

Leyla Najma's Hip Philosophy

Easy To Understand & Learn Belly Dance Instruction That Connects The Dots
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The Belly Dance Routine



The hardest part about belly dancing is knowing where to start on a daily regimen for training and practice. There are different areas to focus on and most women don't know that each area should be worked on equally. I wasn't taught this methodology of practicing on specific areas separately and to this day I wish I would have. I think that practicing everything together can muddy up movements and the completion of moves. It can also keep a dancer from seeing that she really doesn't have the moves down. This happened to me because when I look back at my first videos, all I see is a bird getting ready to fly out of the nest!

Another case in point; Remember not to over practice choreography! I have a student who just recently lost her rhythm because she over practiced. She could not hear the beat of the music because she forgot to listen to the music. I had to ask her not to practice for a week so we could get her back on track. What was surprising to me was the fact that she said she felt *off* in certain areas but she did not do anything about it. So if there is robotic repetition in practice, the danger can be that the dancer won't know the difference or if she does, do nothing about it. There definitely seems to be a need to put in a work schedule so that weekly practicing will keep you fresh, graceful and relaxed.

First choose a day that will be hips only and focus on sharp, soft, sharp and soft combined. Work in your opposition hips and make sure to keep both hips equally strong and precise. You can include shimmies with sharp and soft but focus on your execution of the moves and follow through with each movement. On another day do layering with hips, chest and pelvic area. This may seem easy but you really have to work on your timing with the layering to music. Next work on your arms with combinations and movements so that you have that natural flow with them. With the arms you can actually work them in with each practice day but have one day where you really focus in on them. One important aspect of training is working in your traveling steps with different hip combinations and turns. Subsequently within the week work in different angles with backward and forward steps and combinations. Remember audiences need to see you from all angles and your back is just as important as your front. Remember to work in stage presence and use your space. I will do in place movements and alternate with traveling steps. To be more specific work in your hip combinations with your traveling steps. One important day would be to do

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shimmies of all kinds. In place, traveling and shimmies with sharp and soft moves can really tell the audience how skilled you are and showcase how professional you are. Props are important so keep one day for your sword, cane and veil etc. If you are working on a choreography make sure the props don't showcase what you are lacking in body movement. Remember your body is your greatest prop! Practice your finger cymbals (which are an important instrument) more than one day a week because this is the only way you will get good with them. Also your props can be included in more than one day a week. For those dancers who are just starting out and have a lot to work on, this schedule will help you out.

One thing that a lot of dancers do in the beginning is they work on their dance drills and combinations but they forget music theory. Look up important Middle Eastern musicians, composers and singers of days past and present. Learn about the instruments musicians use and the different beats and melodies that are put into music. This is important for your finger cymbal playing besides any other instrument you might want to learn. Listen to music so you can understand how Middle Eastern music is composed and put together. There are certain beats that we dance to so start listening to as much classical and traditional music as possible besides the modern pop of today.

I can't tell all of you how important our Belly Dance History is. Do you know about the many legendary dancers there are who kept the dance alive? This includes Middle Eastern dancers along with American belly dancers. Learn what each dancer contributed to the belly dance world and also learn how dance has changed through out our history. Learn about why we have coins on our hip scarves or why we dance with veils. Remember that as belly dancers we represent a multitude of cultures so telling people the history of belly dance is just as important as dancing it. The only way to educate people about our dance form is to educate ourselves.

This may seem like a lot of work and it is at first but the benefits outweigh any of the hardships. In order for me to look the part, I have to know everything I can about the dance field I represent. Knowledge is power and when we combine dance training and excellence to this power, we not only become role models but leaders for women to follow. The difference here is that every woman eventually becomes a leader. This is why Belly dancing is different!

But I have to say there is another reason for wanting to know as much as possible about this dance. It's simple; I love being a woman!

"It isn't what I do, but how I do it. It isn't what I say, but how I say it and how I look when I do it and say it. "

Mae West

There is a woman in each of us who craves attention and loves to be up on stage. Just remember that future generations of women will be looking at you wishing they were you. In knowing this

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Leyla Najma's Flip Philosophy

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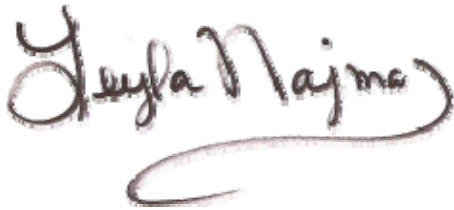
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understand that how we keep this dance form alive is by passing on our knowledge and skill to future generations and they in turn pass it on. So if I'm going to pass on any Belly Dancing tips to future generations the one big one is this:

"When life gives you lemons make orange juice and make them wonder how the hell you did it!"

Anonymous

So go out there and create a dance style that makes the dance world wonder how the hell you did it!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leyla Najma". The signature is written in a dark ink and features a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right and then curves back under the name.