

Shakira's Belly Dance Fitness's

Baladi News

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January 2002

Bazaar - 14 October

Another wonderful bazaar in Ottawa came and went. Loads of women fighting over hip scarves and fabric, it was as fun as always. In preparation, I had ordered performance videos and CDs from a Canadian supplier, but sales weren't as brisk as I had hoped. I sent back about a third of my shipment but kept some. They sold a little better over the next couple of months but I still have some left. The performance videos are from the Middle East albiet they are a little dated. It is very useful to see the older more cultural types of performances as it reminds you about where belly dance has been and helps you to guide it where it should be going - and you. There are quite a few CDs left if you are looking for good quality music to practice to at home. The supplier promised that he would only send me the most popular ones. I did promise him that I would make another order in the new year, but this time I will have more of an idea of what people want.

Vicki accompanied me to the bazaar with her wonderful bras in tow. They were very well received, but alas, people were still looking. They mainly come to buy hip scarves but the other vendors let Vicki know that it takes about a year for new things to catch on and then watch out! Good luck in the future, Vicki.

Athletic Wear

CAJ, our dance pants manufacturer has notified me of some new colours of fabric. They mentioned that they had metallic silver and gold, something I had asked them about last year. They can't wait for me to come and see the new line. I guess they figure that belly dancers will be very interested. I visited their website recently and they have a new crop top with spaghetti straps. As well, their one piece halter-flare pant is back on the market. I have downloaded some pictures and so maybe we can place an order. They sell leggings for around \$30 so if the legs are as long as the flare pant, they should be popular as well. Another supplier of athletic wear from Quebec also has some nice pieces, especially a halter crop top which comes in many colours. I think it was earlier this year that I had mentioned that we might make a group order. The clothes are still expensive but aren't they all. In talking to my students, I have found the main concern with crop tops is proper support without that blasted flattening affect. I have one crop top from Mondor and it is great - I feel supported and I believe I have most of my figure left. Malabar and Brio/Dance Express are the best places to get those. Malabar usually has a sale rack and I have picked up some great deals there. As for Brio, I have been told that their dance shoes are generally cheaper than Malabar.

Special Orders

It will now be required to at least make a deposit when special ordering items. As well, the layaway system will be fully enforced and the policy strictly adhered to. Of course, short hold periods of up to two weeks will be allowed but if you have to wait longer than that, you will need to put the item on layaway and make a deposit.

Keegan's Walk for SIDS

On Sunday 30 September the troupe was invited to be apart of the entertainment for the Keegan's Walk for SIDS. We modified our costumes to wear a crisp white peasant top and ribbons in our hair. You can't get more wholesome than that, although, we did have our bellies showing. We were received very well and were asked to come back next year by the organizers. Since kids were our focus we decided to include them in our show by bringing scarves for them to dance with. Well, guess how you can thin out a crown in Kemptville! Volunteers from the audience were hard to come by but the few little girls that danced had a really great time. We ended up having little taggers-on who helped us carry our equipment all the way to the car and then we let them keep their scarves. They were so excited they sprinted off with squeals of delight. Next year we really must focus heavily on a performance just for the kids.



Photos

I am still hoping to have some promotional troupe photos taken. I have a list of local photographers to contact about the project. I thought we could have group photos taken and also individuals done in different costumes. I would really like to arrange this soon and have them ready to send in our promotional packages for this summer's applications for performing.

