



## Dokus Sekiz

Dans Askina Newsletter, April 2017

Welcome to the spring edition Dokus Sekiz! We hope our featured male bellydancers inspire your world of dance, as they have ours. Thank you to Ben and Serkan for helping us appreciate your unique perspective and contributions to Turkish dance. Also in this issue - take a moment to learn how Amina Beres shared Turkish folk dance with over 100 students at Phalen Lake Elementary School in St. Paul. And, don't forget to check out our upcoming performances and workshops. We'd love to have you join us!



## Ben Suleyman's Story

## Dans Askina's Artistic Captain

How did it all start, a man inspired to Belly Dance? I remember begging my mother to buy enough at the grocery store so we'd have enough to purchase the Encyclopedia Britannica on Ancient Egypt (\$1.50 with a \$5.00 minimum purchase) . . . the featured volume for that week . . . and she did. Little did I know that it would be my inspirational guide book to a life with hypnotic, earthy music and rhythmic dance. After digesting the Encyclopedia's scholarly knowledge, I astounded my Cub Scout Den Mother, Mrs. Carrick, and fellow Cubs by informing them the lifelike statue on her piano was the famous Egyptian Queen Nefertiti.

Pictures and movies always magically transported my heart and imagination – hearing various steadfast tales of Ali Baba and his brush with the forty thieves, the fantastical 'Djinn', the infamous Christmas Magi, to the elegant star studded and robed java sipper on the original Folgers coffee can; not to mention the lush and colorful pageantry of the ever popular holiday television events with Ben Hur, Samson, Delilah, Moses and the 'cast of thousands' as they made their way through the cinematic desert. Exotic

## In this issue . . .

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## Summer 2017 Performances & Workshops

Saturday May 20, 2017:  
[Blaine World Fest](#), Blaine, MN. 3:00 p.m.

May 23-June 6, 2017: Artistic Director Amina Beres teaches workshops and performs in [Oriental Dream Holiday - Crete](#)

June 7-11, 2017: Artistic

adventure tales set in the Middle East unfolded in my impressionable childhood years.

Fast forward . . . my first Renaissance Faire, the "Grand Daddy" of them all in the Agoura Hills of southern California in 1980. The section of the old oak forest called the "Traders Market" was as authentic you can imagine. Its handcrafted wares, food, and lovely exotic performances from various parts of the globe seemed like a dream come true. It was there, in the Turkish coffee house that I first delighted in seeing belly dancers in real life! Middle Eastern musicians droned, drummed and bowed the dancers into the café. With the tinkling sound of finger cymbals, they arrived chanting in a flash and flurry of smooth hip and shoulder movements. To my astonished eyes, in Egyptian finery and glory, were two men! Dressed differently from rest... being men of course... they proceeded to perform with two canes. They were spectacular, imagine my delight to discover MEN CAN DO THIS TOO! Inspired, I began classes with the renowned John Compton. Since my middle name is not "Grace," I can't say learning how to dance was not easy for me – but I was determined. With practice, conviction, and vision the rest, as they say, is history .

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Director Amina Beres teaches workshops in Gent and Brussels, Belgium.

July 10-15, 2017: Masters in Minneapolis with Eva Cernik.

Saturday and Sunday July 29-30, 2017: [Ren in the Glen](#). Glenwood City, WI.

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## *Turkish Dance Classes*

Learn more with Artistic Director Amina Beres

Classes are held on Tuesday evenings at the Hopkins Center for the Performing Arts

Spring 2017 Session  
March 28-May 23  
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Summer 2017 Session  
June 13 - July 25  
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.



## Serkan Tutar - Profile of a Male Belly Dancer

Serkan Tutar is one of the world's most accomplished belly dancers. The best dancers create emotional catharsis and enjoyment for their audiences, and Serkan does this by combining both strength and light, yin and yang. As a performer, he is physically expressive, demonstrating flawless technique that is always enhanced by his warm and playful stage personae. He is equally generous in person, offering his students opportunities to grow as dancers in a classroom atmosphere defined by professionalism, exploration, fun, and encouragement.

