

The Devil in the Details



A Comprehensive Tribal Bellydance Experience with Asharah and Natalie Brown

"When we first met in the summer of 2008, we were very different sides of the tribal bellydance coin. Asharah was known for using dark electronica, precise locks, and ticking. Natalie was exploring slow, fluid movement and extension. As our friendship grew, so did our influence on each other's dancing, until we found ourselves meeting in the middle...."

Fads and styles will come and go. Choreographies and step combinations will fall out of fashion. But the building blocks of movement and performance are essential for belly dancers of all levels. In this intensive, Asharah and Natalie Brown will break down the many facets of bellydance technique and theory to make you a more complete and polished dancer.

After collaborating on several projects, Natalie Brown and Asharah discovered that they take complimentary approaches to teaching their unique styles of tribal belly dance. With Asharah's training in the Suhaila Salimpour format and her electronica-influenced tribal fusion, and Natalie Brown's background in American Tribal Style bellydance, ballet, and classical music, the two have teamed up to present a truly comprehensive tribal fusion belly dance intensive. Participants have the option to learn precise technique, classic American Tribal Style improvisation, extension and grace, musicality and performance essentials, and costuming tips and tricks.

What makes this intensive comprehensive and unique is its structure: workshops are offered in complementary pairs according to each instructor's area of expertise to give students a well-rounded education. For example, Asharah's workshop on pops, locks, and ticking movements is followed by Natalie's approach to stillness, engagement, and slow extension. The intensive is designed to be flexible, and it is adaptable for 2, 3, and 4 days.

If you're interested in hosting an intensive in your city, please contact either Asharah at asharah.dancer@gmail.com or Natalie Brown at alternacirque@gmail.com for more information.

Workshop Topics

Two-Hour Offerings

All workshop topics are taught in complimentary pairs and pairings must be selected together.

Pairing 1: Tribal Foundations

Tribal Tales: The Salimpour Legacy in Contemporary Tribal Bellydance (Taught by Asharah)

Experience Level: All levels welcome.

Tribal style bellydance, one of the newest incarnations of this ancient dance form, has hit the world by storm over the past decade. With its rich costuming, sense of camaraderie, and common dance vocabulary, tribal style dance has grown into an international phenomenon. But where did it come from, and why do we dance the way we do? The answer: Jamila Salimpour and the Salimpour dance legacy. In this workshop, Asharah will discuss just how important Jamila Salimpour--the first American dancer to name bellydance steps in a standard format, the creator of the first tribal-style dance troupe Bal Anat, and mother of Suhaila Salimpour--is to tribal style belly dance and how her format evolved and changed to become American Tribal Style and tribal fusion bellydance. Asharah will then lead participants through some core movements of the Jamila Salimpour format and explain how these movements are similar to and differ from the familiar group improvisational steps we use in American Tribal Style bellydance.

American Tribal Style: The Crash Course (Taught by Natalie Brown)

Experience Level: Intermediate beginner and above.

American Tribal Style (ATS) Bellydance, created by Fat Chance Belly Dance founder and director Carolena Nericcio, is a precise system of moves, cues, transitions, and formations that allow a group of dancers to dance in a synchronized performance without choreography. This workshop will give participants a strong foundation for learning ATS but is not meant to be a comprehensive course. Natalie Brown will give students an introduction to core ATS movements, musculature and execution, cues and variations, leading and following, as well as guidance on costuming, music, and staging. Please bring finger cymbals (zills); wearing a long skirt and choli or belly / back-baring top is recommended. Please make sure your hair is swept up and off your shoulders (ponytail or bun).

Pairing 2: Dancing with Poise and Grace

Danse Mécanique: Elegant Movement for Tribal Fusion Bellydance (Taught by Asharah)

Experience Level: Intermediate beginner and above.

