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Sarasota Shimmies

What's HIP in Bellydance!

Melissa,

Welcome to the latest issue of Sarasota Shimmies! Bringing you articles, events, and more about the growing Sarasota bellydance scene. If you have suggestions, requests, or would like to contribute please let me know!

Once again, thank you to my wonderful students, teachers, mentors, and dance friends (yup photographers - that's you!) for helping to support and share bellydance!

Practice Makes Perfect?

How the heck do I practice in a hectic world?



You work 9 to 5 or, more likely, later. When you rush home there's kids and the husband, pets, other family members, or friends. There's dinner, laundry, general cleaning, whatever good TV is on, and general sheer exhaustion from our modern world's "GO GO GO" approach to living. So how the heck do you squeeze in a belly dance practice?

First off, realize you're not alone! MOST of us live in the "real" world of having tons of responsibilities so please don't ever feel bad if you haven't had time to practice. Remember, you're dancing for no one else except for YOU! So use your practice time as a chance to take a breath, relax, and re-connect with yourself. You'll have a chance to focus on your technique, or just let go and boogie. Either way, you're doing something for you that you can and should enjoy.

And don't be afraid to let that "you" time creep into your everyday world. Go ahead! Shimmy at the copying machine, twirl down the grocery store aisle (yup, I do!), and dance while you fold your laundry. Even these little bursts of practice time can do a lot to create familiarity and mastery of the movements!

Movement of the Month: SHIMMY!

Shake it, baby!

Seeking a shimmy to celebrate? You're not alone! The shimmy can be one of the most elusive movements in belly dance to truly master because there are a number of different types. One dancer's shimmy literally may not be another's, so it can be difficult to get your shimmy to match what your instructor is seeking. Everyone has a tendency to have a "default" shimmy type: it may be Egyptian, American, a vibration,

twist, 3/4...the list goes on and on! But today we'll focus on a standard "4/4" time American shimmy. Try these tips to get your shimmy in shape: 1. Put on music you like with a strong downbeat (I confess to liking hip hop and techno for this) and move your hips in time with the music. Don't necessarily worry about speed, but work on getting the range of motion in your hips, and the shimmy stamina. 2. Slow down! Sometimes if you try to shimmy too fast you'll lose it or get the dreaded shimmy hiccups. So take it down a notch, go a bit slower, and really focus on getting the movement clean. 3. Vary speed. Once you get a nice slow shimmy, try switching it up by going faster and then slower and faster again. This will keep you from getting bored and will also improve your shimmy speed.

Raqs al Assaya: Cane Dance



A folkloric practice in a modern world

Of all of the props available to bellydancers, cane is one of my favorites. Sure, a soft silk veil fluttering in the wind is beautiful and a sword balanced on the head of a stoic, strong dancer is impressive. But the energy and playful attitude of cane dance combined with the manual dexterity necessary to manipulate the cane make this particular prop one of my preferred performances.

Cane dance, or Raqs al Assaya (in Arabic, meaning dance of the stick), is a folkloric dance style performed by the indigenous people of southern, or Upper, Egypt. The region, which stretches from Luxor south, is known as the Said (pronounced Sah-eed) and its people are the Saidi. Sometimes cane dance is referred to as Saidi dance in honor of the people that first performed it. There is a specific Saidi rhythm that is often utilized when performing cane dance.

Believe it or not, cane dance started as a MALE performance piece! Originally, males in the society carried the stick and used it as a weapon. In order to train the younger members of the tribe and practice, the men developed a style of dancing Martial Art (Tahtiyb or Raqs Tahteeb) that incorporated mock-fighting with sticks. The women began to mimic this playful but deadly dance and cane dance was born!

For Tahtiyb, the stick is generally around 4 feet long when performers are practicing on the ground. Male practitioners of this art will also practice on horseback and use a stick that is over 12 feet long! Women, however, usually dance with a hooked cane (as opposed to a stick) that is only about 3 feet long. Our canes are generally thinner and made of a lightweight material.

Raqs al Assaya is a playful, coy dance. It is extremely aerobic and very earthy and grounded. Movements are bouncy, folkloric steps that feature crisp, snapping hip work. Common movements performed by Saidi dancers include twirling the cane, using it to frame movements, balancing it, and making mock fighting jabs. This is an incredibly fun dance style that's powerfully exciting.

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