Serkan was a visiting artist for the Rakkas Minneapolis Dance

Amina also offers private lessons and coaching for individual dancers or troupes

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## *Dans Aşkına Turkish Dance Ensemble Advisory Council*

[Artemis Mourat](#) - International expert in Turkish Oriental and Romany dances, Artemis is an award-winning dance instructor, performer, and extensive academic researcher of Turkish dance and culture.

[Sarah Dorman](#) - Founder and owner of SaraCura. A local arts patron, yoga instructor and world traveller, Sarah is also a blogger for the Twin Cities Fringe Festival.

[June Seaney](#) - New England's expert on all Romani dances, June directs Chandani Belly Dance Troupe and Danza Roani Dance Troupe. She also teaches bellydance through the Physical Education department of

Festival, sponsored by Dans Askina this past August. While he was here, we were able to learn more about his dance philosophies and discover what motivates him.

Like a lot of people who are passionate about belly dance, Serkan was struck by a thunderbolt feeling that belly dance was his “thing” when he was a young child. “When I was 10-years old my family went to live in a Middle Eastern country,” he said. “My first belly dance lesson was from our Arabic landlady. She taught me with a tea glass and spoon how to make noise when I shimmy. After we moved back to Turkey I studied belly dance from videos, all the Egyptian stars. I also found the Turkish belly dancer Nesrin Topkapi and got lessons from her. My first paid performance was when I was 17-years old.”

Growing up in Izmir, a city on the western coast of Turkey, the seaside, the mix of Greeks and Turks living side-by-side, and the mild weather all influenced him. Music and instrumentation were also a part of his upbringing, and he was exposed to a wide variety of music from different cultures. His mother is Balkan Yugoslavian and his father Balkan Turkish, and this made for unique family cultural experiences. All of these things continue to form who he is on stage and in the classroom. “I want people to know that culture, dance, and history connects us as people.”

Education department of  
Cornell University.

[Nancy Fetzek](#) - Nancy's Turkish dance and costuming expertise arose from her numerous travels across Turkey. She collaborates with the Minnesota Turkish-American Association for Festival of Nations performances, and creates custom dance costuming through her Etsy shop - ZambakDesigns.

[Emily Jarrett Hughes](#) - Emily specializes in women's dances from the Balkans and Asia Minor including Balkan Romani and Turkish folkloric dance and has her own performance troupe, Living Wisdom. Her company organizes special events that use culturally-based dance to connect people with the natural world.  
[www.wisdomdances.com](http://www.wisdomdances.com)

[Alexandra Howes](#) - A high school teacher, Alexandra brings a broad depth of expertise as an educator, performer, director of high school theater programs, and educator of theater and dance.

Even though Serkan has mastered many Middle Eastern dance styles, Turkish Oryantal and Romani dance are special to him.

“There is love in it,” he said. “I’m more energetic and positive when I do Turkish dance. From the beginning I can catch the audience and we bring up the energy together.”

Serkan has received many accolades, (he was named Male Belly Dancer of the World in 2008), is beloved by audiences, and travels the world as an elite dancer. However, navigating the world of belly dance as a man has had its challenges. As a young boy and a man seriously pursuing belly dance, his interest was not considered “normal” at the time, although male belly dancing was very much a part of Ottoman Turkish culture and part of a long history of dance traditions. Serkan persevered, but sometimes the social pressure got to him. He even tried to quit in his early 20s when he was conscripted into the Army, but his dance spirit would not be suppressed. “I have to have dance in my life. It’s the best way of connecting,” he said. “Sometimes I meet people and they say, Belly dance? You!? But once they see me dance, they see it as an art.”

Serkan’s home base is in Belgium, but the whole world sparks his inventive creativity. He walks the city streets in search of culture

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## *Our Mission*

To promote cultural awareness and appreciation of the dances, costumes, and music of Turkey through workshops, performances, and collaboration with other ethnic artists.

