

Mohamed El Hosseny

Nourhan Sharif produced/ Invited **Mohamed El Hosseny** to teach for the first time in the USA & Canada 2009 & 2010 ~ Both were Sharifwear sponsored tours! **Mohamed El Hosseny** joined the famous Egyptian Reda Troupe in 1992. During his career as a dancer, he performed all solo parts also with Mahmoud Reda's private dance company, among them the male solo in the Rubabikiya operette in 1999. Besides Egyptian folk dances, Hosseny studied also ballet and performed with the ballerina Diana Calenti for several years. Also featuring in many TV-shows, he got to be known to the Egyptian audience as the #1 male dancer of Egypt!

Mohamed El Hosseny teaches weekly classes in Helsinki and gives workshops in other locations in Finland as well as other countries (see Events). He has taught in many festivals, among them Yalla! Festival of Oriental Dance in Helsinki and Ahlan wa sahlan festival in Cairo. Teaching is for Hosseny a vocation. His students know him as a demanding and minutious, yet encouraging and friendly teacher, who plans his classes carefully and is able to take care of each student. No student is left alone with the steps and combinations, Hosseny explains patiently and friendly, speaking clear English, making sure that everybody gets to enjoy dancing. In his classes the students don't only learn a choreography, but get a solid basis of technique as well as many useful advises for developing their own dance.

Hosseny's repertoire includes both different Egyptian folkloric styles and traditional as well as modern Oriental dance. He masters all commonly known Egyptian folk dances, from Saidi to Alexandrian, Nubian to Fellahi, and naturally Simsimiyya, which is in his blood as he has danced it since his childhood in his hometown Suez.

Ballet training of many years has given him power, body control and dancing technique on which he builds his charismatic stage expression, and also his systematic way of teaching classes. A strong eager in developing himself as a teacher as well as a choreographer can be seen in his oriental, baladi and fusion dances, where his own special style consists of always suitable combinations of emotionality, lightness and drama. Hosseny is the director of El Hosseny Dance Company, founded in 2005.



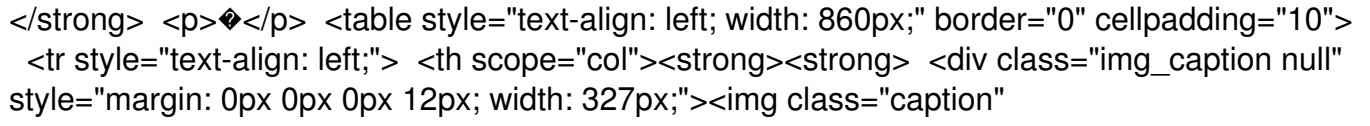
ARTICLE

Northern California Chronicle

Mohamed El Hosseny Dazzles

Audiences on Premier American Tour

By Elaine Pasquini

 On his first U.S. visit, Egyptian dancer Mohamed El Hosseny teaches students at San Francisco's Mission Dance Theatre. Staff photo P. Pasquini

Following the moves of master choreographer Mohamed El Hosseny, students of Middle Eastern dance gyrated to the beat of folk music from the Suez at San Francisco's Mission Dance Theatre on July 19. Possessing a personality as dynamic as his original choreography, the Egyptian-born dancer directed his class of 12 women and one man twisting and spiraling around the wooden-floored studio during his five-hour workshop organized by Zsuzsi, a dancer, music student and the founder of Santa Cruz-based Mediterraneo Productions.

Renowned Middle Eastern master dance instructor Nourhan Sharif sponsored El Hosseny's U.S. tour. He was a featured instructor in Sharif's 12th annual Intensive Egyptian Workshop in New York City July 24 through 26. El Hosseny also traveled to Kalamazoo, MI, Miami, FL and Washington, DC to teach and perform Egyptian folkloric styles, including his trademark Simsimiyya, the signature dance form of his hometown, Suez, where he was born in 1973 and began his dance career at age 13.

In 1992, El Hosseny joined the celebrated Reda Troupe in Cairo. He performed solo roles with the company, including the male lead in the operetta *Rubabiki*. Eager to expand his training and repertoire, he studied and performed ballet with Diana Calenti.

Since 2005 the dancer has been based in Helsinki, Finland, where he is the director of El Hosseny Dance School and Company. Along with instructor Tuija Rinne, he teaches weekly classes in Oriental dance technique, expression, and interpreting rhythms. Besides dance, he told the Washington Report, my students learn a great deal about Arab music, rhythms and the cultural background of the dance.

For more information visit <http://www.elhossenydance.com/ds/index.html> title="Mohamed El Hosseny"

From the City by the Bay to the Big Apple

As a farewell to his new friends and students in San Francisco, El Hosseny gave an impromptu performance to the accompaniment of the Georges Lammam Ensemble at Pena Pachamama restaurant before heading east to participate in Nourhan Sharif's dance workshop at New York City's Ripley-Grier Studios. In addition to teaching folklore, Baladi and Simsimiyya technique, El Hosseny teamed with master percussionist Karim Nagi to introduce rhythms and maqams—a system of melodic modes used in traditional Arabic music—in order to increase students' understanding of Egyptian music.

Nagi, also known as Turbo Tabla, is an Egyptian musician and composer who blends traditional Arabic music with modern sounds. *The Belly and the Beat* is one of his popular releases.

