



Dances of 1001 Nights with Katayoun

Egyptian Dance Technique & Performance Concepts **Course Description and Outline**

This course is designed for current and aspiring performers who wish to develop solo performance skills and a sophisticated approach to presenting belly dance as an art form. The prospect of performing for an audience is both a thrilling and stressful experience. At every level, whether novice or professional, a performer must always consider her audience before her own needs. In addition, the venue and the purpose of her performance are also important considerations, particularly when the desire to innovate or push the envelope is very strong. By displaying a high level of skill, professionalism, showmanship and cultural sensitivity, the dancer not only earns the respect and admiration of her audience, she instantly elevates the art of Middle Eastern dance one notch higher in the minds of those who harbor misconceptions and negative connotations of “belly dance” arts.

In this course we will explore how to interpret the many layers of the music with genuine expression and cultural integrity as we become familiar with the structure of a performance set based on the Egyptian format. Students at all skill levels will build a strong movement vocabulary while developing the skills, knowledge, artistry, and confidence to present a memorable solo performance while remaining true to the Art and one’s own unique style.

Throughout the course, you should make an effort to discover your strengths and areas in which you want to improve and explore more in depth. As you advance your knowledge and proficiency, you will become more aware of cultural and musical nuances which are often subtle, yet have a big impact. These are the details which leave the audience enthralled, yet wanting more. With continued and progressive study in this course, you will be able to apply the concepts to create dynamic performance sets suitable for your own unique interpretation of the dance.

The Egyptian Dance Performance Set

A performance set should have several parts in order to keep the audience’s interest as well as give them a more complete vision of the dance and cultures. Each piece or part complements and adds variety to the whole in order to show the dancers range of skills, knowledge, and modes that reveal her unique personality. Whether your Egyptian dance set includes some or all of these parts, your set should be a well-rounded and cohesive whole which includes an enticing entrance, a meaningful middle, and a fantastic finale! As you put together your set and explore movement options, think about how you want your audience to feel when they watch you dance rather than what you want them to see or what moves you think will impress them.

- ❖ Opening Number
- ❖ Popular piece (audience connection song)
- ❖ Beledi Taqasim (aka beledi progression)
- ❖ Drum Solo
- ❖ Saidi (or other folkloric piece)
- ❖ Finale (reprise of opening number is desirable)

Course Outline: Each session will focus on specific concepts and techniques. Not all topics are covered in a single session; therefore a continuing commitment is required in order to master the techniques and concepts outlined here.

I. The Opening Number

- A. Discuss and Practice Entrance Steps and Concepts (handout)
- B. Mapping out your canvas – Floor patterns: circles, figure 8's, diamonds, crescents
 - 1. Entrance
 - 2. Middle
 - 3. Crescendos/highlights
 - 4. Finale and Exit
- C. Step combinations
- D. Lecture/Discussion: Costuming, presentation, professional image, ethics and standards of venues, pay and cultural representation

II. Interpretation – Music, Moods, and Flavors

- A. The instruments - Sounds and connection to movements using concepts of natural imagery (Air, Water, Earth, Fire), or silent language of communication (Intellectual, Physical, Emotional, Spiritual)
- B. *Taqasim* – Instrumental solo improvisation- Types of Taqasim and Interpretation
- C. Concepts and Images
 - 1. Call and respond element of Arabic music, ie. Monologues, Dialogues, Conversations.
 - 2. The basic underlying rhythm is the Earth (the foundation). The accents are characteristics of the landscape (trees, rocks, mountains, valleys). The melodic instruments are the elements hovering above the earth (water, wind, fire).
- D. Movements and combinations for melodic instruments.
 - 1. Nay– upper body, Veil (Air, Emotional or Spiritual)
 - 2. Accordion– wide movements (Water, Emotional)
 - 3. Violin– wide range of expression, Veil (Water, Emotional or Intellectual)
 - 4. Brass (saxophone, trumpet) – vertical movements (Fire, Emotional)
 - 5. Khanoun – vibrating shimmies (Fire or Earth, Physical or Emotional)
- E. Percussion: Overview/Review of most common rhythms
 - 1. Mischievous Malfuf
 - 2. Entrancing Ayoub
 - 3. Festive Fellahi
 - 4. Basic Beledi
 - 5. Merry Maqsoum
 - 6. Spirited Saidi
 - 7. Marvelous Masmoudi
 - 8. Whispering Wahda (or Sensual Chiftitelli)

III. Egyptian Beledi style dance and rhythms (aka Beledi Progression)

- A. Figure 8's, Undulation, and Circles - Accents, Angles, Level Changes
- B. Shimmies- Weighted, non-weighted, Layering concepts, Folkloric shimmies

IV. Drum riffs and drum solo interpretation- isolations, combinations

- A. Drum solo essence, technique, and structure – dynamic changes, accents and shimmies (Earth)
- B. Identify/Establish rhythms
 - 1. Accents: Heavy, subtle, rolls, loops, call and respond
 - 2. Dynamics: Combinations, angles, layering, level changes, weight changes and variations