THE PYRAMID DANCE CO. INC. was originally founded in Memphis 1987. With over 30 years experience in Middle Eastern Dance, we are known for producing professional Dancers and Instructors in belly dancing! The company's purpose is to teach, promote, study, and perform belly dance.

Phone: 901.628.1788
E-mail: Sadiia@sadiia.com

What Is Belly Dance?
WHAT IS THE BELLY DANCE?

The dance form we call "belly dancing" is derived from traditional women's dances of the Middle East and North Africa. Women have always belly danced, at parties, at family gatherings, and during rites of passage. A woman's social dancing eventually evolved into belly dancing as entertainment ("Dans Oryantal" in Turkish and "Raqs Sharqi" in Arabic). Although the history of belly dancing is clouded prior to the late 1800s, many experts believe its roots go back to the temple rites of India. Probably the greatest misconception about belly dance 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.

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

Belly dance is natural to a woman's bone and muscle structure. The movements center on the torso rather than the legs and feet. 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

Sadiia is committed to furthering belly dance in its various forms (folk, modern, fusion, interpretive) by increasing public awareness, appreciation and education through performances, classes and literature, and by continuing to study all aspects of belly dance and producing meaningful work. She offers her students a fun, positive and nurturing atmosphere to explore movement and the proper techniques of belly dance, giving them a strong foundation to grow and evolve from. She has created a diverse and comprehensive teaching format that stems from the influence of the many teachers of dance and music she has studied with from all over the world. Whether you are interested in workshops, group or private classes, Sadiia's knowledge of movement and belly dance along with her eagerness to share her information will create an unparalleled environment of encouragement and learning in the art form.

The Pyramid Dancers are known for their entertaining portrayals of authentic dances from all over the world and are sought after by the Middle Eastern communities for authentic representation of their homeland dances & music.
Dancing is a good cardio-vascular work out and helps increase flexibility. It is suitable for all ages and body types and can be as physical as the dancer chooses to make it. Combined with a healthy diet that involves sensible eating, raks sharki can without a doubt be part of a sound weight loss program.

Mental health benefits, for many belly dancers, include an improved sense of wellbeing, elevated body image and self-esteem as well as a generally positive outlook that comes with regular enjoyable exercise. In this day and age of almost continuous stress, the subtle rhythms of raks sharki and the traditional movements are calming. The repetitive movements of the dance and the concentration needed to do them can help a mind filled with daily stress to "let go" for a while and relax. One effect of stress is that our bodies tense up, causing contractions or spasms in muscle groups, such as those in the neck, shoulders, or back. When a muscle is contracted, lactic acid builds up causing the "soreness" or pain that occurs. Blood flow to the affected muscles decreases as well.

Today belly dance is enjoyed worldwide and is taught in almost every country. While a small percentage of enthusiasts use belly dance as an income supplement, the majority of enthusiasts pursue it for mere enjoyment as exercise, recreation and socialization. Many perform regularly as amateurs or professionals.

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 based as much on 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 "zils" in Turkish and "sagat" in Arabic. Many belly dancers are also skilled at belly dancing while balancing swords, brass trays, or even with flaming candles.
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 belly dancers now travel to the Middle East and North Africa to study the art form where it originated.

Pyramid Dance Company does and will continue to seek out and encourage new generations of belly dancers to continue to study and perform this wonderful ancient tradition.

A few of the contemporary outstanding dancers are: Suhaila Salimpour, Ansuya, Alexandra King, Delilah, Cassandra, Dalia Carella, Suzanna Del Vecchio, Morocco, Aisha Ali, Rachel Brice, Latifa and Helena Vlahos.

“Tribal” belly dance is a recent movement in the U.S.A. A modern fusion of ancient dance techniques from North India, the Middle East and Africa, tribal is characterized largely by improvisational group choreography and a building of rhythm. Dancers often use finger cymbals, in solo within the group, call-and-answer performance with another dancer, or as a whole group.

Costuming for tribal derives from many “authentic” sources and is often composed of large tiered skirts or 10 meter/yard skirts, a short choli often with a plunging neckline, a visible bra decorated with ancient Middle Eastern coins and textiles, turbaned head, hip scarf with yarn tassles or fringe, and a heavy layering of oxidized silver jewelry.