Following the final workshop, El Hosseny and Nagi performed July 26 in a gala event at Manhattan's Lafayette Grill & Bar.

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Mohamed El Hosseny in New York, July 2009</p> <h1>Mohamed El Hosseny has been referred to as the Reda of the 21st century by many American Dancers on this debut 2009 tour
by Nourhan Sharif</h1> I am not quite sure how to begin to review what transpired in America during Egyptian born dancer Mohamed El Hosseny's first United States tour this Summer 2009 , except to say there was a phenomenal response and lots of tears from students, co-sponsors, and myself! The tour took Mohamed El Hosseny to five cities-San Francisco, New York City, where he performed with Karim Nagi, Miami, Kalamazoo, Michigan & Washington, DC. The tour lasted five weeks, shows & privates in every city and he proved himself to be a master of Egyptian Dance that we can only look forward to seeing more of in the coming years !

 Oh my god is the best phrase any of us could find here!! I have not seen this much talent in one person in a long time!! In my lifetime, I have met only a few dancers that have blown my mind! Mohamed El Hosseny is the fourth one after a full lifetime of dancing! While there are many whom I respect, only a handful can offer the "entire package"! Watching him perform and teach was emotional as well as educational for all of us ! Dance is a language for him, and it was mesmerizing to watch the music lead him as he choreographed his dances with his own vocabulary. His work ethic is impeccable! His stamina is boundless! His love for the dance is infectious! He has incredible strength in his execution of movement and performance ability. He knows how to teach and how to reach the students. His skills in Folklore and Oriental are equally strong. He has a firm footing in both styles, and he has a great deal of training in ballet and jazz, which shines through, but doesn't overpower his Egyptian roots. He is not a carbon copy of other master teachers. His success as a dancer is a direct result of his hard work at creating his own distinct style! He has created more than 150 choreographies since he started living outside of Egypt and one can see his ability to choreograph will set the pulse of Raks Sharqi in the future ! He is quickly becoming an established pioneer of our dance form!

I first met Mohamed El Hosseny a few years ago in Finland. We were both teaching and performing at the Masrah organized festival in Helsinki, where he lives (when not touring) and runs El Hosseny Dance School, which he founded in 2005, with long time Finnish dancer and promoter Tuija Rinne. When I saw him teach and perform at the Masrah festival I knew I finally saw a future leader for the dance form. I was simply mesmerized by the Layali Simsimiyya show/production he had choreographed, and I knew instinctively at that moment he was no ordinary artist. From that moment on, I knew I wanted to bring him to the United States to show American dancers something authentic and very real. I wanted them to see something pure from Egypt that was not jaded, tarnished or altered in any way, and yet would still appeal widely to the American market. What they would see was something very similar to Riverdance in energy, but not commercial in any form & extremely fresh, new & innovative!

In Egypt, Mohamed El Hosseny grew up in Suez and started dancing Simsimiyya when he was a young child. He joined the famous Reda Troupe in 1992, where he performed all solo parts, including the male solo in the Rubabikiya operetta in 1999. As a trained ballet dancer, he performed alongside ballerina Diana Calenti for several years. His string of TV appearances elevated him to national status in Egypt, where he is known as the first male dancer of his country. He continues to teach all over the world, including the Yalla! Festival of Oriental Dance in Helsinki & Ahlan wa Sahlan festival in Cairo, but more importantly he makes massive choreographic productions in Helsinki annually. The current production he is working on will have approximately 15 brand new choreographies and be

presented in Finland this November 2009.

I must admit that in the last few years, I have become a bit disenchanted with the amount of misinformation and confusion that circulates in the Middle Eastern dance scene. We already have some very strong leaders in the dance world right now, such as Mahmoud Reda, but I was starting to wonder who would take over when this generation passes on. It has been a disturbing thought for me. There are festivals that claim to represent the Arabic culture, but don't even use Arabic music. Recently, I stood in a large festival in America for four hours while helping a Sharifwear distributor, I was waiting for a piece of Arabic music to be played, and it never happened! Yet the festival was called an Arabic name, which is very confusing for beginning dancers. Fusion is fun, but it is still a departure from organic Egyptian dance, and without knowing what fusion is departing from, how are we supposed to also help to preserve the Raks Sharqi technique that brought us to where we are? What is becoming of our art form? Why are we not moving forward as a whole and learning more about Arab culture? Instead, the global community seems to be gravitating towards less understanding of the roots of the dance that I dedicated a big portion of my life to!

What we dance is not an isolated act in of itself! It comes from a country and a culture! If you don't step away from the Western world, travel to the Middle East, sit with Arabs and learn about culture, customs, religions, you will never get the full picture of what the dance represents. When people ask me why I have been successful as a dancer, I tell them it is because I have worked hard in educating myself and immersing myself in the culture. Dance is not just what my body does. It lives in my mind as well!!! With all of the ease and accessibility globalization and the internet offer in self-education, we should not be moving in the direction of ignorance. We should be taking advantage of it as an opportunity to learn more. Middle Eastern dance is becoming a joke in many circles because of this break from its culture. Why would you hire a non born Egyptian teacher when Mahmoud Reda is alive and still teaching? There needs to be more examination and discussion about indigenous dances and dance artists from Egypt. Dance artists at the top of their craft like Mohamed El Hosseny should be all over the internet! Saidi, Simsimiyya, Nubian, Muwashahat, etc -- every Middle Eastern dancer should know what these basic folkloric forms are and how to properly execute them as they are the backbone of Raks Sharqi! Sadly enough, many have no idea what I am referring to when I mention these forms in passing!!

