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World Music and Dance
For Immediate Use
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Leila Haddad, One of the World's Premier Oriental Dancers, Performs with the Gypsy Musicians of Upper Egypt at UCLA Live March 22

"The queen of Oriental dance"—Le Parisien



LOS ANGELES—One of the leading innovators and most passionate voices of the art of *Raqs Sharqi*—commonly known as belly dance—makes her Los Angeles premiere at UCLA Live on March 22 in the shimmering shape of world-renowned dancer Leila Haddad & The Gypsy Musicians of Upper Egypt.

Thrilling dance, vibrant music and colorful costumes combine in a lively program entitled “In the Trail of the Ghawazee,” with Tunisian-born Haddad and her accompanying troupe of musicians from the area around the storied Luxor and the Valley of the Kings.

Tracing the trail of the virtuoso Ghawazee dancers, Haddad’s solo performance explores the fascinating connections between dance forms from Asia to North Africa and across centuries of colorful tradition.

The evening begins at 8 p.m. on Saturday, March 22 at UCLA Live at Royce Hall on the UCLA campus. The run time is approximately 90 minutes with no intermission. For tickets, visit www.uclalive.org, call 310-825-2101 or contact Ticketmaster.

Called “the Queen of Oriental dance” by Le Parisien, Haddad has been a leading force in bringing the form’s noble traditions to the fore, transcending the popular notions about belly dance and restoring the roots of female dignity and sensuality at its foundation. A choreographer, teacher, designer and promoter as well as dancer, Haddad has been featured at festivals and theater performances around the world, her original programs acclaimed for their combination of originality and authenticity.

Playing instruments tied to ancient worlds—the two-stringed *rababa* spike fiddle, the double-reed *arghul*, the *tabl baladi* drum—the musicians reach the *tarab* trance state, as barefoot Haddad matches the music’s every twist and turn.

2 2 2 Leila Haddad

The music and dance follows the steps of the little-known Roma (Gypsy) people. While their main route was through the Balkans into Eastern Europe and finally to Spain, a branch found its way through the Arabian peninsula to Upper Egypt. Here the dances drew deeply on the mythical Nile as a source before moving on to nourish the roots of many of the world's secular dance forms—including modern dance.

Born to a Berber family in Djerba, Tunisia, Haddad has traveled throughout the Arab countries to learn at the source, both in renowned cultural institutions and in tiny villages. She began teaching oriental dance in Paris in the mid-'80s and today travels extensively to teach and train instructors.

But it is her original stage works that have earned her a position of global leadership. The first Oriental dancer to perform at the Salon de la Danse festival in Paris in 1988, she has gone on to create works including "Dance of the Seven Veils," "Rouh," "A la Recherche de Tanit," "L'Orient d'une Danseuse—Reveries sur le Nil," "Nomades" and a tribute to the great Egyptian singer Oum Kalthoum, "Zikrayat," which premiered in 2000 at the Théâtre Mogador in Paris.

First shown in its current form in February 2006 at Paris' Theatre du Trianon, "In the Trail of the Ghawazee" has been presented at settings ranging from Denmark's Images of the Middle East Festival to the Middle East Festival at the National Museum in Singapore and the Mediterranean Festival in Hong Kong.

Throughout, Haddad has brought the personal touch of her own experiences to her art, creating new vistas of performance.

"I am not representative of tradition," she has said. "My work is not considered traditional because I perform in theaters, and it is not contemporary as well because it refers to its roots. I need tradition to create an expression that is mine."

Crucial to that is her role in celebrating women in Arabic culture.

"I was so outraged by the very restrained image of the Arabic woman, persecuted or prostituted, martyred or exotic," she told an interviewer. "As an Arab myself, I live in France and have bloomed in a European reality. I am obliged to mix my own story. My dance is an artistic and political assertion through the form of choreography. Artists are the last barriers against intolerance."

It's an expression, she noted to *La Parisien*, of both self-discovery and cultural discovery, with an open sensuality.

"In Oriental dance, we accept our body as it is: young or old, without making it suffer, without brutal movement. This is a relation of self-seduction, more than seducing others, which teaches you a real solidarity between women."

Tickets are \$42, \$30 and \$22 and may be purchased online at www.uclalive.org, by phone at 310-825-2101, in person at the UCLA Central Ticket Office at the southwest corner of the James West Alumni Center and at all Ticketmaster outlets. UCLA students may purchase tickets in advance for **\$15**. Student rush tickets, subject to availability, are offered at the same price to all students with a valid ID one hour prior to showtime. **Press images:** <http://files.performingarts.ucla.edu/0708images/Leila%20Haddad/>

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Program Credits

Leila Haddad & the Gypsy Musicians of Upper Egypt—“In the Trail of the Ghawazee”

Leila Haddad—dance, choreography

Mohamed Mourad—*rababa* (two-string spike fiddle), *suffara* (open-ended reed flute), vocal

Youssef Moubarak—vocal, *rababa*

El Kinawy—*mizmar* (oboe)

Ramadan Atta—*mizmar*, *arghul* (chanter and drone double clarinet)

Hanafy—*tabl baladi* (large double-sided drum)

El Hamy Mohamed—*dohola* (large hand drum), *duff* (large frame drum), *rababa*, *tura* (set of large brass finger cymbals), chant

Abdallah Farah—*mizmar*, *tabl baladi*

UCLA Live is an internationally acclaimed producer and presenter of music, dance, theater and spoken word, bringing hundreds of outstanding and provocative artists to Los Angeles each year.