

This is Belly Dance!

Saturday, August 11th, 2007 8:30PM

Ford Amphitheatre ~ Hollywood

Suzy Evans & The International Academy of Middle Eastern Dance
Present

This is Belly Dance! at the Ford Amphitheatre, Hollywood

Flashing finger cymbals, swirling veils and exotic music...From the slow and hypnotic to the hottest from Cairo...This is Belly Dance!

Please Note: You will find a backgrounder on belly dance at the end of this release.

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For high resolution photographs go to: "<http://bellydanceweek.com/promo>"

"THIS IS BELLY DANCE!" features performances by more than 60 of the best belly dancers in the world! Internationally acclaimed stars include Ava Fleming, Isidora, Elayssa, Amara, Ahava, Midnight Mirage Dance Company, Black Opal Dance Company, the Lotus Niraja Dance Company, Sadie, Angelika's Dance Ensemble and sword dancer Zahirah. They will take the audience on an enchanted journey through the timeless world of belly dancing and the traditional dances of the Middle East that inspired it. This is an all-new edition of the belly dance performances that attracted a sold-out audience to the Ford in 2005. Exquisite costumes, exotic music and the magic of soul, passion and superb technique make "*This is Belly Dance!*" a night audiences will remember.

The International Academy of Middle Eastern Dance has been staging belly dance shows since 1996, including The Awards of Belly Dance Shows, Rockin' the Casbah, Hollywood Babylon, Belly Dance Rocks!, Belly Dance-O-Rama and the 2003 premier of "This is Belly Dance!" at the Ford. Venues have included the Performing Arts Center at Cal State Northridge, Burbank Center Stage, the Los Angeles Theatre Center, the El Portal Theatre and Ford Amphitheatre. The International Academy of Middle

Eastern Dance, also known as IAMED, has earned the reputation for producing the Best Belly Dance Shows in the World!

Tickets are priced at \$36 and \$26 and available through **Tickets.com** or through the Ford website at **www.FordAmphitheatre.org** or by calling the Ford Box Office at **323 GO 1-FORD (461-3673)**.

The Ford Amphitheatre is located at 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood, CA 90068, just off the 101 Hollywood Freeway across from the Hollywood Bowl and south of Universal Studios. The grounds open two hours before show time for picnicking. The Ford offers a number of dining options: a variety of food and beverages is available on site and box dinners for evening events may be ordered in advance. Patrons are welcome to bring their own food and drink. The Ford is disabled accessible. Portable wireless listening devices are available upon request.

On-site, stacked parking costs \$5 per vehicle for evening shows and \$1 per vehicle for morning family shows. For evening shows only, **FREE non-stacked parking serviced by a FREE shuttle to the Ford, for evening amphitheatre performances only**, is available at the Universal City Metro Station lot at Lankershim Blvd. and Campo de Cahuenga. The shuttle, which cycles every 15-20 minutes, stops in the "kiss and ride" area.

This event is part of the Ford Amphitheatre 2007 Season, a multi-disciplinary arts series produced by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission in cooperation with Los Angeles County-based arts organizations. For a complete season schedule, directions to the theater and parking information, log on to www.FordTheatres.org.

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**INTERNATIONAL BELLY DANCE WEEK
&
INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF MIDDLE EASTERN DANCE**

WHAT IS BELLY DANCE?

BY SUSAN T. EVANS
AND CAROLYNN RUTH

The dance form we call "belly dance" is derived from traditional women's dances of the Middle East and North Africa. Women have always danced, at parties, at family gatherings and during rites of passage. A woman's social dancing eventually evolved into belly dancing as entertainment ("Gobek Dansi" in Turkish and "Raqs Sharqi" in Arabic). Although the history of belly dancing is murky prior to the late 1800s, many experts believe its roots go back to the temple rites of India. Probably the greatest misconception about belly dancing is that it is intended to entertain men. Because segregation of the sexes was common in the part of the world that produced belly dancing, men often were not allowed to be present.

Belly dance developed from social dancing. This helps explain its long lasting popularity. Belly dance offers women a community of friends who share and celebrate joy in music. Belly dance embraces all body types and creates self-confidence through artistic self-expression.

Belly dance is natural to a woman's bone and muscle structure. The movements center on the torso rather than the legs and feet, as is common in Western dance. The belly dancer isolates parts of her body to move each independently in a completely feminine interpretation of the music. The music seems to emanate from her body, as sometimes she emphasizes the rhythm, sometimes the melody of the song. Belly dance is often performed barefoot, now thought by many to signify the intimate and ancient physical connection between the dancer, the music and Mother Earth. Historically, most dancers were barefoot because they could not afford shoes.

Belly dance was introduced to America when a dancer known as Little Egypt performed at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Americans were fascinated (and scandalized!) by the freedom and rhythms of the dance and the music, and thus began a fascination with the "exotic Orient." Early Hollywood fell in love with the dancing girls and created glamorous flowing costumes inspired as much by Leon Bakst's fantasies as on garments of the Middle East. Dancers in the Middle East, who were developing belly dance in its native lands, adopted these colorful interpretations.

Veils are a popular part of the belly dance performance, as are finger cymbals known as "zills" in Turkish and "sagat" in Arabic. Many belly dancers are also skilled at dancing while balancing swords, brass trays, or even candelabrum with flaming candles (also known as "shamandan").

Belly dancing continues to grow in popularity. Belly dance concerts, festivals, and workshops are now held throughout the world, attracting large audiences of women and men alike. Many dancers now travel to the Middle East and North Africa to study the art form where it originated. Organizations, such as IAMED, dedicated to the dance, will continue to seek out and encourage new generations of belly dancers to continue to study and perform this wonderful ancient tradition.

For more information visit us on the web at "www.BellyDance.org".