

Farida Fahmy The Art of Egyptian Dance



(Photo of Mahmoud and Farida in Siwa 1963)

Mahmoud Reda & Farida Fahmy Fifty Years of Dance

by Farida Fahmy, Aug 2009

August 6th 2009 marked the Golden Jubilee of the Reda Troupe. Exactly 50 years since Mahmoud Reda, myself, and a small group of dancers appeared on stage in what we named The Reda Troupe. As the number of the dance members increased the repertoire of performances and spectacles presented also grew with innovative and original dances that to this day remain an inspiration to all.

I am writing this from my own personal experience and because I was constantly by the side of Mahmoud Reda and midst the activity and work that took place during the 25 fruitful years of my dance career. Mahmoud Reda's artistic innovations, my own accomplishments as a dancer, our impact on professional dance, as well as the significant social impact we had in Egypt has become common knowledge. Little has been written, however, about the inner workings and the manner in which this professional dance ensemble functioned. It was a well structured and well organized theater dance group.

Each of the co-founders played an important role in his or her own area of expertise, thus developing a well founded entity with a co-ordinated system that offered stability and a longevity that never existed before in Egypt.

With the advent of a new genre of dance and its different styles, a vocabulary of related movements was accumulating, Mahmoud Reda devised his own method of teaching and training his dancers in the new idiom that was evolving. At the beginning of the formation of the troupe, it was nearly impossible to find already-trained professional dancers which was not the case in many other countries around the world. In Egypt, prior to this method, professional dancers such as belly dancers and their rural counterparts, the ghawazi, learned through copying the movements that they were being shown by their teachers or other dancers. Imitation and copying was the norm.

In his teaching method, Mahmoud Reda segmented, codified and all the possible variations were extracted, then developed into warm up exercises and various routines. Popular movements and folk dance steps were collected studied and developed into exercises that were practiced every day. Not only were the dancers improving their dance skills, but the logical progress of the sequence of exercises and the order by which the classes were formed brought about a discipline that helped further the professionalism that all dancers need.



(Photo of Reda troupe with Farida in Luxor)

With the passing of years many generation of dancers who later became teachers, benefited from this teaching method. Those who learned directly, as well as those who learned from others, could now rely on a system that helped them, especially as many of them began travelling and teaching in many parts of the world. In short, every generation of Egyptian teachers owe gratitude to Mahmoud Reda, a pioneer and originator of theatre dance or dance as a form of entertainment in Egypt. (A short summary about professional dance in Egypt prior to the Reda Troupe can be found in my Thesis). All teachers owe gratitude to Mahmoud whether they learned directly from him or weather through others.

I am mainly writing this piece in acknowledgement to those hundreds of dancers who joined our dance ensemble throughout the years. Those who together with me brought Mahmoud Reda's dance innovations to life on stage. I find it an opportune time to remember all the dancers who shared with us the years of joy, fame and the love and respect of the Egyptians as well as audiences around the world. For all the generations of dancers that participated in our artistic ventures, it was more than just becoming skilled or talented performers. They practically lived and breathed the life of the theater. They shared with us the discipline, punctuality and a great amount of physical endurance. They learned to use their professionalism in times of fatigue, hardships and sometimes in moments of sorrow or even grief. All these traits developed side by side as they became skilled and talented dancers. I also write this in fond memory of the members who are

no longer with us and who shared with us those years that were filled with the joy of success and the hardships that came along with it.



I write this in memory of my mother who worked very hard to produce the beautiful costumes we wore. Every one called her mommy and with her sweet nature and kindness to all, kept a sense of family that brought us together. I also remember with love and gratitude my father, his wisdom and his constant moral support. To Ali Ismael, who believed in us from the first day and who gave us so much of his talent through the beautiful music we danced to. Last but not least my husband who knew the artistic potentials Mahmoud Reda and myself possessed. He spared no energy advising, helping, promoting and encouraging us. He was our rock.

Lastly, I want to thank Mahmoud Reda for his role in fulfilling my life dream of becoming a dancer (something that was unheard of at that time), but that is another story yet to be told. To me, he is more than a blood relative. He was my teacher, my dance partner, the brother of my husband and earlier on, the husband of my sister. Together we shared ideas, hopes and aspirations. We shared the ups and downs of both our artistic careers and of life in general. We laughed and cried together and shared moments of great pride together." Congratulations my dear Mahmoud for 50 years of accomplishments. You are now regarded as the grand father of generations of dancers both Egyptian and foreign. Everyone holds you in a place of reverence and admiration."

Mamoud Rdea has been teaching all over the world for the last 20 years. His dance creations are performed in many countries and great numbers of students and teachers attend his workshops. He is a highly educated, wise, softly spoken and well seasoned man, always willing to impart his wealth of knowledge to anyone who asks.

Farida Fahmy



(Photo of Reda troupe with Farida - performance in Turkey)

**Mahmoud Reda and Farida Fahmy in El Gouna, Egypt
Dec 1-5 2012 www.sphinxfestival.com**

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