worn for many years. Pay more now, and save a lot of money in the long run.

TOP	well-constructed costume bra (and matching belt)	→	<i>or, for first-time student performers or student performers on a budget</i>	→	choli crop top tie top
MIDRIFF	Bare	→	<i>or, for student performers who prefer not to expose their midriffs</i>	→	mesh torso cover or body suit
BELT	well-constructed costume belt (and matching bra)	→	<i>or, for first-time student performers or student performers on a budget</i>	→	hip scarf
SKIRT	Nisaa generally recommends "trumpet" or "mermaid" style skirts (the skirt is fitted around the hip and thigh but flares out at the knee or just above the knee) because this style flatters a wide range of body types.				

- Note also that there are one-piece dresses for raqs sharqi that simulate the look of the badlah (i.e. with embellishment at bust and at hip). Dancers who feel more comfortable with a more covered look may prefer this option.

Alternatives for Male Dancers

- The badlah evolved as a costume for female dancers, so male dancers often find themselves in a bind with regards to costuming for raqs sharqi.
- Male dancers can opt for a form-fitting shirt, a belt or a hip scarf, and pants (or a skirt if they prefer). The shirt can be full-length (covering the midriff) or half-length (exposing the midriff). Some male dancers may prefer to perform in an embellished galabaya or thobe (full-length traditional dress embellished for stage).

Costuming for Other Middle Eastern Dance Styles

- Costuming for Middle Eastern dance styles other than raqs sharqi varies a great deal. This primarily impacts Levels 2a and 3 student performers, who will be performing styles other than raqs sharqi more often than Level 2 performers. Nisaa will provide guidance when specialized costuming becomes necessary.
- Levels 2a and 3 student performers are encouraged to invest in a galabaya, a full-length traditional dress. On belly dance costume vendor web sites, this is often listed as a “baladi dress.” A galabaya is suitable costuming for a variety of dance styles, including raqs baladi, raqs sa’idi, and raqs assaya, so it is a useful costume item for more experienced student performers to have on hand. Nisaa will provide guidance on the style and cut of the galabaya, as there are differences between “at home” and “on stage” styles.
- Nisaa has a limited supply of costume items for a variety of other Middle Eastern dance styles and loans these items out for performances as needed.

Costume Care

- Do not store costumes in plastic.
- After performing, allow costumes to air-dry before putting them away.
- Do not bend bras when storing them. This can alter the shape of the cup.
- Be careful about hanging skirts made from stretchy materials such as lycra or stretch velvet – very heavy skirts can stretch and lose their shape.
- Be careful about snagging one part of a costume on another. For example, the hooks that hold rhinestones on a bra can easily snag a lycra skirt. Store and transport costume pieces separately or protect each piece by wrapping in a towel or pillowcase.

Jewelry

- Jewelry should complement the costume. Avoid overwhelming an already “blingy” costume with very “blingy” jewelry.
- Use jewelry to bring balance to the overall look. For example, arms with no decoration look very naked next to an elaborately decorated bra/belt set. Bring balance to the arms by ornamenting them with chunky bracelets.

Footwear

- Level 2, 2a, and 3 students are strongly encouraged to invest in a pair of dance slippers for class.
- Below are some general guidelines for performance footwear.

<i>for day-to-day class wear and for most stage performances</i>	→	lyrical shoes that cover the balls of the feet – like Bloch Foot Thongs, Capezio Foot Undeez, or Dance Paws – or ballet slippers
<i>for performances where the performing surface is questionable</i>	→	full-coverage flat sandals – like Capezio Hermes sandals – or equivalent street sandals
<i>for stage performances where the costuming requires heeled shoes</i>	→	low-heeled ballroom sandals or low-heeled character shoes (depending on dance style)
<i>for performances where the performing surface is questionable and where the costuming requires heeled shoes</i>	→	low-heeled street sandals or low-heeled street pumps (depending on dance style)

Performance Make-Up

- Performance make-up is applied to provide emphasis to facial features that would otherwise be difficult to see from far away or under the harsh glare of stage lights.
- Although performance make-up requirements vary depending on the performance venue, in general, performance make-up has to be applied much more dramatically than ordinary day-to-day make-up (even evening make-up).
- Below are some general guidelines for performance make-up.

BEFORE BEGINNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash and moisturize the face.
THE FACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply foundation to even out skin tone (choose foundation that matches skin color). • Apply powder to set foundation. • Apply blush to define cheekbones.
THE EYES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply dramatically pigmented eye shadow to the entire eyelid. • Emphasize the crease of the eyelid with a darker shade of eye shadow. • Line the eyes with black eyeliner. • Apply mascara or wear false eyelashes.
THE EYEBROWS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencil the eyebrows (this is an important step because the eyebrows help to convey facial expressions).
THE LIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply dramatically pigmented lipstick (bright reds work well) and blot.

Nails and Hair

- When preparing for a performance, do not neglect the grooming and appearance of fingernails, toenails, and hair.
- Fingernails and toenails should be clean and shaped. They may also be polished in a shade that complements the dancer or the costume.
- Hair should be clean and styled. Consider wearing a headband or a clip in the hair that complements the costume and helps frame the face.

Where to Buy Stuff

<p>COMPLETE COSTUMES AND ACCESSORIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dahlal Internationale – www.dahlal.com • Neenee’s Imports (Andrea) – 314-780-4721 • The Bellydance Store – www.bellydancestore.com
<p>COSTUME JEWELRY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Trading Co. – 314-993-1313 • Hong’s Trading Co. – 636-536-4400
<p>FOOTWEAR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dancewear Solutions – www.dancewearsolutions.com

- There are many other vendors out there. Ask Nisaa for additional recommendations.

Finally...

- Please do not hesitate to ask Nisaa for help and guidance!



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