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Sarasota Shimmies

What's HIP in Bellydance!

November 2007

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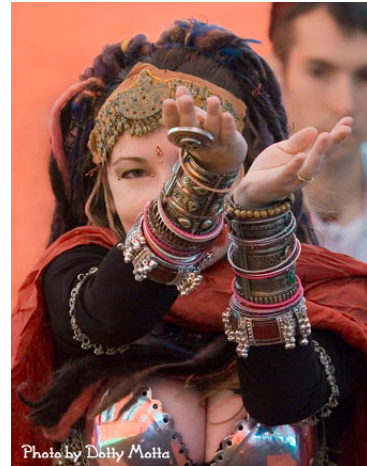
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 Bhuz (bellydance forum)
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Greetings!

Hello all my lovely dance friends and students! I hope the cooler fall weather finds you well and dancing happily. By the time you receive this, I will be married (yay!) and taking a much needed break from my beloved but hectic real life eco-job and only a little bit of a siesta from dance. While I'm away, I wanted to send this out and give everyone a little bit of bellydance magic to slink into their lives ;) Remember - even with classes on hiatus you should all keep on shimmying!



Bellydance Technology

How lucky are we living today in a digital age?! Today, inspiration and knowledge is but a click away on the computer. I am truly thankful to be living at a time where we can easily access information *and* incredible images of other dancers performing. Just like not everything on TV is true, there are of course some websites out there that are total bunk. But, for the most part, modern dancers and students have access to a *global* community of dancers, many of whom are ready and willing to share their wisdom! For those of you interested in seeing bellydancers, you need look no further than your own home computer. The same is true for middle eastern music and even shopping for goods that once would've required a trip to Egypt, or at least a workshop or three!

This month, as I'm away I challenge you to stay inspired and expand your horizons. There are plenty of DVDs to check out (netflix is *great* for that and if you're not sure about one or looking for something in particular, shoot me an email - chances are I've got it or have seen it and can give you an idea of what the vid is like). Before you run out and buy a DVD, though, remember there are plenty of places to check out online. [YouTube](#) is a great place to find bellydance clips. At this site you can see everything from the modern Bellydance Superstars to the classical Egyptian film dancers. Lots of up and coming dancers are on here, and you can even find online lessons, too! Try searching by the dancer's name, style, or even a song and you'll find some really great resources. Check out the different performances - there's lots of inspiration (both in dance and music) on this site!

Check out my links for more places with bellydance info!

Move of the Month: Psoas Pull



This month, we're going to do a drill that will really put the "belly" in your dance! Often, when we think of movements that use the belly like body waves, pelvic locks, and undulations, we think of using the abdominals to drive the move. But there is also a "deeper" muscle, called the psoas (major), that assists in powering these movements. This muscle connects your spine to your pelvis and, when used in conjunction with the abdominals, can make your belly locks pop and your rolls even more fluid!

So how do you access this mysterious muscle? Stand in proper posture, and pretend that you need to pull on a super-tight pair of jeans. You know that super suck-in you use to squeeze into those pants? Well you've just found your psoas muscle! As you pull in (slowly! don't overdo it!) you'll feel your spine straighten and your pelvis tip up. Pull in to a comfy level, then release and relax. As you become familiar with this drill, try speeding it up. You can also vary the intensity of the muscle contraction, turning it into a lock. Keep practicing - once you add this contraction to your repertoire you'll see improvements in a number of different torso and belly moves!

More info on your psoas muscle!

Raqs al Shemadan: Dance of the Candelabra



With weddings on the brain, what better style of bellydance to discuss than Raqs al Shemadan - the dance of the candelabra? In this prop-oriented dance, the performer carries a lit candelabra, or shemadan (sp. shamadan) on her head. The light of the dancer's shemadan leads the *zeffa*, the Egyptian wedding processional. Historically, the *zeffa* traveled through the streets of Egypt and the dancer would lead the bride and her family to her new husband's home. The flickering candlelight announced a wedding had taken place and would guide the nighttime processional and its celebrants safely on their journey. In modern times, though, the city-wide processional has turned inside to a still beautiful and dramatic walk through the reception area. After the *zeffa* the dancer may then encourage the entire party to dance, or she may perform a beautiful shemadan solo, complete with floorwork!

In looking at the shemadan in the photo, you may think this would be quite easy. Looks just like a hat with some candles, right? Well, looks can be deceiving! That "hat" is anywhere between 2 and 3 feet tall and, of course, usually has lit flame. The originators of this style of dance (and, of course, there are several different thoughts on who started it but most agree that the use of the shemadan in the *zeffa* began circa 1920s) didn't have the luxury of the molded headpiece and were truly skilled at balancing flat candelabras! Even with the hat-like feature, this is an incredibly difficult dance and requires a great deal of balance and skill.

Happy dancing! I'll see you all when I return in November (don't forget the zils class!) ~ much love to you all!

Happy shimmies,

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