The current USA dance population had never heard of Simsimiyya before Mohamed El Hosseny came this summer and many folks attended based on my referral ..not having any idea what I was indeed talking about !! (and loved it!) So many times, I would ask myself, ♦Where is the next Reda?♦ Who will lead this dance form in a positive direction in the next century? Why doesn't anyone inspire me anymore? Am I ready to retire? What is happening, I kept asking myself. The very dance I have loved and devoted myself to for decades was deteriorating before my very eyes. Where, I asked myself, are the great teachers of tomorrow? Then il hamdu lillah I met Mr. Hosseny who has immense talent & skills and I am indeed inspired to continue teaching and promoting this fine art form & artist in North America!! Without inspiration it is hard to continue in any art form and ours is no exception! I was in the desert and he was the water I needed to continue to create Enheduana, Mashuka, Zuzu and others touched by this tour whose comments are below felt exactly the same as myself ..

 As an ambassador of dance and culture for Egypt and a lifelong dancer since I was two-years-old in diapers doing Raks Sharqi, I can count on one hand the artists I have met who have inspired me the same way Mohamed el Hosseny did. He is that artist!! He is a man who is in love with what he does! You can see his love for the dance in his eyes, and that love is infectious to all who experience it! He inspired me like no other person I

have met since the millennium. His work is fresh, not jaded, from the road of the belly dance business without a trace of commercial corruption. I have no doubt that not only will he go to the top of the dance form like a rocket, but that he will also train a generation of dancers around the world that will be proud to represent "Hosseny Technique." Inshallah, I will be representing that group in the United States as his manager for North American affairs. I am proud to help disseminate & be associated with his work throughout the North American continent. He is strong, talented, speaks English well (an unexpected and pleasant surprise), and he uses multiple layers of the music in his choreography. As interpreters of music, dancers are musicians in their own right, and his own musicality shines through when he dances and teaches. He has a strong understanding of rhythms and maqams, and he sings while he teaches! (Which is unusual in the USA) Principal Dancer from the National Folkloric troupe of Egypt Faten Salama met him on this trip in Washington, DC and she called me immediately to tell me she started to feel very emotional hearing him teach from outside the room ..she had heard no one since Mr. Reda behave that way in the classroom ...!! She gave him a firm thumbs up and agreed with everything I stated above so I know it is not just my perspective on this artist! He also spontaneously played piano for the NY students when they couldn't get the melody..the man is just bursting with energy and talent all the time!

In the studio, he is both demanding and encouraging of his students. His ballet and jazz training are evident in his repertoire. His attention to detail and dancing from the soul is so obvious, he told all of the students they are now his children and that dancing for him is his life which was quite evident! He captured his audience in all five cities in his first United States tour both in the classroom and on the stage!

From the USA dancers perspective ~Dancers in Finland are extremely lucky to have in Mohamed El Hosseny & his incredible contributions in their country, a man destined to become the 21st century's star of Egyptian dance!! Mohamed El Hosseny & Tuija Rinne's school is one of the brightest & most creative in the world! Currently, he is working intensively on all new choreographies for his production "Egypt," due to premiere this November 2009 and I am sure it will delight audiences in Finland as much as previous performances he gave here in the United States. I am delighted for him & Tuija and the lucky El Hosseny Dance Company, that is getting invaluable training from him at his peak and will insure that they all continue to have careers in Raks Sharqi should they desire to teach his methods in the future!

American & Canadian Dancers are eagerly waiting for his return in Summer 2010!

Due to the overwhelming response from dancers here in the States, his tour next year will be expanded to ten cities throughout North America!

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</p> <p class="MsoNormal" style="margin: 0in 0in 0pt;">Sing, o simsimiyya

by Tuija Rinne
2004
</p> <p class="MsoNormal" style="margin: 0in 0in 0pt;"> </p> <p class="MsoNormal" style="margin: 0in 0in 0pt;">Simisimiyya is an instrument belonging to the folk music of the Suez canal, Said, Ismailiyya and Suez towns and ports. The same word is also used to describe the genre of Canal district folk music, in which the simsimiyya instrument is the main instrument.

The instrument itself is a kind of lyre, a stringed instrument that was carried to the Canal district towns from Sudan along the coast. According to Dwight Reynolds, an ethnomusicologist who has studied the simsimiyya music, the instrument arrived in <span style="background-color: transparent; font-family:

& & color: #000000; font-size: x-small;"/>Port Said in 1938, and it looked somewhat different than the present-day instrument. According to theory the instrument was carried from Africa to Yemen by ship, and nowadays features in Yemeni folk music.

The older form of simsimiyya, the tanboura, is said to have its roots in Ancient Egypt and is currently played in Upper Egypt. It has five strings and is tuned in pentatonic scale. It is smaller than the simsimiyya, and its strings are made of organic material. The tanboura was not used to accompany singing, it was rather a zar instrument. Over the course of time and with the development of the tradition the instrument changed. The actual simsimiyya, which is used to accompany singing, usually has from 12 to 14 metallic strings, sometimes even 25, and it is tuned to fit the maqams of Arab music.

