

Portrait SAMARA HAYAT

My way to live dancing....

Belly dance was in my life, the natural consequence of a personal research and an artistic evolution.

Shortly after the early age of 7, when I started ballet lessons, I've been seriously involved in different ways, in classical and contemporary dance (and theater), in parallel with school and university studies.

Due to the fact that mine was an "artistic" family of painters, dancers, actresses and book printers, I grew up surrounded by the smell of "oleums", varnishes, printing inks and machines, and old theater's floor woods, being the theater backstages and lights a common childhood environment.

My mother (model, actress and director) and my grand mother always had a canvas at home with a painting in progress. My aunts were (and still are) musicians, drawers and dancers as well. That gave me the opportunity of being raised around backstages and front seat rows. Because of that, my debut in

different artistic areas were so early and diverse. At 10, I was already singing advertising jingles and at 11 was assisting a director in a child's play.

During those formative years, I was sharing regular school attendance, with dance lessons, as well with theater groups, aerobatics, painting and lyrical singing. I was so in love with "the opera" that dreamed of becoming "Regie" (Opera director), when I would retire from the stages. Also in my teens I was heavily immersed into philosophy, Nietzsche and existentialism. I was kind of wild, those days!

(Vicky Olivares picture)
After being member of several classical and contemporary small dance companies, and driven by a need of multidisciplinary expression, I produced and premiered at age 17 and then at 18, two personal performance shows at Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Sao Paulo (Brazil). The first: "Behind the mirror" was based on the idea of the thin line that separates reality from fantasy. Dance & theater occurred between photo slides of my paintings and graphic poetry,

supported by original music mixed with whale songs (at that moment I was very involved in environment protection). The second performance: "Dreams, death, love & wings", developed a personal view of the Greek myth of *Persefone* (Proserpine), where the musicians and actors represented the gods as interactive part of the live scenery, driving the rhythm of the performance. Blending dance, live sculpting, theater and operatic singing with some Tom Waits pieces, we got an explosive cocktail, where the public were sensing a global experience.

Those were my first achievements as an artist, since both of them got prizes and honorific mentions in local art fairs, from *Greenpeace*, and the *Academy of Nations*.

WHEN AND WHY DID YOU STARTED in belly dance?

It was 11 years ago, when after that last performance in Buenos Aires I got a scholarship to study choreographic composition at the Merce Cunningham institute in New York. There I had the opportunity of doing a small collaboration with MOMIX, but my student visa was to expire soon. Then I asked for help a Lebanese friend of my mother's and when she saw my dossier and videos, she asked if I was ever into belly dance and oriental dance, since I was doing undulant movements instinctively, like *the camel* or *rotations* and due to my passion for old Greek myths, built my own two piece exotic dresses with "vaporous" soft fabrics.