

Keti Sharif's

MIDDLE EASTERN DANCE & MUSIC



GLOSSARY OF TERMS



Keti Sharif's

MIDDLE EASTERN DANCE & MUSIC GLOSSARY OF TERMS

almeh - Egyptian colloquial term for a learned woman, principal dancer

Andalusian - Spanish/Moorish inspired dance with sweeping movements, half moon poses and usually performed in pale coloured dress with long sleeves and turban. Also known as Mutashahat.

arghul - Arabic twin reed pipe played as a flute

Assyut - Egyptian town known for its famous silver embossed fabric Assyuti

Aswan - southern Egypt, also known as Upper Egypt

ayoub (rhythm) - also called the Zaar, is a simple yet spiritually powerful rhythm with a hypnotic, mesmerizing feel. Ayoub is a single dom followed by a single tak, then another, with a tiny delay just a single sixteenth note, between that first dom and the next tak. So the rhythm comes out as dom·tak-dom tak, dom·tak-dom tak. Ayoub is most often associated with the trance dances of the dervishes, who whirled themselves into a religious ecstasy using the energy of the pounding doms and trance-inducing hypnotic feel of the rhythm. The same rhythm, generally played more slowly and called the Zaar, is used in Egypt and Northern Africa to drive away evil spirits.

baladi - Egyptian term meaning 'native' or 'of the country'. Robust yet sensual earthy urban folkloric style, more refined than folk, but deep seated and earthier than classical dance. Usually performed in a kaftan or dress with a hip scarf and/or head scarf. Aissuit dress (black with silver embossing) is popular attire for baladi. Downward hip moves are prominent.

bambi - Arabic for the colour pink, also refers to a style of coquettish baladi dance

bazouki - Greek lute Bint al balad - Egyptian term meaning 'girl of the country'



bourka - full face veil worn in the Middle east - made from either netting or opaque fabric. It is worn by Bedouin women, the women of the Western desert and even in the traditional dance of Alexandria, the Eskenderaya. The Eskendereya version is made of net, and does not cover the face. Here is an image of Farida Fahmy wearing one.





call-and-response - a musical term for conversation between instruments

cengi - Turkish term for gypsy

chiftetelli (dance) - Greek and Turkish style of bellydancing. Sensual to fast rhythmic patterns known as chiftetelli usually performed in two piece costume. Focus on undulations and pelvic tilts upwards.

chiftetelli (rhythm) - Turkish rhythm marked by a distinctive rest on the final beat, which gives the rhythm a very soft and relaxed feel. It is often used as the underlying rhythm for taqsim segments of songs, allowing the other musicians to solo freely over the softly flowing Chiftetelli rhythm. In terms of dancing, fluid moves as snake arms work well, and when the drummer and dancer both freeze for that final eighth beat, with an exciting 'momentarily suspended' effect.

dabke - Arabic men's or men and women's folkloric group dance performed with group linking arms and using heavy footwork in sync with each other. Traditional attire is a dress with pantaloons. Also performed in Syria and Jordan.

danse du ventre - French term for bellydance – literally translates to “dance of the belly”



darbuka - Turkish or Arabic drum made from clay or metal

darj - Iranian dance 6/8rhythm

djinn - Arabic name for spirits

dof - Arabic tambourine minus the cymbals

doholla - largest of the Egyptian tablas (drums)

dom - the name given to the bass sound produced when striking the tabla, darbuka or Middle Eastern drum

dumbek - Turkish brass drum

Eskendereya - dance from the city of Alexandria in northern Egypt. Flirty Alexandrian dance with a milaya, or heavy veil, formerly used as a fashion accessory in the 40s. Dancer wears a bourka - netted face veil, and a frilly mid-knee length dress.

Fayoum Oasis - province in north west Egypt

fellaha - Egyptian farm girl derived from fellahin (Egyptian farmers)

fellahi - Festive shimmy and fast-paced celebration dance of the farmers. Uses pots or doffs (tambourine) whilst dancing in village dress - sometimes floral print with head piece lined with pom-poms.

figure-eights - bellydance hip move that traces a shape like a curvy number eight

guedra - Earthy blessing ritual performed by Berber tribes, includes dancing on knees and flicking moves of hands and wrist.



ghawazee - Gypsies, from the term 'invaders of the heart'. Also a vibrant gypsy dance with finger cymbals and focus on hip moves. A kaftan or shirt that is tight fitting on top, with wide skirts and pantaloons.



hafla - Arabic term for party or celebration

hagalla - Festive dance of the Western Desert, performed in dresses (see Farida Fahmy opposite) from Marsa Matruh region or heavy black kaftans and woven face veils from other regions. Tribal and earthy with mostly hip moves.

head slide - The main head movement used in bellydance is the head slide (a gentle continuous move from right to left, the head slides horizontally). It is very much used in Persian dance, Turkish and Egyptian folklore.



