

## Editors' Note

On the late June day that we fashioned this introduction, the media was full of news from and about the Middle East: another American military vehicle blew up in Iraq; Israeli and Palestinian diplomats initiated a new peace effort; Turkish officials were in dispute with a Russian natural gas agency concerning a Black Sea pipeline. If Americans' visions of the Middle East were once shaped by *The Arabian Nights* and *Schéhérazade*, we now experience a Middle East shaped by the media and largely drawn in archetypes—the terrorist, the fanatic, the dictator, the chador-clad woman—and in tableaux of unsolvable conflict and tragedy. The scholars whose work is collected here add another layer of information and complication to our mental images of the Middle East, re-peopling these with dancers thoughtfully shaping and reacting to political and social upheaval through movement.

In this issue of *Dance Research Journal* we present an amalgam of perspectives, histories, and issues concerning dance in the Middle East including articles exploring perceptions of belly dancing and historical essays about contemporary dance practices in Turkey and Israel. With one exception, in the reviews collected here, writers discuss current publications about dancers and dancing in Egypt, Iran, and Israel. These writings prompt readers to think about the interconnections of dance practice and varying scholarly, political, and social visions circulating with colonialism, modernization, westernization, and globalization. It is especially interesting to think about concert and social dancing as means of creating new bodies and contemporary identities in Turkey and Israel, and to understand the historical interconnections between contemporary dance experiments in various parts of the world.

The articles, as well as the following reviews, help us realize the paucity of serious scholarship about dance in the Middle East published in America and the degree to which we still operate on orientalist assumptions about the region. The editors welcome position statements, critiques, letters to the editors, and article submissions that would broaden our understanding of and discourse about dancing in this region. Lastly, the limited nature of this small collection of articles and the nature of the articles themselves point to a need for further critical investigation of the histories and current roles of dance in this volatile, complex region.

The first article in this collection of essays concerning dance identified with and practiced in the Middle East is “Belly Dance: Orientalism—Exoticism—Self-Exoticism” by Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young. The authors examine popular and scholarly ideas about belly dancing, especially our habit of associating dance in the Middle East primarily with cabaret-style belly dancing rather than considering the var-

ied solo improvised forms from this region and our need to speculate about its origins in order to assert some spiritual and artistic legitimacy for the form. The authors also discuss the impact of western expectation and the desires of an increasingly westernized Egyptian middle class on the form and its use by American women, and some men, as a means of asserting personal erotic power.

Shay and Sellers-Young's article is positioned before a series of essays about concert dance written by historians working in Turkey and Israel. These include Arzu Öztürkmen's "Modern Dance *Alla Turka*: Transforming Ottoman Dance in Early Republican Turkey," an investigation of Selim Sırrı Tarcan and Selma Selim Sırrı, father and daughter, the former interested in establishing social dance forms appropriate to a westernized Turkey, and the latter, in establishing contemporary dance practices that might shape the bodies and public respectability of Turkish women. Following, are two articles about concert dance in Israel. Ruth Eshel's "Concert Dance in Israel" is a historical overview of the establishment of a contemporary form in Israel. Gaby Aldor's "The Borders of Contemporary Israeli Dance: 'Invisible Unless in Final Pain'" is an evocative descriptive account of contemporary choreography in Israel. Both articles provide historical understanding of Israeli dance; both help us realize the possibilities of further investigation.

This issue marks the beginning of our tenure as co-editors of *DRJ*. At this transitional time, we want to thank those who have welcomed us, helped us learn our new roles, and set such wonderful examples. We are honored to follow in the steps of *DRJ* Editor Julie Malnig who produced a journal of impeccable quality and remarkable vision. Our job is easier because of her clear, generous orientation to the procedures and responsibilities of editorship. Sally Allen Ness, Editorial Board Chair, welcomed us to the board and provided much support and assistance. She encouraged us to articulate our vision and ideas for future issues. Her wisdom, diplomacy, thoughtfulness, and strength are greatly appreciated. Barbara Palfy, who has served *DRJ* as copyeditor for many years and has graciously agreed to continue that role, has been patient and an incredibly valuable source of wisdom and information. Cara Gargano, *CORD* President, her predecessor, Mary Edsall, and *CORD* Office Administrator Ginger Carlson have been warm and supportive. Their leadership and administrative acumen provide a clear organizational structure that supports our efforts as well as those of *CORD*. We thank outgoing Reviews Editor Kate Ramsey, and welcome our new Reviews Editor Rebekah Kowal. Rekekah has done an excellent job of seeking out significant books and highly-qualified reviewers for this issue. We also welcome Julie Mulvihill, our assistant (and source of levity and order) in the *DRJ* office, and thank Cristina Huebner, who worked with Julie Malnig in New York and helped make the transition successful. We thank our colleagues in the Department of Dance, especially Sue Stinson and Larry Laverder, past and current department heads, and our Dean of Health and Human Performance, David Perrin, who have been gracious and supportive of this enterprise. Lastly, we thank the authors and readers who make *DRJ* a vital scholarly enterprise.

*Jill Green and Ann Dils, editors*