Christmas Show and Party

Our Christmas show and party was yet again phenomenal. Everyone performed so well even after my horrible threats of being cut. I never felt more like a wretched director than I did this Christmas. I wondered, if this is the way I have to be then I'm not sure I can do it. It was very hard being tough on everyone because we are doing this for fun, but then I realized that yes we are all learning the dances for fun, but those who are in or want to be in the troupe are bordering on semi-professional for the summer and for that, I have to be tough. After the Kingston Busker's Festival last year, I realized that I didn't want our troupe to be "singing Elvises" forever but wanted us to be "Checkerboard Men", "Paprikas", and "Acromaniacs". Those of you who accompanied me to Kingston will know what I am getting at, I hope. Those of you who will be joining us for the first time, will find out. As for our Christmas show, it was a lot of fun and everyone danced well. You all certainly looked spectacular. Every year I realize new things that I should do instead next year. Next year I will delegate more. I think that each dancer may have an extra duty, like making sure the dressing room floor is clear, making sure the next dancer is ready, making sure there is enough coffee, and collecting the music from the dancers etc. I am still at the learning stage of arranging these functions and therefore feel I need to **do everything**. I noticed dancers standing around with nothing to do and I thought, "I should trust them with something to do next time". Anyway, I am contemplating another recital in June before we go off to our summer line-up, it might be fun to do it outside.

It was lucky that we had two video cameras rolling this year, as ours didn't get the entire show. With everything that I had to do at the show, the one thing I didn't have time to do was change the record speed

on our camera. We had two tapes but they were just a little short to get everything. We are missing half of Layla's veil, half of the Enya Globe dance, and my entire drum solo. Thankfully, Laurie's husband and son team got the whole show and she has since created what sounds like a very professionally done video with captioning and fade-in and outs. Those of you that were in the show keep your ears open for a video showing sometime in January.

Something I learned because of this show, was that heavily emotional dancing will only fly with an audience that understands the spirituality of belly dance. When I was watching my "Kidda" performance on the video I realized that my attempted artistic expression of the emotions of the song may have been too intense for the Christmas show venue. Upon asking people who attended the show I was told it was fine - how polite they are. As well, we have all seen how certain songs just didn't work in other venues ie. outdoors. These discoveries are all part of the learning process of becoming seasoned professionals.

Hadia Workshop

A grand total of 6 of us attended the Hadia workshop in Ottawa on the last weekend of October. It was a lot of fun and everyone learned some new moves. The choreographies were quite popular and she has put them both on a video which we can order. I believe it costs \$25. Anybody interested can contact Hadia through her website www.hadia.ca <<http://www.hadia.ca>> and she will send it to you toutesuited. I ordered her video of the choreography we learned in London the year before and she was very good about sending it right away. The troupe performed Ya Leyli during the gala show and it was thrilling to be included in such a wonderful array of talent. Aziza of Aie-wa! magazine (who sponsored the workshop) always puts together a phenomenal line-up of performers. Hopefully the video will be ready soon as we had missed a few of the dancers while we hid in the dressing room.

Aziza and Aie-wa! magazine are planning another workshop in the spring with Jalila Zamorah from Montreal. She is an extremely popular workshop instructor so save your loonies again. We are very lucky that these instructors are being brought into Ottawa which saves us the tremendous cost of traveling and hotels.

Beata and Horatio Cifuentes Workshop

In November I traveled to Sherbrooke with Julia Watson (Jalila) and Tanya (Safira) to attend the Beata and Horatio Cifuentes workshop. Again, Nathalie Lebel organized a spectacular weekend. Beata and Horatio are wonderful teachers and phenomenal dancers. Their plan of action is to split the day in half and each teach their own choreographies. It is great that they work as a team as we were able to benefit from each of their different styles. Both have their roots in ballet so a lot of movements are carried out on your toes. This is especially difficult for persons who never took ballet and who normally dance solidly on their feet. (I won't volunteer my own name) I, myself, felt like a complete clod. It is very refreshing to be challenged again and to have a door opened to a way of dancing that will broaden our physical expression to new heights, so to speak. There was an amazing gala show, where Horatio and Beata danced pretty much through the whole thing. They are artistically experimental so all the dances were different from each other. Beata is extremely elegant but also lends herself well to humour and definitely can not take herself seriously at times. Horatio lends his strength and masculinity to his dances so it was a amazing to see him do a double veil dance and have it not look feminine whatsoever. He also borrowed from his Columbian roots and dressed up as a toreador and used his bull fighting cape as a prop. As well, he did a breathtaking cane dance which again used his masculinity as an extreme benefit. Beata, on the other hand, is petite and curvy but extremely elegant. She loves to entertain and it shows in her willingness to vary her spectacular performances. We are hoping that a video will be available from Nathalie of this particular show but more than likely we will have to wait until the spring when a professionally directed version shot in Germany will be on the market. In the meantime, I will try to purchase one of their other performance videos from Nathalie. I am pretty sure that she had a couple of "best of" which will help to show you guys what we witnessed.