The development of an urban folklore

Throughout time the Suez Canal district has been a gateway of crucial importance between Africa and

style="background-color: transparent; font-family: & & color: #000000; font-size: x-small;">Asia, and from the beginning of Islam pilgrim, Muslims have travelled through Suez on their way to and from Mecca. That is why it is natural that the district has been affected by different cultural influences. The completion of the Suez Canal in 1869 was an important event for Egypt, strategically, politically as well as economically, and it also affected the development of the districts folk music. During its building, the workers came from all parts of Egypt and brought with them their own musical traditions, and so did the Western engineers and the administrative staff with their families. Port Said was divided in two parts, Western and

Egyptian; the foreigners organised weekly dancing parties, the Egyptians gathered in dammas to play music and sing. In damma gatherings, the musicians and singers sat in a circle, often on laundry stools. The instruments used were the tabla-drum, spoons, and sometimes a tambourine. The simsimiyya didn't come along until probably the late thirties. The words of the songs were usually about love or religious feelings. The ethnomusicologist Mohamed Shabana, in his doctoral thesis, studied the music of the Canal district and its different historical and stylistic layers. According to him, the damma songs are influenced by at least five musical genres: the religious hadra, the workers' songs, the songs of awalims, the old muwashshah songs and the traditions of the surrounding areas. Also more classical genres belonging to the upper class "descended" to the music of ordinary people of the district. According to some sources the simsimiyya instrument came to the Canal shores in 1938, and became smoothly adapted to the musical tradition of the district. Soon it became the most essential instrument of this urban tradition of

Port Said, Ismailiyya and Suez

The simsimiyya music is insomuch similar in the whole area, that we can speak about one genre. Differences between regions include, according to Shabana, dialectal variation in the lyrics as well as the shape of the instrument, which varies slightly from region to region.

The political meaning sing, o simsimiyya to the bullet of the rifle and the strong hand on the trigger sing to the cannons and to people behind them and tell to the leader: shoot not just once shoot a thousand shots

Simsimiyya received a new importance in the 1950's when it became connected to the ideology of the resistance movement against British occupation, and it became the instrument of nationalistic music. The occupation forces confronted among the inhabitants of Suez a frantic resistance movement which reached its culmination in 1950-51. The renewed music tradition is filled with stories about the fierce nationalism and fighting spirit of

8.5pt;">. 1967 Egypt fought the Six-Day War against Israel, during which most homes in Suez were destroyed. The town became a ghost town torn to pieces, with its inhabitants evacuated along the Nile Delta. During that period the simsimiyya groups formed by young men had an important role in maintaining the unity of people originating from the Canal area.

One of the most known personalities who had effect on the reforming of the simsimiyya tradition is Mohamed Mahmoud Ghazali, known as Captain Ghazali, born in 1928, who was a lead figure of the resistance movement and formed a simsimiyya band called Awlad al-Ard in 1967.

The old lyrics were replaced with words describing new meanings and notions that were fundamental in the new political situation, and also expressed feelings of the sacredness of the battle and the glory of dying for one's own homeland. Ghazali even used to take his band all the way to the front line to perform their songs to encourage the combatants.

The troupe was known by the name firqat al-battaniyya ('the blanket orchestra') due to their habit of performing, seated in a circle, on a blanket. Beside the simsimiyya, the instruments used were a washbasin, tin cans, spoons and empty bottles, to produce different rhythms. Ghazali wrote the lyrics; he wanted to "convey to all Egyptians the comforting message of hope and security and to raise the fighting spirit of the troops". He used to travel around the villages singing Suez songs and making people know that the resistance movement was still strong. The band soon became famous all over

x-small;">Egypt; several groups were founded in different parts of the country, and many poets began to write song lyrics.

After the victorious war of 1973 (Yom kippur war to Israelis, October war to Egyptians), the inhabitants of the Canal towns started to return to their homes, and the rebuilding began. During that period the influence of media to Egyptian music increased, and the simsimiyya tradition got its part of that influence; old songs were brought back to life, the proportion of the nationalistic songs decreased, and the simsimiyya instrument started to be used for performing different kinds of music.

The Al-Tanboura band from Port Said is probably the most famous simsimiyya band nowadays. It was founded in 1989 by Zakaria Ibrahim, who's aim is to enliven and preserve the old damma tradition. The band has also modernised the music tradition as well as the instrument itself. The lyrics of the band's songs often consist of old formulas, elements of religious rituals, popular wisdom and different metaphors.