The jewelry commonly originates from Central Asia, from any number of nomadic tribes or empires (e.g. Kuchi, Turkoman, Rajasthan) and is often large and set with semi-precious stones or, when mass-produced, with glass. Dancers frequently "tattoo" their faces with henna or kajal. Make-up is usually eye focused with heavy kajal.
Belly dance is a Western name coined for a style of dance developed in the Middle East and other Arabic-influenced areas. In Arabic language it is known as Raqs Shaqi or in Turkish as Oryantal dansı, translated as "Dance of the East". For Europeans, this translation sounded perfectly fit, hence it was also known as "Oriental dance", "Exotic oriental dance", "Oriental belly dance" and the likes. The term "Raqs Sharqi" is claimed to be originated in Egypt. The name suggested an exotic dance originated elsewhere - and so a higher status than the local dance.

It is thought that the dance has been known through the oral tradition in Egypt since the pre-Islamic times. There have been many theories about the origin of belly dancing, but most evidence links it to the Middle East and Africa. Some say it was originated by the Phoenicians; others claim that it was introduced into Egypt by the Ottoman Turks. Egyptian tomb paintings dating from as far back as the fourteenth century BC depict partially clad dancers whose callisthenic positions appear to be very similar to those used in belly dancing.

Modern feminist revisionists like to say it became famous in Ottoman times when the dance was a frequent pastime for the women of the harem for each other. In fact both men and women danced - but in separate spaces. A "good" woman would not be seen dancing by any but her husband. This extended to separating the male musicians from female dancers.
RAKS SHARKI

Raqs Shaqi is performed by women - and men - usually solo, for entertainment of spectators in public or private settings. Despite its alias, "belly dance", Raqs Shaqi dancing involves motion of the whole body, from head to feet. Basically, it is an improvisational dance (although based on a certain vocabulary), rhythmic and fluid at the same time.

The dance has a strong focus on an internalization and reflection of the music and the emotion therein. The music is as important as a vocabulary of movements from which to draw, and therefore the most revered of dancers will generally be those who are either the most charismatic or the most emotionally projective (even if their movement vocabulary is limited). The dancer becomes the vehicle of communication to make sound and emotion visible to her audience.

Many see it as a woman's dance, celebrating sensuality and power of being a woman. Sohair Zaki, Fifi Abdou, Lucy, Dina, who are all popular dancers in Egypt, are above the age of 40. Many feel that you have limited life experiences to use as a catalyst for dance until you reach "a certain age".

In Egypt, three different forms of the dance: Baladi, Sha'abi, and Sharqi are known.

NON-EGYPTIAN FORMS

The most important non-Egyptian forms of belly dance are the Lebanese belly dance and the Turkish belly dance. Some mistakenly believe that this is known as Chifteteli due to the fact that this style of music has been incorporated into oriental dancing by Greeks and gypsies, illustrated by the fact that the Greek belly dance is called Tsifteteli. However, ciftetelli is a form of upbeat folk music and makes up the lively part of the dance. Çiftetelli is actually a form of folk wedding music.

Turkish belly dance is closer to its Gypsy heritage than its Egyptian and Lebanese sisters. Because modern Turkey does not have the same restrictions on dancers as Egypt, Turkish dancers are often more outwardly expressive than their Egyptian sisters. Turkish dance also remains closer to its gypsy roots as many professional dancers and musicians in Turkey continue to be of gypsy heritage. Turkish dancers are known for their energetic and athletic style, and particularly their adept use of finger cymbals, also known as zils. Connoisseurs of Turkish dance often say that a dancer who can't play zils is not an accomplished dancer. Another distinguishing element of the Turkish style is the use of the Karsilama rhythm in a 9/8 time signature, counted as 12-34-56-789.

When immigrants from Turkey, Armenia, and the Arab states began to immigrate to New York in the 1930s and 1940s, dancers started to perform a unique mixture of these cultures in the nightclubs and restaurants. Often called "Classic Cabaret" or "American Cabaret" belly dance, these dancers are the grandmothers and