henna - decorative red, brown or black tattoo design lasting approximately three weeks, derived from the henna plant. Often used for weddings and Arabic celebrations

hip drop - an Egyptian signature move, it is a deep seated downward hip move. Again make sure the whole body doesn't 'drop' when the hip does - isolation is important.

hip lift - the hip lifts upward whilst the rest of the body remains quite still. Isolation is important for effective fast hip moves. Turkish, Lebanese, Persian and Ghawazee (Egyptian Gypsy dance) incorporates many hip lifts.

karsilama - Turkish folkdance in a 9/8 rhythm with syncopated steps, done in a group. Folk style costume with pantaloons, and zills played.

kawala - Turkish reed flute, originally a shepherd's pastoral calling instrument also known as kavala in Arabic



khaleege - Dance from the Arabian Gulf performed in an ultra long gold-embroidered kaftan which is held in the hands whilst dancing. Includes refined, rhythmic footwork, hand gestures and hair flicking moves.

khawals - gypsy men who would dress as and impersonate female dancers. A derogatory term these days in the Middle East.

lakoum - term for the desert Turkish delight, also a bellydance move

malemma - head village woman

maluf (rhythm) - fast Arabic rhythm for the dancer's entrance, often played as an intro for classical orchestral compositions especially created for Oriental dance. Maluf is commonly used when a dancer enters or exits the stage. Like Ayoub, it is a two-beat rhythm, but it has only one dom instead of Ayoub's driving two doms. The quickness of the two-beat rhythm and the lightness of having only one dom give Maluf a lively yet relaxed and rolling feel. Its energetic enough to capture the audience's attention when the dancer enters, but still leaves them wanting more.

masmoudi (rhythm) - The Masmoud are a Berber tribe of northern Africa, and the 'i' ending indicates something from or to do with the Masmoud. Musically speaking, Masmoudi is interesting in that it is 8 counts long and partially symmetric. The first half consists of two doms and one set of taks, while the second half consists of one dom and two sets of taks. The length of the rhythm, its asymmetry and the combination of strong doms and light taks give the dancer lots of opportunity to interpret this rhythm in various creative ways.



Mata Hari - infamous Dutch dancer and spy known for her exotic bellydance style costumes and dance

maqsum (rhythm) - Sprightly Egyptian rhythm widely considered the basic baladi rhythm, and the most common rhythm used in today's bellydancing music. The word maqsum itself means half or halved. One theory is that the name and the rhythm come from halving (in the sense of playing half as fast) the very fast and very basic fellahi rhythm.

mastika - Literally meaning 'drinking song' this is a rather parodied version of fast Turkish dance, with many pelvic tilts upward and hip lifts.

maya - an outward figure of eight bellydance move that means 'water' in Arabic

mazhar - large tambourine with cymbals

mervlana - Turkish term for the whirling derwish also known as tanoura in Egypt. Islamic ance of spiritual nirvana through constant turning movement, of Sufi origin.



milaya il'laff - a type of large veil used for an Egyptian dance from Alexandria

mizmar - Arabic horn played at festivals

ney - reed flute

Nubian - Sprightly folkdance from Nubia with African overtones, usually performed in a white cotton kaftan with colourful embroidery.



oriental - term for the classical style of Arabic bellydance. Classical bellydance, usually in two piece costume with more armwork, ballet inspired turns and refined hip work. Dramatic and sensual, with many changing moods, often danced to orchestral pieces.

orientalism - genre of art, poetry and imagery that was inspired by a somewhat fictitious romanticism of the exotic East; its dance, music and mysterious allure

oud - Arabic lute, literally meaning 'flexible stick'. Fretless instrument played in the takht or wooden instrument band or acoustic Arabic ensemble.

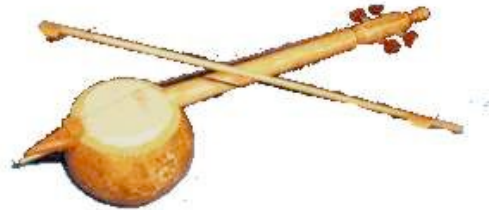


Ouled Nail - dancers on the Algerian fringe who fascinated travelers in the 1900's. Earthy yet poised dance from the Ouled Nail tribeswomen. Highly decorated tribal costume with heavy skirts, layered, and coins.

