

What is Middle Eastern Dance?

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Middle eastern dance is so much more than movement! Dance in and of itself is a universal language of expression, a way for people to share their common experiences with one another though their spoken languages may differ.

Middle eastern dance (also known as 'belly dance') is an expression of culture, and of individual experience. It's more than a hip drop here, a snake arm there. It is the visual representation of, and compliment to, the music (1), which in and of itself is a representation of the culture.

Middle eastern dance, or belly dance, is not a dance about sex, seduction, or virgin harem girls dancing for the sultan; that is total Hollywood! Across the middle east (as in the rest of the world!) men, women, and children dance to celebrate life's happy occasions: weddings, births, graduations, anniversaries, showers, and other rite of passage events, among others. This is the basis of what we do at Bellydance Kalamazoo.

There are over 20 countries in the middle east, and each country has it's own versions of ethnic dances. There are many common line dances and group dances, as well as what people normally think of as "belly dance": a solo dance in a glitzy costume. Within that genre, there are many different styles, and many different opinions as to what they should be named. At Bellydance Kalamazoo, you will learn a common movement vocabulary that would generally be recognized throughout the middle east. We teach mainly Egyptian/American style, although there will be occasions when a different style is introduced just to keep things interesting. :)

Footnotes:

1. Aisha Azar, <http://raqsazar.com/bio.html>