

## A History of Aziza

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AZIZA teaches and performs Raqs el Sharqi (Middle Eastern Belly Dance) in and around the Birmingham area.

Her love of theater and dance began at Birmingham's Jewish Community Center where she appeared in productions of "Man of La Mancha", "West Side Story", "Fiddler on the Roof", "Play It Again, Sam", "Little Me", "Pajama Game" and "A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum".

Aziza's Middle Eastern Dance training began with Najwa Bateh, a Palestinian native, who has also taught other instructors and performers in this area. Najwa, who has continued to provide a major influence on Aziza's dance career, introduced her to not only the dance of the Middle East but also to eastern culture and the Arabic community. It was before this community of native Middle Easterners that Aziza made her debut. She has since performed at their events, dancing at weddings, conventions and festivals, including St. George Melkite Church's Annual Middle Eastern Food Festival, where, as a member, she has choreographed and directed the Annual St. George Food Festival featuring dancers from within the community. One of Aziza's greatest pleasures has been preparing brides in the Arabic community (and some non-ethnic brides) for their wedding reception dancing, and introducing the dance to second generation members of the Ramallah community of Birmingham. Throughout her years of instruction, her classes have been sprinkled with members of the Middle Eastern community in Birmingham.

Other performances include Birmingham's Festival of Arts International Fairs, the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, events at the Birmingham Museum of Art, The McWane Center, and the Birmingham Opera Guild who selected Aziza to perform the part of "Salome" from the opera of the same name. She also traveled and danced

with the Greek band, "The Spartans" for Greek conventions in the southeastern area.

Aziza has been afforded the special honor of being invited to perform for Prince Fahad of Saudi

Arabia. During a tour of Egypt and Morocco, she studied with the Reda Troupe founder and choreographer, Mahmoud Reda, and the former Kowmea Troupe director, Mohammed Khalil who was choreographer to Egypt's legendary Nagwa Fouad. The tour also led her to perform at The Pyramids Restaurant for an event sponsored by Egypt's Minister of Agriculture. Other performances in Egypt included The Cairo Sheraton Hotel where she participated in a contest sponsored and judged by Nagwa Fouad, Egyptian dance legend, Soheir Zaki, Mahmoud Khalil and others from Egypt's movie and dance industry. Aziza was awarded first place at the contest and was subsequently featured on ABC's "20/20" in a segment entitled, "Cairo Chorus Line".

Aziza continues to perform, teach and sponsor workshops for such notables as Dahlena, Shoshana, Cassandra. In 2008, she will celebrate 34 years of involvement with Middle Eastern dance in both performing and instruction. Her popular classes are taught at the Homewood Park and Recreation Center Auditorium.

Many dancers from Aziza's School of Middle Eastern Dance have performed at private functions and for dance shows in and around Birmingham, Atlanta, Huntsville, Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, Anniston and Gadsden.