The dance

Simsimiyya is an essential part of the repertoire of the folklore troupes of the Canal district. Mohamed El Hosseny, native of Suez and known as a leading dancer of Reda Troupe and Mahmoud Reda Troupe as well as a dance instructor and choreographer, started his career as a young boy in Suez folklore troupe, and feels very strongly being brought up by simsimiyya. While dancing simsimiyya he expresses most of all feelings of joy. The dance movements are brisk and cheerful, and include different charleston-styled steps. Men's dancing include impressive jumps, women do hip movements as well. The dancers also play with spoons, and in Suez

x-small;">, the performance also includes syncopated clapping, kaff, used only in

Suez

simsimiyya (kaff is also known in Nubian and Bedouine music, but the connection between these different traditions remains unknown). The district has no typical ethnic dress, and the dresses consist of stylised clothing of different groups of workers: fishermen, coastguard, bambutiyya (men who use rowing boats to trade between the harbour and the big ships). When Hosseny was dancing in

Suez

folklore troupe, the repertoire consisted mostly of love songs and different tableaux, among others the "Henna Night of Suez", which is one of the most famous and most often performed simsimiyya tableaux. Dances were also made to nationalistic songs. Hosseny prefers to do his own choreographies to old folk songs that are created spontaneously and have a romantic and yet joyful, sometimes even humorous mood.

A living tradition

Simsimiyya is still a living tradition. Weddings are organised in

Suez

with simsimiyya bands entertaining the guests. Hosseny mentions an episode that happened to him once: he was walking in his home town carrying a simsimiyya, when suddenly people gathered around him, grabbed the instrument and started to sing in the middle of the street.

The author's very first simsimiyya experience dates from the 1980-ies from

Port Said

where I was invited to a small meeting of a political party. The meeting was concluded with a musical performance, and I was told that this was the way they did it every time. There were a few old men sitting in the corner of the room, one of them playing simsimiyya, another one accompanying him with a washboard, two other men were singing. I don't recall the words, but I remember that some of the participants of the meeting stood up to dance in slow steps of bambutiyya.

References (among others)

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font-size: 8.5pt;">Suez Canal: the Birth of a Regional Popular Culture.
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Captain Ghazali: Simsimiyya Stories. http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/401/people.htm. 30.9.2004
Conversations with Mohamed El Hosseny and Mohamed Shabana during autumn 2004</p> <p>◆</p> <p class="style2" style="text-align: left;">◆</p> <p class="style2" style="text-align: left;">
</p> <p style="text-align: left;">For more information on training with this artist in New York City, please contact Nourhan Sharif at: Nourhan@aol.com</p> <p style="text-align: left;">◆</p> <p style="text-align: left;">

◆</p> <p style="text-align: left;">◆</p> <p style="text-align: left;">◆</p> <p>His Dancing Journey from Suez to Cairo, Helsinki, and Beyond</p> <h3>Interview by Zsuzsi
 of California on July 4th, 2010
 Photos by Carl Sermon and others
 posted July 6, 2010</h3> <p>Mohamed El Hosseny is a dancer, choreographer, and a native of Suez, Egypt. He is the director of El Hosseny Dance Company in Helsinki, Finland, and was an accomplished soloist in the famous Reda Troupe of Egypt. Mohamed recently arrived in New York for his second North American tour. Despite his busy 12-city tour schedule, I was able to spend a few moments chatting with him by phone about his life and career in dance, in anticipation of his forthcoming visit to California, which will be followed by workshops elsewhere in the United States, Canada, and Venezuela. His tour was organized by his North America manager and tour sponsor, Nourhan Sharif of Sharifwear. He was in New York when we spoke, enjoying the July fourth holiday in the US for the first time. </p> <p>Zsuzsi: You began dancing at a very young age in Suez. What is your earliest memory of dancing as a child?</p> <p>MoH: I started my artistic career as a musician when I was nine years old in the primary school in Suez. After a while, when I was about eleven, I began to play the accordion for a young folk dance group. I came to love dancing through this experience!! I found dance to be a better expression than playing music because you utilize the entire body, instead of only your fingers to play the accordion!<a

<http://www.gildedserpent.com/archives/musicalinstrumentlibrary.htm#ling><img alt="accordion"

<http://www.gildedserpent.com/graphics/musicalinstruments/accordion1inch.jpg> width="75" align="right" height="75" /></p>

Zsuzsi:How did you wind up dancing in a troupe in Suez? Who were your teachers? </p> <p>MoH: By luck, when I was 13 years old they were selecting able bodies at my school. They collected us in a room, and a man who was the trainer of the Suez folklore group called Mohsen Refaaey began to explain folklore in Suez. Mr. Mohsen had been working in the famous El Samer Theater in Cairo before moving to Suez to make a new folkloric troupe. I became so excited because he was demonstrating what looked to me like tap dance! He had retired the previous group of dancers he was working with, and desired to start a new team of dancers. Within one year I was growing very quickly as a dancer in his group, and I remember a funny situation from this time period. The new group had not grown as quickly as Mr. Mohsen wished, so he had to take some of the dancers from each group to make a show in Marsa Matruh (A city close to 300 kilometers west of Alexandria).</p>

<p class="highlight">At this performance many spectators commented, "There is a small boy dancing brilliantly with big men!" These nice comments pushed me forward and I will never forget it.</p> <p> I am thankful for the opportunity that both Mr. Mohsen gave me, and the audience that appreciated us! Mr. Mohsen is a very creative person and a great choreographer! We are still very good friends. He is like a father to me. We always played backgammon together in the cafes. I recently visited him in Egypt and we shared some time together. I am grateful for everything he taught me, from Suez folklore to interaction with students, I learned much from him!</p>

<p>Zsuzsi: Was your family supportive of your desire to pursue dance as a hobby, and eventually as a career?</p> <p>MoH: Yes, my family gave me a chance to do everything in life with freedom and responsibility.</p>