Persian motreb - Elegant Iranian dance with a hanky, dressed in kaftan with flowing sleeves. Refined footwork and concentrated hip moves.



qanoun - Arabic zither made of walnut with 48 strings
rababa - ancient Arabic string instrument made from a coconut shell, similar to a violin



rababa - coconut shell instrument played similarly to a violin, but resting on the ground, and held vertically

rakkass - Turkish term for dance. Flamboyant cabaret bellydance done in two piece costume with a lot of hip work, especially hip lifts and shimmies.

rakkassa - Turkish term for dancer

raqs sharqi - Arabic term meaning 'dance of the East'

req - small tambourine with skin and cymbals



rompi - Turkish style of Gypsy dance sometimes called rompi-rompi with many colloquialisms and hand symbols

sagat - Arabic term for finger cymbals (zills in Turkish)

Shimmy - a distinctive controlled quivering of the flesh on the hips and bottom. You must relax your knees and build up a constant vibration from the knees to the thighs. The move can range from subtle to exuberant.

Saiidi (dance) - traditionally a men's cane dance from El Saiid, Upper Egypt. Stealthy cane dance, where men in kaftans dance a sprightly martial arts like dance with heavy canes. The Raqs al Tahtib or men's stick dance upon which the Raqs al Assaya or women's cane dance is performed to a strong and lively Saiidi rhythm accompanying the fierce and powerful movements of the dance's ritualized combat.



Saiidi (rhythm) - The Saiidi rhythm originating in the Upper Egypt regions of Aswan and Luxor, is based on three strong doms, with a single dom at the very start, and then driving forward with two doms in the middle. It is a traditional rhythm but has been applied to Egyptian pop or sha'abi music.



santoor - zither similar to the qanoun

saz - Turkish version of the lute, with a longer, slimmer neck and smaller body

sha'abi - modern style of Egyptian street dancing. Fun, modern form of urban 'street dance' or 'dance of the people', similar to baladi, but danced to more up-tempo music.



shamadan - Dance with lit candelabra balanced on head, classical movements usually performed in a dress. Especially popular at weddings as the fire "drives away evil spirits".

shikhat - Festive tribal women's dance with many moves mimicking birth ritual and was a former 'wedding night' dance.

shoulder shimmy - a rapid, relaxed vibrating move in the shoulders. Hands remain still while the shoulders shimmy.

snake arms - slow, mesmerizing move done with arms out to the side, alternating levels, ie: lift one arm up while the other is down low and then smoothly, swap. Maintain some poise in the arms. You can do this by focusing on the elbows lifting the arms up and down.

tabul - large double sided drum

tak - the name given to the treble sound produced when striking the tabla (drum)

takht - woodwind and strings ensemble

taktib - the name of the heavy staff (wooden fighting stick) and the men's cane dance of Upper Egypt

tanoura - Egyptian whirling derwish (see mervlana)

taqsim - improvised dance to emotive melodies

toura - extra large finger cymbals played in the orchestra

tremolando - quivering note with a vibrating quality, especially hear with strings



tribal - a style of dance with elements of Berber, Ouled Nail and Ghawazee dance movements and costume. Emphasis on the 'tribe' or connected group dancing.

Tuareg - a tribe of Moroccan Berbers also known as the 'blue people' because the indigo in their face veils and turbans would stain their skin.

undulation - a sinewy swaying motion of the spine and belly. First move the weight of the body forward and then 'pulling back' with the abs and pelvis, like a wave.



wahda el'kebira - spacious rhythm literally meaning the 'large one'

wahda wa noss - Arabic rhythm with two distinct parts meaning 'one and a half' used in Egyptian baladi dance

Waheda - One of the first words you learn in Arabic is wahid meaning one. The name is perfectly appropriate in that waheda comprises one dom on the first count, followed by three counts worth of taks. With just one (wahid) heavy dom and a whole series of lighter taks, this rhythm has a very light and flowing feel and is thus particularly well suited to softer movements such as hip circles or camel.

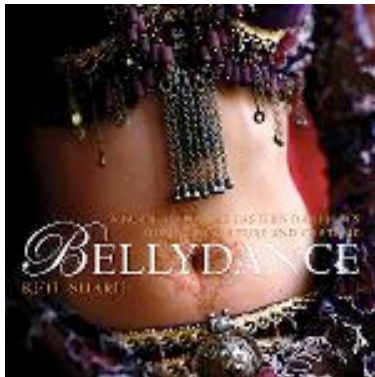
zaafen - Yemeni group dance featured at weddings and celebrations. When performed by men, very sprightly steps in a group similar to dabke, but with athletic squats - like Cossac dance. Women perform a gentler version.

zaar - Egyptian trance dance and spiritual cleansing ritual that involves shaking the body and flicking the hair. Borkhul (incense) is sometimes brought out by the dancer in a brass holder, and the dance begins slowly, building up to a frenzied trance state, with hair flicking.

zaffa - Arabic term for wedding, also, a characteristic rhythm for a wedding procession, usually with many drummers and mizmar players with a folkloric dance group in the centre of the festivities.

zills - Turkish term for brass finger cymbals

Glossary from 'Bellydance' book by Keti Sharif
Available via Keti's website or www.amazon.com



See many free articles and downloads for bellydancers!
Click on [ARTICLES](#)

www.ketisharif.com