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Dans Askina is a nonprofit organization with fiscal sponsorship through [Springboard for the Arts](#)

Dans Askina project activities are made possible in part by a grant from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (supported in part by an appropriation from the Minnesota State Legislature and the Minnesota arts and Cultural Heritage Fund).

and history; or sits in parks or on the metro and watches people go about their lives. “That’s inspiring to me. I take so much from human nature.” He listens to the city and the people make their own music, and finds things to incorporate into choreography—a flirty facial expression, intense eye contact, or a flick of the fingers.

“I am the luckiest person. I am doing my passion and what I love as a job. When we are dancing we are in the same world. Dance makes the world better.”



### Masters in Minneapolis 2017

Masters in Minneapolis offers open classes and workshops with world-renown dance instructors. "There is no fee for participation in the open classes and workshops; we do require advance registration to keep the class sizes to a manageable level," says Amina Beres, Dans Aşkina's Artistic Director. "We have had

participants take advantage of our affiliation with Springboard for the Arts by making a tax-deductible donation as a show of appreciation for our efforts in having Masters in Minneapolis; their donations help us fund future guest artists to come here. Our goal is to broaden not only the dance skills of our entire local dance community, but also to providing an opportunity to learn a little of the cultural context of different dance styles from different instructors."

The Masters in Minneapolis 2017 schedule includes current Lebanese dance sensation Lebanese Simon in March, and Turkish dance legend Eva Cernik in July.

Information about the July workshops will be available in May on Dans Aşkına's [website](#) and Facebook [page](#).

Why Lebanese dance? "We invited Simon to teach both Lebanese Oriental and Dabke, the Lebanese line dance. Lebanese Oriental dance is the stylistic bridge between the Turkish and Egyptian styles of Oriental dance; by offering a cultural lecture of Dabke as well as teaching it, Simon was an obvious choice to fill a void in our local dance knowledge base. He is also an excellent instructor with a wealth of knowledge to share about his Lebanese heritage," says Amina. "Due to his busy schedule, he was only in town for 2 days; hopefully we can invite him back for a longer stay so dancers can take advantage of individual lessons with him."

In July, Eva Cernik's classes include 'Veil as a Partner, not a Prop'; 'Playing with Dance (transitions, layering, partnering, and junctures between moves), and 'Eva's Signature Moves.' Eva will be also available for private lessons and coaching.

## 2017 East Side Arts Council Global Dance Residency Program

From February 6-10, 2017 our Artistic Director Amina Beres taught over 100 students from Phalen Lake Elementary School in St. Paul, MN Turkish Folk Dance and culture. The Global Dance Residency program at the school was funded by a grant and administered through the East Side Arts Council.

The Turkish dance workshop series was part of a larger residency program with three other folk dance artists (Northern Indian, Aztec, and Scandinavian).

"This was such a thrill, and I have to thank Ethnic Dance Theater's Artistic Director Don LaCourse for recommending me for this opportunity", said Amina. "While this program has been up and running for a number of years, it's the first time they've had Turkish Folk Dance as a component. The school is predominantly Hmong students, so it was exciting to teach a little about Turkish culture as well as the folk dance."

Classes were held in the mornings from Monday through Thursday over the course of the week, with a student performance for the entire school on Friday morning. "Each class was a little over an hour, starting with 3rd grade, then 4th grade, and then 5th grade", says Amina. "They all learned the Turkish Folk Dance Elmalarin Yongasi, how to say "Good Morning", "Wonderful", and "Beautiful" in Turkish, and the history of the Turkish Evil Eye. At the end of the week, all the students received an Evil Eye good luck charm for their performance."

"Elmalarin Yongasi is a Turkish spoon dance about

cutting/chopping apples, so I created a village scene for the students to 'set the stage'. Then I gave some of the steps names like 'chopping step' and 'eagle step', which helped in remembering the choreography", said Amina. "The important thing was they had fun, and they got to perform for their families and peers. It's so rewarding to see young minds so eager to learn about a different culture...we adults can learn a lot from them!"



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