<p>Zsuzsi: How did you join the Reda Troupe? Were you discovered, or did you have to audition?</p> <p>MoH: I went to Cairo University♦s School of Art to study Eastern Oriental languages in 1992. It was there that I read in a newspaper an advertisement for Reda Troupe auditions. Approximately a thousand people came to this audition. I gave my name, and waited 3 hours! When I was about to leave, they finally called my name, so I stayed and danced with a group of men to see if we could do the steps. I passed this test! The Troupe had wanted to collect dancers to make a new show!</p>

<p>Zsuzsi: What was it like being a member of the Troupe in your first few years? What was it like working with Mr. Reda?</p>

<p>MoH: By the time I became a member of the Reda Troupe, Mahmoud Reda had already retired at 60 years of age. I was a big fan of his of course! When I first met Mahmoud Reda, I wanted to be like him, just like everybody did. I wanted to work with him personally, but that did not happen until later on. The ballerina Diana Calenti had come to the Reda Troupe as a trainer to teach ballet, and she selected me to be her partner, which was a big stepping stone in my dance career! Diana was from New York but lived in Canada. She had her own dance company there, a really

great company and she inspired her students by showing us videos of other professional dance companies in the West. </p> <p class="highlight">She was my trainer, choreographer, ballet teacher, always demanding advanced techniques from us which developed us further as a group. She inspired everyone but for me personally she took my dance to another level.</p> <p>Diana was the star of a film called [Search for Diana](http://searchfordiana.com/), a joint production by Canadian & Egyptian filmmakers. The director was Milad Bisada, an Egyptian TV director. Diana had also collaborated with the composer Omar Khairat from the Conservatory in Egypt. They mixed classical and Oriental styles together very well which was very influential on my development as a dancer. They produced shows together in Canada, like *Sorceress and the Magical Perfumes*, and the *Horiyya (Mermaid)* ballet.</p> <p>At first, I found ballet to be so difficult but after about six months, it was completely different! After training and building strength, my body began to change and we performed jumps, turns, clean body lines and exciting combinations, thus I grew to love it! Of course Oriental dance is full of ballet movements!</p> <p class="highlight">My advice which I tell all of my students is to study ballet at a beginner level for a few months. It will help your lines very much, so you have a nice bodyline without worrying about it and you can focus on learning the choreography and Oriental movements of the teacher in front of you.</p> <p>I wished to be the number one dancer in the Reda Troupe, and I had to work so hard to achieve this, and finally it happened! After 2 years of hard work and practice, I was performing 13 choreographies out of a 15 choreography show (the other 2 numbers were for ladies only) with the Reda Troupe! I performed a solo with Diana in this show, and I had the good fortune of becoming a soloist in the Troupe faster than others had before me. I think she picked me as her partner because I was similar to her Russian partner. She was very important to my style, bringing in techniques from dancers like Baryshnikov and Alvin Ailey. It pushed me forward, and influenced all the dancers in the troupe.</p> <p>Around 1997, Mr. Reda held another audition for his private company (much smaller than the one in 1992), so again I went to the audition and he selected me. With that company I performed at presidential parties, many TV shows and numerous events. Mr. Reda always placed me in solos at that time. </p> <p class="highlight">When I worked with him, I focused on how he directed his company, and his attention to staging and graphic design. But I didn't want to copy his style or anyone else's, I wanted to create my own.</p> <p>Like many people who learned from him, it is difficult not to copy him after working with him extensively, but I tried to create my own style by playing music, and listening very deeply to it. I watched the orchestra very closely when I was in the Reda Troupe, observing all the instruments, how they play, their roles in the music. It helped me learn to interpret the music. I have enjoyed great relations with Mr. Reda over the years, and just a few months ago, I was asked to perform his work at his 80th birthday celebrations in Rome and Helsinki, which was an honor for me!</p> <p>I also worked with Nagwa Fouad for 3 years. There I learned a lot about belly dancing in a nightclub setting.</p> <p class="highlight">Cabaret is very different from working on the stage, you need special music, special movements, different costumes.</p> <p>Zsuzsi: You toured extensively with the Reda Troupe, even to places as remote as North Korea. Which country or countries did you like best?</p> <p>MoH: I enjoyed all the countries, each one has a different beauty to offer.</p> <p>Zsuzsi: What is your proudest achievement as a

