

Reviews - Shows, Music, DVD's/Videos, CD's and More

Nesma - Memories of Cairo as reviewed by Oberon



As foretold in the last issue of The Belly Dancer Magazine, I am herein reviewing the music choices of the dancer Nesma whose collaborative DVD review appeared in the Fall 2006 issue.

Again, I must comment on the sophisticated and intelligent packaging, of which the cover shows a skillful blend of the dancer's Spanish heritage and her love of Middle Eastern Dance. Well chosen and timeless.

The front cover holds a small booklet sporting the same artwork, offering some nice insight into the dancer's back-ground and intent.

Refreshingly, the booklet goes on to explain the Dancer's performance choices. The pieces are listed insightfully with their purpose, musicians and composer all in place. The information is repeated in English Spanish and German and professional pictures of the engaging and beautiful Nesma are spattered throughout the inside cover area and the booklet so that you visualize as you are reading and listening.

I will not attempt to list all the imposing musicians contributing to this CD but they are catalogued first and foremost on the inside cover.

You will notice right away that several of the pieces on this CD were composed specifically for Nesma. This is so with the entrance, "The Nesma Overture". It is a fast-paced introduction especially engineered she explains, to focus the attention of the audience on the emerging dancer. Without doubt this piece is the exciting flourish that does just that.

It is followed, in sensible progression, by the classical piece titled "Nesma" which is almost ten minutes long. She explains that in this most challenging section, the dancer will work to show her knowledge of the music and the dance to her audience. This piece crafted for the dancer by composer, Osama El Gohary, has the instrumental strength of the full orchestra with a tapestry of changing tempo and style. It is my opinion that a dancer would need a vast education in musicality and dance to possess the repertoire that would be required to hold attention and emote the music throughout this piece.

"Nesma's Solo" was composed and performed by Egyptian drummer, Negm Hanafy. Though termed "whimsical", this experienced percussionist certainly shows through intricate interplay with the dancer that he is accomplished in offering a challenging solo that helps interest and excitement to the performance. He was also careful to keep the valuable, "rule of four", allowing the dancer to expand on his talent.

"Nesma Finale", a flighty exit written simultaneously by Osama El Gohary is beautifully crafted for a flowy last acknowledgement by the dancer for her appreciative audience. A short pause allows

her to curry thanks for her musicians, a last wave, and the music begins again to usher her off in blaze glory.

"Hobbak Ala Feyn", (Where is your Love), was composed and performed by Mohamad Abdel Muttalib for the famous dancer, Naima Aakeef. I feel it worth mentioning, that Nesma, having studied both the music and the dance has built on the piece in this performance, using her own arrangements based on an accordion solo, a true blend of dance and music through strong education. "Haniin", (Osama El Gohary), is another 9 plus minutes of complex rhythms and stylistic changes. Again, the educated, accomplished dancer, with the patience to develop a clear understanding of what she's listening too, a will find this piece a rewarding showcase.

My interest was peaked in "Hussein's Solo", when I read that Hussein el Zahaar was percussionist for the great Nagua Fouad for fifteen years, and famous in his own right across Egypt. This, his composition for Nesma is gorged with energetic, crisp and multi-farious cadence. Dynamic and commanding demanding respectful, erudite response.

The valuable booklet explains that the accordion, a western instrument was introduced to Egyptian music halfway through the 20th century. I can see why it has gained in popularity. In "Baladi Accordion Piece", you will notice that it has totally its own voice and gives the dancer another influence and intonation to consider.

"Darat El Ayam 1. 2 & 3", conclude this ambitious CD. Of these the third is my favorite, resonating with the mesmerizing style of it's composer the astonishing Mohamed Abdel Wahab. He created this piece for the legendary singer Oum Kalthoum. The interesting point of this piece is it's adaptation for dance, in which the different instruments are now performing what was originally sung. Listen carefully with that in mind for a unique experience. A great choice to conclude this CD.

Overall, this CD left me yearning for the years of study and appreciation my husband has for the subtleties and nuances of the classical composers. For the dancer who delights in bestowing a vast tapestry of movement and emotion to her audience, who is educated and enjoys sophisticated, intricate arrangements, performed brilliantly by musicians experienced in this genre - tailor-made for you. Personally, I feel it is a beautifully constructed endeavor, educating dancers to a world they may never see, so much a cultural part of the dance we study. Seriously Enjoyable.

See ad on page 38