

Improving Your Learning Experience

I recently had the privilege to attend a seminar with Farida Fahmy in Greensboro, NC. It was a rare and delightful opportunity to study with one of the true celebrities of Egyptian dance.

Farida was very earnest and sincere in trying to communicate to all of us the unique styling and spirit of Egyptian dance. She was frustrated, however, because the we were using our own conceptions of the dance to re-interpret the movements, instead of absorbing her styling.

In trying to get us to overcome our preconceptions and habits, she came up with a lovely way to describe the attitude that every student of middle eastern dance should bring to class:

Leave your dance in a little bag at the door.

In saying this, Farida wanted us to empty our minds of what we thought we knew, and absorb only what we were being taught. We were welcome to pick up our little bag of dance as we finished with class, and add or subtract from its contents as we saw fit.

But while we were in class, she wanted us to watch, and understand, and absorb, without coloring our vision with past history.

This was very sound advice, although sometimes difficult to follow. It takes both mental and physical effort to accomplish. It is worth the effort, and it applies to any dance class experience that you have throughout your career as a middle eastern dancer.

If you learn how to leave your dance in a little bag at the door, it will enrich the class experience for both you and your instructor.