



BELEDI BEAT



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Note from Cassandra

It's once again the summer reading season, and many of my dancer friends, teachers, and students have written interesting and varied books about the Near East, in fiction, from their perspectives on where Raqs Sharqi is today, or their personal experiences with the dance and what it has meant to them. All are fabulous reading, with much to ponder in each book. I am pleased beyond measure to see their successes and hope they will continue writing for all of us. Do YOU have a book in you that needs to be written? Get on it!

Read All About It! Belly Dancers Write Great Books!

We've had a plethora of excellent books about belly dance come out in the last few months that we think you should know about. Patricia Cumbie has written a book about the joy and healing power of belly dance in her new memoir *The Shape of a Hundred Hips*. Kay Hardy Campbell has released *A Caravan of Brides*, a novel of historical fiction told from a woman's perspective in Saudi Arabia from World War I through the 1980's. Alia Thabit has also written *Midnight at the Crossroads*, a nonfiction book that addresses essential questions about how belly dance is taught and performed today.

We had the opportunity to talk with each author about what motivated them to write their books, and each author is doing their part to elevate and honor their experiences with dance and Arab culture.



Patricia Cumbie

The Shape of a Hundred Hips
Bedazzled Ink, 2018

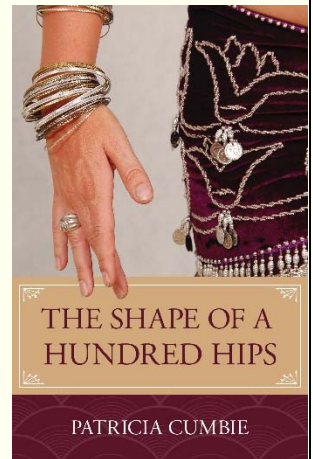


The Shape of a Hundred Hips is a memoir that juxtaposes dance and sexual assault recovery that takes the reader into intimate moments in her life as a writer and dancer. Patricia writes of her personal experience with belly dance as a serious art form that gives her, and other women and men, the ability to transcend prescriptive narratives about their bodies to claim what they find empowering and sensual about physical expression. *The Shape of a Hundred Hips* is a literary memoir that advances the idea that people can gain insight and take greater control of their lives through intentional movement and artistic connection.

“When I took up belly dance, people I knew had misconceptions about what it was about. When I considered the many ways belly dance had changed my life, I knew I needed to write a book. I wanted to show respect for what the art form meant to me, as well as to demystify it for people who didn’t understand its real transformational power.”

Patricia Cumbie is a Minneapolis-based writer, who has been a student at The Cassandra School of Belly Dance for many years. She writes about women’s lives, dance, food, and travel. She is also the author of a young adult novel, *Where People Like Us Live*, and the winner of the Carol Bly Award for Nonfiction. To learn more about her and her books, visit www.patriciacumbie.com.

[Buy the book*](#)



Kay Hardy Campbell

A Caravan of Brides: A Novel of Saudi Arabia
Loon Cove Press, 2017

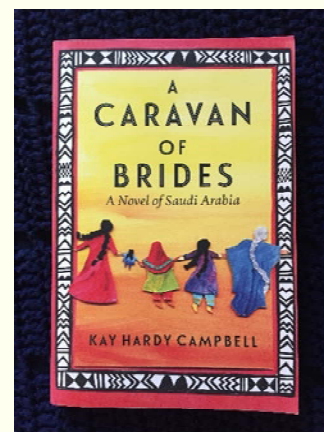


In Kay Hardy Campbell’s historical fiction novel set in Saudi Arabia, *A Caravan of Brides*, Fawzia returns home to Jeddah and takes up secretly with her forbidden college sweetheart. When her reckless behavior leads to family tragedy, she is drawn into an unlikely friendship with a mysterious old storyteller, the niece of a legendary tribal chief. Narrated by Fawzia and the storyteller Salma, *A Caravan of Brides* celebrates the dangerous melody that love sings in each generation, as it brings the world of Saudi women, past and present, into focus with a tender touch. Travel with memorable characters across Arabia, from the ancient cities of Jeddah and Mecca, to a peaceful mountain valley, forbidding northern deserts, and a storied oasis town once known for tolerance and open-mindedness.

