

Anatomy of a Dance

by Josephine Wise

Magreb

Music: Hayati Inta by Natacha Atlas

The music for this dance begins with men's voices calling and an Oud (Arabic lute) warming up – to me it is the evocative sound of perhaps a street band in Djemm El Fnaa Square in Marrakesh.

This is a hybrid piece, using the Moroccan beat of the music to establish a North African feel to the dance, with the dancers using a pounding Moroccan entrance step with Arab hand claps (palms together parallel, not across as in Flamenco). Natacha Atlas's voice has a wonderful bluesy seductiveness, and I wanted a deep African stretch from the soloists to emphasise the voice as it deepens at the end of each verse.

The Men chanting in the background gave me the feel of what I call the 'Moroccan Camel' step, with the hips lifting up and back on the back step. The hand waves can be used in a variety of contexts, and I loved them here.

Verse two has men's voices in the background singing 'aiwa! inta!' which translates as 'yes! you!'. I wanted a martial art feel with the arms pushing across. For the clapping sequences after this I used a specific Tunisian twisting step to give the feel of the syncopation in the rhythm. For the 'nai' or bamboo flute, I wanted the dancers to advance on the audience and to deepen the African feel before using the hip drops, then the Tunisian twist followed by the wonderful 'boat' step used by the Ghawazee Gypsies from Upper Egypt.

The last verse has a Saidi style head wobble from the dancers in the background - I just have a weakness for them. The guitar appears unexpectedly and I decided to use only totally authentic Moroccan moves for this part taken from folkloric dances I have seen in Tangiers. I wanted to show how the 70's rock style guitar could give rise to a 'headbanging' dance as used by hippies who had seen the Guedra and other dances on their travels.

I loved putting this dance together and hope that the enjoyment shows through!

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