Sword Workshop

On December 9, Shakira's Belly Dance Fitness sponsored its first workshop. Susi Liou (Leila) is a well-known sword dancer in Ottawa and so I approached her about instructing us. She has been retired from teaching for a few years while she continued her university studies but now is slowly reintegrating herself into the belly dance world of Ottawa. She was very pleased with the turn-out of the workshop, as was I (what a relief) and apparently had quite an enjoyable time. All of the participants were treated to hidden and extremely useful information about how to dance with a sword. And I think I speak for all those involved that we will need a whole lot of practice before we can yield them in public! Troupe members are very excited about choreographing a dance for our summer performances, especially Kingston where we need to give our show a little more punch.

Other workshop subjects that have been thrown around: drum/percussion (see details below), zills (for which Susi Liou has agreed to return), introductory yoga, African dance, double veil, just to name a few. There is also the possibility of having intensive choreography workshops where in one day we learn an entire dance. As well, we may have another bra workshop like the "emergency" one we had for troupe members to create last summer's masterpiece. Dancing bras are time consuming to create, and it takes about 4 hours just to cover them by hand - that's with no decoration. We are lucky to have a diligent and obsessed bra maker in our midst (Vicki/Samira) who has provided us with an array of beautiful choices. I would love for all the troupe members to eventually have one of her designs and then make a matching hip belt. To that end, we should also have a belt workshop so that everyone can learn how to make a pattern that will allow the beaded belts to fit perfectly. Making a pattern for a belt can take a couple of hours but then it can be used numerous times because it is made to accentuate your particular body and it will look great. We should also have a harem pant workshop as everyone wants to have a pair and they are so very easy to make but so very hard to explain. It would be great to have a jewelry making workshop as I know of a couple of beaders who specialize. It is so hard to find a pair of earrings, necklace, or armbands/bracelets to go with a beaded bra and belt set so let's make our own!

Drum Workshop - 17 February

For our next workshop I have invited Devin Johnstone, a well-known and extremely talented percussionist to teach us some basic techniques of Middle Eastern drumming. After the workshop training, at the most, it will be very exciting to be able to accompany fellow dancers as they perform, and at the least, the instruction will help us to understand the many different and diverse rhythms that have been created over time. Each one has a name and can remain simple or be made complex depending on the skill and number of drummers. I have a tape and a CD that name and explain many of the basic rhythms which can help us pre-study.

The workshop will take place on Sunday 17 February from 12 noon to 2:00. Devin will be providing a bio for me soon and then I will make up the registration form. I believe the cost will be \$40 each for the two hours. As requested by Devin there will be a maximum amount of participants allowed so please register early to avoid disappointment. If all goes well, Devin has suggested that he return for a level II workshop later in the year.

Devin has expressed the preference that everyone have a djembke (the curvy Middle Eastern drum, see the one in the studio). But, of course, he will allow an alternative for the workshop. I have a couple of bongo drums and a new tambourine. I will also look around in the meantime for more drums. Devin may have some for purchasing at the workshop and I may as well. My hip scarf supplier sells the drums, but it is the mailing of them that is my concern. If you are interested in ordering one, please let me know.

Students as Musicians

Arranging the drumming workshop and finding my high school band flute during my basement clean-up has re-sparked my interest in starting up an amateur music group. It would be great to get together and practice just for fun. If any of you played an instrument in high school or plays the piano now, or whatever, please

let me know. I'll keep the info and we'll see what we can put together. Even if I find one person to play duets with at the studio I would be happy.