While clean and sharp technique is an essential part of the tribal dancer's repertoire, grace and polish are equally, if not more, important for conveying expression and feeling from the stage to the audience. Asharah will lead students through an intense warm-up that will prepare the body for fluid arm-work, well-defined isolations, and solid footing. Using ballet and jazz as a foundation, participants will learn to connect with the floor and move across a stage with dignity and poise. We will also drill smooth bellydance movements (such as arm waves, interior hip circles, and undulations) and their hard contraction counterparts. To conclude the workshop, Asharah will lead students through a short combination to drill all workshop elements.

Slow Movement and The Anatomy of Grace: Physics, Fluidity, and Form (Taught by Natalie Brown)

Experience Level: Intermediate beginner and above.

Take heart: graceful stylization is obtainable, not bestowed on a lucky and gifted few! Natalie has discovered that graceful movement is accessible to all dancers when broken down in terms of laws of motion and momentum. In this workshop, Natalie will lead students through exercises to build the strength, flexibility, and precision to perform agonizingly slow and controlled movements, all while making it look fluid and effortless. She will also guide participants through analysis of their own movement, muscles, strengths, and weaknesses. Slow motion drills, visualization exercises, and breathing exercises will all help break down into digestible bits what makes dance "graceful" and "effortless."

Pairing 3: Mechanical Hits and Stunning Stillness

Pops, Locks, and Tick Tocks: Tricks to Mechanize your Movement (Taught by Asharah)

Experience Level: Intermediate beginner and above.

Inspired by robots, experimental electronic music, and poppin' and lockin', Asharah has integrated mechanical movements into her expressive tribal fusion performances. In this workshop, Asharah will lead students through an intense warm up and then will show students how to break down traditional bellydance movements such as vertical hip figure-8s, shoulder rolls, torso undulations, turns, and arm waves into smaller and sharper parts to give your performances a robotic and creepy edge.

Elegant Extension and Poses (Taught by Natalie Brown)

Experience Level: Intermediate and above.

Natalie is known for her elegant lines and almost unbelievable extension. In this workshop, participants will learn how to create dynamic poses, refine angles and alignment, and create tension and engagement in all the right places. Natalie will begin the workshop with a warmup and lengthy stretching segment, focusing on students' alignment, proper muscle engagement, and posture. From there, she will teach participants how to stretch stationary poses and slow-developing movements to their fullest, jaw-dropping potential in a manner that's both safe and awe-inducing. Please wear form-fitting clothing that will keep muscles warm, and bring a yoga mat.

Pairing 4: Performance Essentials

Dancing Your Demons: Dramatic Dance through Emotional Expression (Taught by Asharah)

Experience Level: Intermediate and above.

Within each one of us is our true, instinctual self, and we often ignore or repress her (or him) in our everyday lives. Our instinctual self is not rational, and yet to dance to our fullest, we must acknowledge our instinct, acting upon it without second-guessing it and while still harnessing it for a clean and stage-worthy performance. In this workshop, Asharah will lead students through theater and dance exercises aimed at dropping our everyday personas and tapping into the gut instincts needed for a moving and expressive performance. Leave your Ego at the door and come dance on the shadow side.

Music and Musicality for Dancers (Taught by Natalie Brown)

Experience Level: All Levels

What is a beat? A measure? A phrase? What is a time signature, and what the heck do those numbers mean? Originally developed for teaching her professional company, Delirium Tribal, to be more musical with their American Tribal Style leading and following, this workshop will introduce basic music notation concepts and phrasing to dancers of all styles and disciplines, as well as break down common Middle Eastern rhythms and integrate this knowledge into dance and performance. Natalie is a classically-trained musician, and covered the classical music beat as a journalist in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina.

One-Hour Offerings

Performance and Presentation: Creating a Set (Taught by Asharah)

Experience level: All levels

An essential element of creating a performance set is choosing music that not only speaks to you, but also is appropriate for the performance venue, your dance style, and your own skill level. In this short workshop, we'll discuss how to put songs together so they flow, and tell a complete story or create a cohesive mood. Using the American Cabaret set as a template, we'll create a cohesive and professional performance set. Bring six songs from your performance repertoire. We'll also briefly talk about finding music and your own personal artistic voice.

