

Amara and Ya Helewa!

By Maruala

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I confess! I am a long time fan of Amara and Ya Helewa!, as well as a fan of Amara's annual production "An Evening of Experimental Middle Eastern Dance".

Granted the first time I experienced "An Evening of Experimental Middle Eastern Dance" I was there to perform "Soul of a Dancer". I must have looked like a deer caught in the headlights. I had thought it was like every other belly dance show that I had participated in. Since that time, my desire has been to find the opportunity to once again perform at "An Evening of Experimental Middle Eastern Dance". Unfortunately, I have not worked out a piece that I think would fit this particular venue. Perhaps you are a creative, daring, inspirational soloist or group who would like to participate but, you know little of this avant-garde forum. If so, please read on!

An Evening of Experimental Middle Eastern Dance is an opportunity for Middle Eastern dancers to perform their controversial works. The performances are usually based in some aspect of the Middle Eastern dance expression, and make current borders and standard representations visible by playing with and pushing past them. An Evening of Experimental Middle Eastern Dance is a wonderful opportunity to experience multicultural unconventional events. Performer and audience can explore roles beyond the standard portrayals of belly dance and deal with issues rarely presented in a Middle Eastern performance setting.

Amara produces numerous events, although her focus is "An Evening of Experimental Middle Eastern Dance" concerts and videos. She also co-founded "Dance Under Construction," a UC system-wide dance conference. Her newest project with other experimental Middle Eastern dancers, X-MED, is a workshop series presenting tools and methods for creating experimental Middle Eastern dances. If you haven't experienced X-MED, you have an upcoming local opportunity!

Amara will be in San Diego in January 2009 (TBA) to present a mini workshop at the Mission Valley YMCA. She and Ya Helewa! will also be performing for the upcoming production Once Upon a Bellydance! A Collection of Short Stories that same weekend.

Although Amara is the founder of "An Evening of Experimental Middle Eastern Dance" she also celebrates and presents the traditional. She is the director of Ya Helewa!, a collection of lovely dancers who bring an exciting dimension to Middle Eastern Dance. The troupe performs most of the Traditional and Folkloric dances from the Middle East, as well as American Cabaret Belly Dance, and modern and experimental styles. They have held several regular dance jobs at Pars Restaurant and Moun of Tunis and are featured on several videos including IAMED's Belly Dance Rocks!, BDTY, and the EEMED series. Other appearances also include Musee des

Femmes, Cafe Beledy, One Enchanted Evening (my baby), The Knitting Factory, Labyrinth of Jareth Masquerade Ball, Dance Fusion/Dance Tribal, and of course, An Evening of Experimental Middle Eastern Dance.

Don't miss the next opportunity to catch her performance in San Diego in January 2009 at Once Upon a Bellydance! A Collection of Short Stories as well as her inspirational workshop. You will be pleased.