

Dance of the Moon

Experiments in Oriental Dance

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On 27 February 2004, a very special show took place in a small but packed theatre in Cologne, Germany. Starting and ending with a poem, the show seemed to be a poem in itself. Encompassing a broad range of characters including priestesses, nymphs, fairies, Celtic mythology, royalty, gypsies, witches and warriors - the boundaries of Middle Eastern dance in a modern, global context were fully explored.

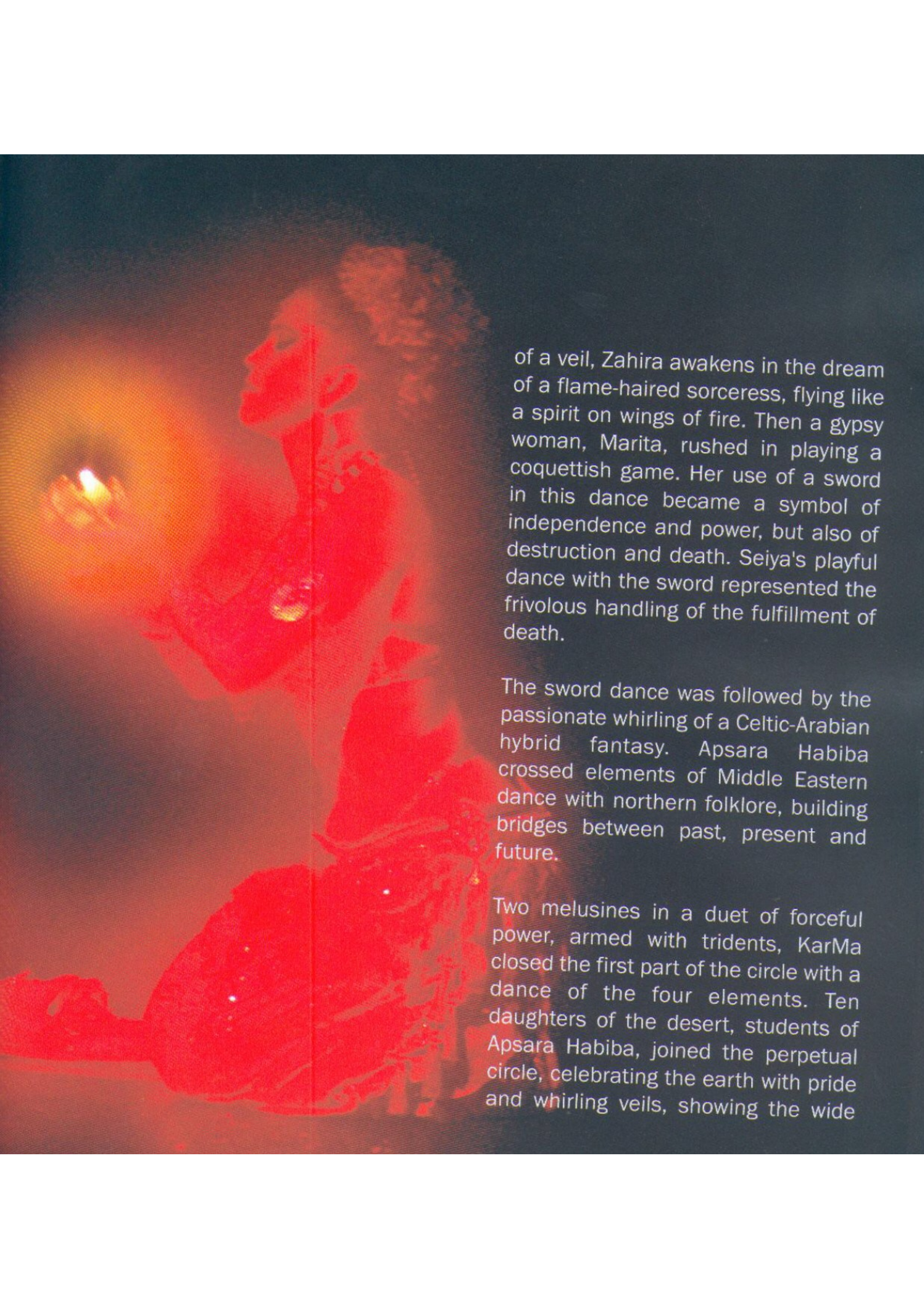
The idea of this Middle Eastern based dance show was created in 2003 by Apsara Habiba (a dancer from Cologne famous for her snake-like movements, strong expression and emotions in dance) and Seiya (an actress and dancer, known for her great mobility and sphinx-like expression). These two dancers have known each other for a long time and their artistic paths have repeatedly crossed. Both have been interested in the deeper spheres of dance, and, no longer satisfied with regular Middle Eastern dance as performed

throughout the world, they decided to hold an experimental night to push the limits.

Last year they started to perform together in a Middle Eastern café in Cologne. However, fate gave them the inspiration to organise a show on stage. Joined by the duo KarMa (dancers Zahira and Marita) and a tribal group, Apsara Habiba, they succeeded in creating a kaleidoscope of mystic colours

The show this year began with the pale blue light of the full moon, and Apsara Habiba appeared out of the shadows, like an oracle of ancient times inviting the audience to join in a sacred circle. Four priestesses representing the four elements made ancient patterns of spiral and turns. Switching into a sensual Indo-Arabian sprite, full of charming beauty, Apsara Habiba's dance was a call to womanhood, symbolising inner light.

Seiya appeared and became a dream-like fairy playing with ribbons

A woman in a vibrant red, flowing costume is captured in profile, holding a glowing sword aloft. The scene is set against a dark, atmospheric background with a warm, orange-red glow emanating from the sword and the dancer's attire. The overall mood is dramatic and ethereal.

of a veil, Zahira awakens in the dream of a flame-haired sorceress, flying like a spirit on wings of fire. Then a gypsy woman, Marita, rushed in playing a coquettish game. Her use of a sword in this dance became a symbol of independence and power, but also of destruction and death. Seiya's playful dance with the sword represented the frivolous handling of the fulfillment of death.

The sword dance was followed by the passionate whirling of a Celtic-Arabian hybrid fantasy. Apsara Habiba crossed elements of Middle Eastern dance with northern folklore, building bridges between past, present and future.

Two melusines in a duet of forceful power, armed with tridents, KarMa closed the first part of the circle with a dance of the four elements. Ten daughters of the desert, students of Apsara Habiba, joined the perpetual circle, celebrating the earth with pride and whirling veils, showing the wide

range of the tribal style of belly dance. Queen of moonlight, Seiya's romantic grace joined in again, then changed into Marita's modern dance experiment. Zahira followed using fire-pois in flaming circles - fire and dance becoming magically one.

Finally, two female warriors conquered the stage. Apsara Habiba and Seiya in a martial sword dance, accompanied by the wild sound of war-drums, emphasising the darker side of femininity, reminding us that both creation and destruction are part of life.

So ended an evening of powerful dancing, symbolism and courage.