performer?</p> <p>MoH: My biggest moment inside of Egypt was starring in Mr. Reda's "Robibekika* Show". My biggest moment outside of Egypt was my first production in Finland, called "Layali Simsimaya". All of the choreographies were mine, and I am delighted with the results of this show!! </p> <p>Zsuzsi: How did you happen to move to Finland and establish your dance school there?</p> <p>MoH: After producing Layali Simsimaya, I began to teach there with Tuija Rinne's cooperation. Tuija is a well known dancer and teacher from Finland. I met her in Finland at the Yallah Festival, at that festival I also met Raqia Hassan and she asked me to teach a class of simsimiyya* at Ahlan wa Sahlan in 2003. At that class I used a live band to accompany me with traditional simsimiyya music for the first time in Egypt. Before that, people were trying to dance simsimiyya to Hakim songs or any random music. Tuija had come to my class because she had seen me perform with Reda in Finland the year before. After seeing this class she asked me to come teach a workshop in Finland. Then after that, she asked me to make a show there. I didn't know what to expect, but it was very nice. She was very supportive and helpful, and a very good organizer. She understands the legal issues, and how to arrange artistic events.</p> <p>I remember when I made Layali Simsimiyya. At first I thought it was just going to be a show of only half an hour. I began with the men in Egypt. I made professional contracts for them and treated them the way I wished to be treated as a performer. I could only imagine the parts for the ladies [Tuija's students] because I was not in Finland with them yet. </p> <p class="highlight">Tuija had to train the ladies using videos. She would film what they were doing in Finland, then come to Egypt and show the men, and we would film ourselves and send it back for them. It was very hard. It was also hard to get the musicians to follow a precise musical score.</p> <p>They are used to playing what they want, not each note exactly as written. I gathered the musicians for the band one by one from different places. I got two extra just in case any of them had problems and couldn't come to Finland. We began to practice and recorded everything in the studio. I was in Suez three nights a week and in Cairo the other four nights. At night I worked on my own on the music and choreography. I think the best choreography is when you know the dancers who will be dancing in which dances. I went to Finland two months before the show, then the men came from Egypt just ten days before the show, and it was Ramadan. We had to practice all afternoon without eating. It was very difficult. After the show, I knew for the first time that I am a choreographer. Before that I wasn't sure. I encourage my students to try it, sketch out what they want to see. After Layali Simsimiyya, Tuija asked me to stay in Finland and open a school with her.</p> <p>Zsuzsi: The Finnish people seem very supportive and enthusiastic about your work. Is there anything especially challenging about working as an Egyptian dancer, choreographer and teacher in Finland? </p> <p>MoH: Actually Finland gave me a chance to create because it is a calm, peaceful country, and it allowed me the space I needed to concentrate on becoming a choreographer. I developed myself there and created my own style of Oriental dance. My students are both helpful and hard working! I am grateful for the opportunities this country has awarded me! </p> <p>Zsuzsi:How is life in Finland different from life in Cairo, or Suez? </p> <p>MoH: The countries are totally

different, each having its own character. I believe it was good for me to be in Finland and create in this calm atmosphere.

Zsuzsi: You are one of those rare dancers who is very talented in all three aspects of dance: performance, choreography, and instruction. Which of these three aspects do you enjoy the most? Which do you find most challenging?

MoH: Definitely choreography is most challenging, because I have to dance, teach, perform, train and do everything at a fast rate all at once! Teaching for me is fun & natural. If you know your stuff, especially the basics which are very important, then teaching is not stressful. Every time I make a show, everyone is happy with it but me. I wonder what's next?

Zsuzsi: At your workshops in the US last year, I noticed that you seem unusually dedicated to your students, even after teaching them for just an hour or two. What do you enjoy most about teaching, and what advice do you have for other dance teachers?

MoH: My advice is to study hard and practice well. For example, if you don't speak English, you cannot teach English, so you really need to master your craft in order to be the best teacher you can be! Every dancer has to go to Egypt and study, travel, go to Suez, Alexandria, Cairo, all over. Many teachers don't know the traditions.

This is a message for teachers, you must learn these things so they will never forget you. If you want to be a really good teacher, you must make your students thirsty for your class! So they cannot wait to come to class again. First art, then business. Business will take care of itself.

I remember last year the students in California were so great! Their eyes were so full of emotion! Something I believe in is if somebody pays me for something, like teaching a class, I have to make it perfect. That's why I kill myself in my classes. One class can change a person's life! We are not sitting in a chair teaching Arabic in my classes. If you are sick you can sit down, but not the teacher! Even if everybody sits down, the teacher does not. Teaching is a message and a responsibility. I give much but I get a lot back from teaching as well.

Zsuzsi: In just a few years in Finland you have created a number of major theatrical productions with very innovative choreographies. Where do you get your inspiration for these new works?

MoH: I get my inspiration from my god.

Also, the ideas always come so suddenly, all at once. For example when I made the clapping dance (Kaff) in Layali Simsimiyya, it came from life in Suez.

My father had a fishing boat. After you catch the fish, they slap around together in the bottom of the boat, making a noise like clapping. So this dance imitates that sound.

Also Kaff is done with henna the day before a marriage. It is a competition between men and women. It was really like that in our rehearsals. The men would compete against the women, to see which team can dance better. I encouraged them to compete with each other.

After we finished Layali Simsimiyya, I wanted to make another Egyptian show, so I made Masriyyat, which means from Egypt.

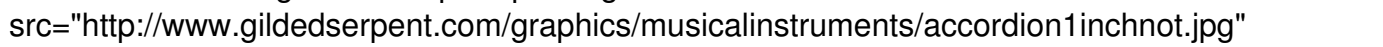
Zsuzsi: Masriyyat was the show with the [Ul'm Kalthoum](http://www.gildedserpent.com/art36/YasminOmK.htm) choreography, with eight dancers dressed like her, dancing to *Enta Omri*? What moved you to create that piece?

MoH: I think all my life I imagined that piece. When I was young I watched her like all Egyptians.

She is like the fourth pyramid of Egypt!! She did NOT dance when she sang. She moved her arms, her hands, her scarf and used her heel to accent the music only.

