

BELLYDANCE NEWS

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Ozgen and Princess WOW Fantasia 2008!!

By Warda



Princess Farhana and Ozgen at Fantasia 2008.
Photo by kind permission of Princess Farhana

Having recovered from my teacher training of a few years ago (financially and otherwise), I decided it was time to check out the JWAAD scene again – I hadn't been to Fantasia in many years and was curious to see how it now fitted in with the plethora of weekend festivals up and down the country.

Fantasia is now held at the Arts Educational School in Chiswick – several dance studios, a studio theatre, a (small) café/bar and several large rooms for the souk all under one roof. It is easy to get to and Chiswick is a lovely area with nice cafes, restaurants

and interesting shops. On the Sunday, I had the distinct feeling of being in the West End of Glasgow as I dodged prams and toddlers and watched groups of friends breakfasting together while reading the papers.

Though the weekend is advertised as London's Arabic Dance Festival and I remember reading somewhere that Fantasia is now meant to showcase the best of London and South of England dance, teachers came from far and wide (the programme is still on www.jwaad.com). After Samantha Hasthorpe withdrew or, more likely, was withdrawn due to a 'conflict of interest with the BDSS', Princess Farhana was flown in to take her place – and was I glad!

Continued overleaf..

May I wish a Happy and Peaceful New Year to All Members!

In this month's issue:

- **Fantasia 2008 review;**
- **A short story by Bellydance News reader;**
- **Book Review;**
- **Give-away and**
- **Your forthcoming events for 2009!!**

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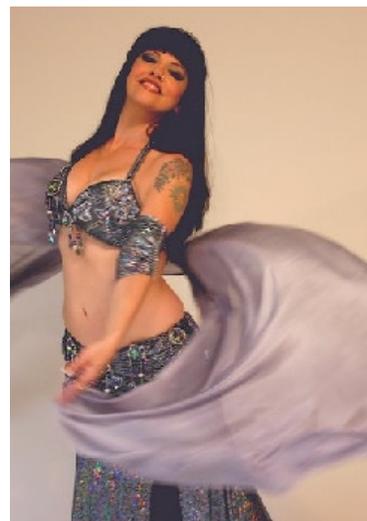
Ozgen and Princess Farhana at Fantasia continued..

Continued from previous page..

I met Princess at Majma in 2006 and I found her to be a patient, humorous and informative teacher as well as a fabulous performer. She didn't disappoint me this weekend: despite the jet lag (flown in on Friday, flown out on Monday from/to Los Angeles), her workshops were excellent, came with handouts of background information/exercises and she made a point of giving individual feedback to everyone around the room. She is also very funny and there was a lot of laughter which helped when trying (and failing) to imitate her AMAZING belly rolls with flutters and sideways belly rolls (don't ask!).

I also attended an introduction to Turkish dance with Ozgen – young, gorgeous and male! Ozgen teaches in London but if you ever have the chance to catch a workshop with him, don't miss it: he gave us background information, split each sequence up in manageable chunks and made it all fun with a lot of attitude. I was really impressed by his style which is obviously influenced by his ballet and contemporary dance training giving him an elegance and gracefulness I haven't often seen in Turkish dance.

The souk spread over several rooms with anything from the latest fashion by the Cairo costumiers to the most delightful hand-crafted fascinators for burlesque shows - with plenty of music, dvds, tribal gear, Turkish/Egyptian/American bedlahs and class outfits thrown in. It was good to see traders I hadn't seen before and hard not to overspend (though the thought of the 20KG maximum luggage allowance on the plane helped a little).



**Princess Farhana.
Photo by Celeste Hines.**

**Warda and Ann McLaughlin are
organising Princess Farhana's visit to
Scotland!**

**She is coming to Scotland for the first
time on Friday 13th March for a
performance and five workshops!**

Look out for the flyer following your BDN!

Finally, the Fantasia show. More than a hafla; this was an endurance test! It started at 6.30pm and finished at about 10.30pm with over 40 acts! In theory you could drop in and out (the souk stayed open till 8.30pm and dancers were sitting in until it was time for them to get ready) but in practice you had to be really determined to fight your way through the performers huddled at the door and sitting on the floor, stepping on bags, costumes and the odd limb in the process. Audience management and a maximum length for performances would have improved the experience for all though I was amazed at the number of (male) partners who sat uncomplaining through it all!

There was a number of group performances - saaidi, oriental and ATS and some scary fusion stuff – and many, many soloists. Ozgen first danced a gypsy romani piece which left most of the audience hyperventilating then reappeared at the end of the show for a Turkish oriental mix which left all of us speechless. There were two beautiful oriental solos by Eva Green and Charlotte Desorgher (both teachers down south), a drum solo by Nikki Livermore and John Sleiman (unfortunately, the costume malfunction might be what people remember most) (meditate twice daily on Rule no.1: wear appropriate knickers under your skirt!) and a cyber fusion piece by Dawn O'Brien (wow). Princess Farhana dazzled us in true Hollywood-style and later reappeared, transformed, for a fusion piece to a Broadway musical. And Josephine Wise – the JW of JWAAD herself – danced an oriental piece with veil, humour and style.

I came away feeling energized and inspired by the excellent teaching and dancing; the organization was flawless, the venue very good and I enjoyed seeing old friends again. If you are looking for a dance weekend that is easily accessible (all in one place!), of excellent standard and in a fun part of London – this is it.

**Warda
www.desertjourney.net**

How about reviewing an event you attend? Get your text and a couple of photos in quickly after the event, so that it's fresh news, and send it to me over the email. We'd all love to hear from you, whether you're a new student attending an event for the first time, or whether your and 'old hand' who knows the circuit well.

Looking forward to hearing from you!!