“This book started as a series of short stories based on my time living in Saudi Arabia. After living so long overseas I wanted to process the experience,” Kay said. “I also wanted readers to fully experience modern Saudi Arabian history through the

eyes of a woman. The book includes important milestones in Saudi history that affected women's lives. There's no other historical fiction book about Saudi Arabia in English offering this perspective."

Kay Hardy Campbell had lived in Saudi Arabia for many years. While living in the kingdom, she wrote cultural features for the English language dailies, Arab News, and Saudi Gazette. Since returning to the U.S., she has traveled back to Saudi Arabia three times on assignment for AramcoWorld Magazine to write about Saudi culture. She also researches and writes about Arabic music as well as the folk music and folk dances of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. Kay plays Arabic music and is the co-founder and administrative director of the Arabic Music Retreat. She and her husband live in Maine. Read more about her work at www.kayhardycampbell.com.



[Buy the book*](#)

Alia Thabit

Midnight at the Crossroads: Has Belly Dance Sold Its Soul?
Dance Art Press, 2017



Join Alia Thabit, an Arab-American dancer with forty-five years of experience, as she reveals the secret soul of the dance—and how to make it your own. *Midnight at the Crossroads* is a heartfelt, accessible, and welcoming view of what happens when people embrace the soul of belly dance. It also features 40 delightful illustrations by the author. Belly dance and its music arise from an Eastern ethos of feeling, improvisation, and joy. However, Alia thinks it's hard for Western dancers to discover these principles—and even harder to embody them, especially if they are steeped in an aesthetic of appearance, choreography, and perfectionism.

Alia argues that all arts grow and change, and in the case of belly dance, there are surprising advantages to embracing the Eastern way, including brain

health, trauma healing, and a connection to the Divine. "Belly dance is much bigger on the inside than it is on the outside. It is packed with hidden treasures, and all of this goodness is waiting for everyone. Belly dance transmits wonders."

Alia Thabit is a Levantine-American dance artist, writer, and teacher, who celebrates belly dance's cultural ideals of feeling, playfulness, and joy. An international and online instructor with decades of experience, Alia believes that each of us is filled with our own unique beauty and magic, treasure waiting to be found. Come find your treasure at www.bellydancesoul.com.

[Buy the book*](#)

Midnight at the Crossroads



Has belly dance sold its soul?

Alia Thabit
with 40+ illustrations by the author

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Our New Website: Check it out!

For the past several months, Eileen Goren, Terry Joyce, and Jenny Piper have been furiously working on updating and creating a glorious new, smartphone savvy, Jawaahir.org website. We have made it user-friendly and quite enjoyable! See for yourself: www.jawaahir.org. Our beautiful new website was made possible thanks to a generous MRAC Organization Grant.



Upcoming Events

[PeopleFest! Party](#) on **Thursday, August 9th from 5:00–8:00pm at Staring Lake Park**, features live performances from South Indian Parai (drums), a traditional Chinese fashion show, and women's dance from Arabic-speaking countries by **Jawaahir Dance Company**. A variety of cultural and educational organizations share their stories, activities, and outreach. Multicultural cuisine is available for purchase but the event is FREE.

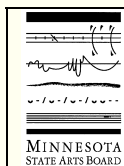


Performance Adventure Classes are back! For the month of September, The Cassandra School is offering five original choreographies, to be taught by five gifted teachers, and performed by YOU at **Cassandra's Cabaret on Saturday, October 6th**. Space is limited! Early registration is encouraged and will be available soon!

[Smoke Signals 2018 Charity Auto Show](#) will feature Jawaahir performing on **Sunday, September 16th at 4:00pm**. Plan a whole day of fun including amazing vehicles, special causes, races, live entertainment, special events, food and drink, silent auctions, vendors, and awesome sponsors. This event is free!

Save the date! Jawaahir will be hosting a flea market on Saturday, September 22nd from 1:00–5:00pm. For more info, contact Angela at admin@jawaahir.org.

For further information on any of our upcoming events, check out the [Jawaahir website](http://www.jawaahir.org). You may also call 612-872-6050, or email us at admin@jawaahir.org.



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund; Lisherness Foundation; Martha Wren Charitable Fund, a Donor Advised Fund of the U.S. Charitable Gift Trust; O'Shaughnessy Foundation; Target; and friends of Jawaahir.