Class Changes: Lucky Intermediates - Ottawa Postponed

As most of you may be aware, after many years, my student population has evolved enough for me to create a purely intermediate class. From now on, the Thursday evening class will be strictly for intermediate students. Students who are invited into the class will have a knowledge of the basic traveling and isolation techniques. This step was taken to help challenge more advanced students to achieve new levels. More complicated traveling and combinations will take place and more than likely the cardio section of class will become more extreme.

The Tuesday night class will remain multi-level so that everyone will be able to attend. Those of you who are not attending the intermediate class but miss a Tuesday night, will still be allowed to make up the missed class in Prescott on Monday and Friday mornings from 9:00-10:00. I may even add a Saturday class to the end of a session for people to pickup that missed class.

The Ottawa classes have been postponed to at least February. I so enjoyed teaching there from Oct-Dec and the facilities at Dance Educators on Rideau St were very good. I had quite a large class considering my advertising funds were limited but I mainly owe thanks to a couple of the participants who brought dancing buddies. Word of mouth is always the best advertisement as happy costumers are a business's best friend. Anyway, one drawback was the driving into Ottawa on my two days off, the other was the potential cost of advertising again and again each session. There are too many newspapers in Ottawa big and small, and they all charge too much for ads. Classified are fine if you want to sell baby furniture, but for a fitness class, a graphic ad is best for visual impact but they cost hundreds of dollars. Added to that is the fact that I decided for my own good, I should cut down to one day a week, especially during winter driving season. Over Christmas, when I was just totally exhausted and now broke(!), I decided that there was no way I could afford any advertising in Ottawa for a while. I know that the ladies in Ottawa are terribly disappointed because they too got hooked on bellydancing. I have contemplated doing a lunch hour class on wednesdays at my workplace on Bronson Avenue. The rent would be less and I would be there already. It would also depend if the ladies I am thinking of could travel a little west of downtown on their lunch hours. I suppose I am thinking mostly of Jessica. She is a lovely dancer as those of you who have seen will well agree. She lives quite far away but still tries to come to class. She so enjoys being part of the troupe, I hate to desert her, or even to lose her to someone else. I had also been requested by numerous people already studying in Ottawa to come in. There are about 13 instructors in the Ottawa area so I was feeling alittle redundant but no one else is doing lunch hour classes so I guess it was a welcome diversion. In the meantime, I am sending them a list of all the teachers I know about so that maybe they can study at night near their homes. It is something at least.

Prescott Classes - Hard to Sell and Where to Put Them?

My Prescott classes are continuing, albiet in a new location yet again. One of these sessions will find us in a permanent home, I do hope. As you may remember, the first session for Sep/Oct found us at the Johnstown Community Centre. It is a lovely facility with a large modern hall and kitchen. At the same location is a lovely recreational facility with a pool and baseball diamond etc. The problem there was the "off the beaten track" location and the fact that I was having trouble locking the door. The door locking thing may seem trivial but it used to make me late for my Ottawa classes, and one time I just had to leave the building unlocked. This predicament left me with quite a queasy feeling. For the next session of Nov/Dec I was invited to "rent" the hall at the St. John's Anglican Church in the heart of Prescott. It seemed like a good move to go into the "city" and the hall is very nice. Alas, a new problem in that the church, being a non-profit organization, would not give me a receipt for my rental payment. Over the Christmas holidays I really didn't think too much about it and then first thing in January realized that I needed to find a new place to teach. Panicking yet again to find a spot, I am calling around in Prescott looking for a room. Until I find a permanent spot, it will be quite impossible to make a name for belly dance in Prescott. I am determined to

make it a success though - some of you know how stubborn I am!! Stay tuned for an update on the location of classes down south.

Summer Line-up

It is time to start planning the troupe's summer performance line-up. I have no doubt that Troupe 2000 will be added to this summer with guests and permanent members. Depending on the venue, not all students will be dancing at all events, but every effort will be made to include those who wish to dance in at least one event this summer. In turn, if you hear of something going on that would lend itself to a performance by Shakira's Gypsy Caravan and guests, please do let me know. The more events we participate in the easier it is to sort out what we would like to keep as a permanent "gig".