

class act

guideline for writing interesting workshop and class descriptions

by Dr. Laura (Amara) Osweiler



Amara

What draws you into taking a workshop, besides being interested in the teacher or topic? For me, it is being captivated by the language and understanding enough about what the workshop is going to be about to purchase it.

Over years of producing events and editing numerous instructor descriptions, I was often making the same suggestions. I have placed them into what I hope is a handy guide.

A well-crafted class title and description is an opportunity to draw customers to your business. Often, you have one fleeting chance to draw them in, so make it enticing!

- Plan your class outline before, or in conjunction with, writing the description; this process will make it easier to write and present an accurate, comprehensive synopsis. Customers will get a good understanding of what they can expect.
- Know your target audience, e.g. general public or current dancers. Each demographic has different needs and expectations. Modify your descriptions

by employing words and terms that each group is familiar with and will understand. Readers want to know quickly what they are getting.

- A catchy title is the first statement potential customers read. It should be exciting, short and informative. Entice them to read on.
- The first sentence should grab attention.
- Your paragraph should present a mini overview of the activities (participants get details by attending). See suggestion number 1.
- State the skill level required and/or items participants should bring.
- Use or imply the 'you' pronoun to personalise the information so readers envision themselves in your class. I find the word 'participants' elicits a more positive response in adults than 'students'.
- Be positive in your presentation of the material. Present a welcoming space, e.g. change 'stuck in a rut' to 'expand your...'
- If you use the word 'no', beware its power and consider why you are using it.
- Employ and vary action verbs to create dynamic, inviting statements.

- Descriptions are short; make every word count. Leave out redundant or implied statements e.g. 'in this workshop', 'the class will focus on' etc.
- Professional writers write out the full word. If it's part of your branding to use contractions, do so, otherwise, give words their full force and independence.
- Let the statements reflect your personality and teaching style. Part of your branding includes who you are as a unique artist and teacher; that should come out in your writing style. Like teaching, writing is an art. There are fine lines between being flowery and unclear and too direct and boring.
- Edit your writing. After the initial writing, let the text sit for a bit. Come back to it with fresh eyes and with the mindset of your target audience.
- Have someone read and edit your description. An outside eye will see things that are or are not working.
- Take your time and enjoy writing descriptions; they are an opportunity to look at the big picture of a topic and craft who you are as an artist. •



EXAMPLES OF WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS:

Classical Persian Jirisi (Sydney)

Persian Dance is a romantic form deeply influenced by Persian culture and poetry, portraying a feeling like no other dance in such a graceful manner. A Persian dancer expresses this through the many different styles in the rich spiritual, elegant form this dance has to offer. Jirisi will teach the essential stylings of Classical Persian Dance; footwork, armwork, posture and the essence of the dance, 'Eshvec'. Jirisi is currently studying her advanced level training under the tutelage of HELIA BANDEH (Holland) of the Helia Dance Academy. *Skill level: All*

Contemporary Cairo Style Rachel Bond (Sydney)

It sometimes seems that every Oriental dancer in Egypt has tried to copy Dina since she burst onto the scene in the early 1990s. The powerful aesthetic she created has thoroughly changed how performers

in Cairo move today. Let's explore how her style differs from her predecessors including her teacher Raqia Hassan and how contemporary dancers such as Randa Kamel have taken her influence in new directions. You'll see video clips and experiment with each dancer's style including signature moves and a short combination. *Skill level: Intermediate – Advanced*

Exploring the World of the Drum Solo with Ozzy and Amara

Understand both sides of the drum solo equation from world renowned Darbuka player Ozzy and dancer Amara. Through combos, drills, and improvisational tools, you will study the most important aspects of performing with a live drummer. Learn drum sounds and rhythms and moves that work with them. Dissect important transitions to get the most out of nuances and enhance your show. Explore the structure of an Arab drum solo including how they are composed and improvised. Experience the relationship between drummer and

dancer and learn how to maximize your time on stage together. *Skill level: All levels.*

Amara (Dr Laura Osweiler) is a teacher, performer, choreographer, producer and scholar. Her solo, company and collaborative works have been presented at concerts, festivals and conventions internationally and on video. In addition to teaching dance studio classes, pedagogy seminars, workshops and labs, Amara has taught accredited courses at a number of universities. She produces workshops, performances, and conventions, including The Austin Belly Dance Convention, An Evening of Experimental Middle Eastern Dance and X-MED and currently is the General Manager of Critical Path, a choreographic research and development organization. Amara holds a PhD in Dance History and Theory from University of California - Riverside, a BA in Music History and Literature and a certificate in Ethnomusicology from The Florida State University. www.AmaraDances.com