The Art of Costuming (Taught by Natalie Brown)

Experience level: All levels

The art is the dance, as it should be, but costuming can do a lot to make or break a performance. Through her work with her tribal dance company, her alternative circus and her conceptual solo career, Natalie has performed in everything from skirts to corsets, fake moustaches to beads and sequins (and one very infamous feather costume). In this one-hour discussion, Natalie will speak very candidly on matching costumes to concepts, tricks for fitting and flattering your body type, hair and makeup for the stage, and the importance of considering the way costuming moves.

About the Instructors

Natalie Brown

Director of Delirium Tribal and Columbia Alternacirque

Natalie Brown grew up studying classical music and ballet as she traveled the world with her military family. She met her spiritual match, however, when she stumbled upon an American Tribal Bellydance Style class in New Orleans, LA in 2004. Natalie soon became a N.o.madic Tribal lower company member under the careful teachings of Ali Arnold, Amy Hession and Lisa Lala, original students of ATS Master Teacher Megha Gavin of Devyani.

After fleeing hurricane Katrina, Natalie found herself starting over in Columbia, South Carolina. With no tribal troupes or classes established in the state, she founded Tribal Style classes in November of 2005 (with the benevolent help of the CMFA and Center for Dance Education), and formed Delirium Tribal Bellydance Company in April of 2006. Under her artistic direction, Delirium Tribal has become a greatly respected member of the Southeast U.S. bellydance community. Delirium strives for artistic and technical excellence, while pushing the boundaries of tribal style.

In August of 2007, Delirium Tribal transitioned to a collective approach and teamed up with Steve Oswanski, director of Fire and Motion. The new umbrella vaudeville circus-inspired performance organization was coined Columbia Alternacirque, and the group gave their first performance in September of 2007. Columbia Alternacirque is now developing its third full season, with a cast of dancers, fire performers, hoopers, actors, poets, stilt walkers and guest artists from across the country.

In 2009, Natalie had the honor of collaborating frequently with tribal star Asharah on several projects, as well as Columbia-based professional modern dance troupe The Power Company. She also earned her Suhaila Salimpour Level I certification.

Biography for Asharah

International Performer and Instructor

Asharah has been performing since the age of six as a dancer, figure skater, and singer. As a bellydancer, she is not only known for her dramatic fusion of tribal and cabaret styles, but also has extensive experience in Turkish, Egyptian and American bellydance. Her technique, musicality, emotional expression, and finger cymbal playing skills have been noted and admired around the world. She is deeply grateful to Alexia (Kim Leary), Artemis Mourat, Suhaila Salimpour, and others who have guided her along the way. In 2007 she earned her Level 2 certification in the Suhaila Salimpour format, and is working towards earning Level 3 in the coming year.

In addition to traveling around the world to teach sold-out workshops, she teaches regular tribal belly dance classes at two of the Washington, DC, area's finest dance studios, Joy of Motion and Saffron Dance. In spring of 2010 she will be relocating to Columbia, South Carolina, to join Delirium Tribal Dance Company and teach regular classes. She released her first instructional DVD *Modern Tribal*

Bellydance, produced by WorldDanceNewYork, in January 2008, which has received excellent reviews from all styles and levels of dancers. She is also featured on the groundbreaking DVD *Gothic Bellydance: The Darker Side of Fusion*, produced by World Dance New York. She provided live percussion and graphic design for Maduro's debut release *Shimmer Sustain*, and is the graphic designer for Octofoil Records.

Asharah is not only an accomplished dancer but also has a B.A. in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University. Ever since her childhood, Asharah has been deeply interested in Middle Eastern arts and culture. She believes that every belly dancer must know the history and culture of this dance, whether she is performing it in its traditional forms or fusing it with others.