

Ok, I think I was the second person to pay up and reserve my Suhaila Workshops in Brighton this year. A friend e-mailed me at work the day tickets went on sale, and since I had no internet at my house, after work I literally ran home, picked up my debit card, came all the way back to work and paid for it.

We almost have a Suhaila war chant in my house, the boys have listened to me rabbiting on about her so much.

I hope I am expressing to you how excited I was about training with Suhaila.

Let's give you a blow by blow of the workshops. Three days. Day one was Jamila Salimpour format, in which we learnt Jamila's original moves used in her Bal Anat troupe (Jamila being the mother of tribal, and of course of ATS) and spent five hours zilling (after so long thinking that I can't zill as it destroys my wrists, I was taught safe zill practice and managed to zill, very inexpertly, for five hours) and dammit I am bringing the Zills back to ATS in Cambridge. And I need to get some big noisy sexy ones as well.

Day 2 was Suhaila level 1 format. I could handle the warm up ok, which was a good start. Then came the maths, oh my. Suhaila's mission was to package bellydance into an intense training system equal to other dance forms, like Ballet and Jazz. Part of this was creating a terminology for moves, timing, and instead of saying "mya while walking" it would be "walking half time downbeat on the right with vertical eights up to down full time." My brain does not process anything vaguely related to maths, so this was super challenging to me. I had my Face Of Trouble on and my Concentration Tounge out through that lecture.

Day three, Suhaila level two, with LAYERING. My brain, my brain, my brain. I think all of us were concentrating so hard that if we tried to pay attention to anything other than counting and where the downbeat was we would have exploded.

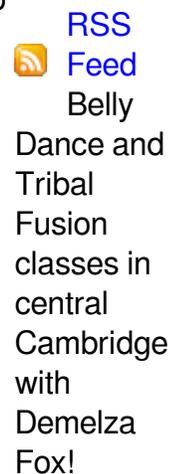
These workshops really made me realise that I have SO FAR TO GO to be the dancer I want to be. All we did were drills, drills on different foot patterns, drills layering other drills on top of drills, drills changing tempo. There was no dancing, no opportunity for me to hide my slim technical knowledge with all the pizazzy bits or to judge who was the dancer I'd like to see perform most. And my god were we sweating.

And I LOVED IT.

I'd like to live in Suhaila's STUDIO CUPBOARD I loved it so much.

In addition to five hours of drilling and learning dance stuff every day, Suhaila did a LOT of talking, about how her Mum became a dance teacher, about how she came up with the format, about the history of the dance in America, what is safe dance practice - she's got a brain full of stuff. Chockablock. Did I say chockablock? I meant chockamockablock.

I was horribly worried that I wouldn't be able to do anything in these workshops, as an old knee



injury had popped up again a week and a half before Suhaila time, and I was freaking out a bit, cos I know I'd give it my all in workshop then be a hobbly cripple afterwards. Suhaila asked if we had any injuries, and I said my knee and explained what it was, and she told me I needed to ROLL IT OUT and asked someone to bring in a roller on day 2. When we were doing warm up, Suhaila came up to me and dug her fingers into my thigh, from mid thigh to practically my groin, and dude it HURT. Maybe stabbed her fingers would be better. But, after that, honestly, the pain in my leg, which had been so crap that previous week that I couldn't even lead my dance class or sit down for long periods of time, was 98% gone. For real. I shall say that again - gone, for real.

She got me on a roller the next day, and even though it was blasphemously painful, I bought one when I got home for future fixing and regular painful use. I'm gonna get my boys on it too.

Suhaila was incredible - anyone who has read my blog before will know that I am a leeeetle bit gay for her, but know my god do I know why. I love how her system is structured, the emphasis on muscle control and safety and conditioning so we have strong dancers bodies. I loved the drills, I loved the music, I loved how much she knew, I loved holding her ass while she did her butt vibration shimmy and I loved how much I couldn't do it.

Aggggghhh Suhaila! If anyone else wants to bring her to the UK, I have money here for you. If not, well, it'll be Belgium next year for Level One and America in 2013 for future progress!!!!

I loved those workshops as well...hooked! She is going to be in Italy in July for Level 1!

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