She used to sing on the first Thursday of every month. In the

beginning she would sit in a chair while the orchestra played, then got up and sang, then sat back down. After the third song she always sat down. She did not wear her dark sunglasses on stage, but she was so known for wearing those glasses, so I had the dancers wear them, like the classic image of her.

 Everyone in Egypt told me you are crazy, forget this idea. I needed the right song. I wanted to use Enta Omri but not the version with accordion, that would not be right. I found a version by Omar Khairat, the same composer who worked with Diana Calenti. His was a very classic version but without accordion. I knew if I had only one dancer in this piece, it would be too realistic, like an imitation of her, and that would not be good. But if I use eight dancers all dressed like her, it's obviously not realistic, it's imagined, like a dream. Also it creates more movement on stage with eight of them, since her movements were so subtle.

Zsuzsi: How did other people react to the Ulm Kalthoum number, was it controversial in Egypt?

MoH: After, everyone in Egypt was amazed. People really loved it, no complaints.

Zsuzsi: What kind of response have your productions generally received in Finland and in Egypt, or elsewhere?

MoH: People in Finland loved my work. So far I have only shown my productions in Finland. Many friends in Egypt told me I am an ambassador for them in Finland, and they are very proud to see Egypt represented in this way. The Egyptian ambassador to Finland came to see our Masriyyat show. He brought me flowers and congratulated me, and said the show was amazing and he really enjoyed the Ulm Kalthoum number!

Zsuzsi: What has been your major artistic focus in the last year or two?

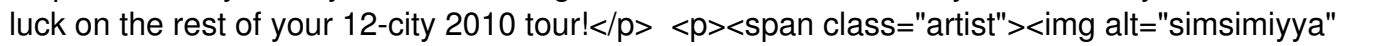
MoH: My first priority the past few years was to achieve a higher level of Oriental Dance, with a complete range of emotions & sophisticated technique and at the same time respecting the folkloric roots of Egypt.

My second priority was creating a show in 2009 named Egypt. I made this show because I am sad to hear some people comment belly dancing is just shaking your ass (sorry for the language) when the culture of Egypt is very rich and diverse! My wish for the dance and through this show is to bring respect to Oriental dance just like the dancing of Alvin Ailey, or other western professional companies that I have previously viewed in my youth.

I want to show the public, if you want to dance Egyptian dance, it includes many styles and techniques, try to do it properly! It is not just shaking your ass.

You have to really show respect to Egypt as the mother of the dance and I love my country very much and always want her to be the second sun!

Zsuzsi: Thank you very much for taking time for this interview today Mr. Hosseny, and best of luck on the rest of your 12-city 2010 tour!

 Mohamed El Hosseny: You're welcome. It was a pleasure speaking with you. I'm looking forward to return to California in a few weeks!

resources:

- Mohamed El Hosseny's website at:

www.elhossenydance.com

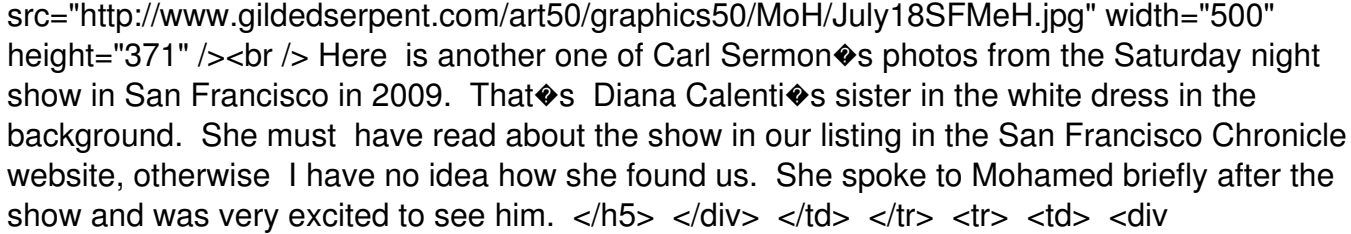


more info on Mohamed El Hosseny's 2010 Tour

www.egyptianacademy.com

Author's bio page on Gilded Serpent:

[Zsuzsi](http://www.gildedserpent.com/aboutuspages/Zsuzsi.html)

- term: simsimaya- M Hosseny is referring to the dances of Port Said and Ismailiyya, Suez Canal folklore dance. Moh wears a sailor suit to indicate the culture along the water front. Simisimiyya is also a plucked lyre and is an instrument that is carried on the boats for good luck. The same word is also used to mean the whole genre of Canal district folk music, that has the simsimiyya instrument as the main instrument. It belongs closely to the folk music of the Suez canal towns of Port Said, Ismailiyya and Suez.
- term: robibekika- In Arabic it mean "odds and ends" and probably meant that this was a variety show.

<div align="center"><h5> Here is another one of Carl Sermon's photos from the Saturday night show in San Francisco in 2009. That's Diana Calenti's sister in the white dress in the background. She must have read about the show in our listing in the San Francisco Chronicle website, otherwise I have no idea how she found us. She spoke to Mohamed briefly after the show and was very excited to see him.</h5></div>
<div align="center"><h5> Michigan, August 2009</h5></div>
<div align="center"><h5> New York, 2009</h5></div>

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