

BAKSANA ENSEMBLE'S PERFORMANCE PROGRAM / INFORMATON

Baksana presents pieces in a hybrid-historical/modern fashion. While our dances are rooted in folk stylizations, we'd like to mention 3 important things. 1. Many of these dances are living, culturally specific, creative expressions that have adapted over time and continue to do so. We are "harkening back" but also looking to the present and future of these forms. 2. Baksana has respectfully adapted elements for stage presentation and we acknowledge and honor that many of these dances are done at community celebrations, not all are "performed" in their original contexts, but have become modernized as performance over time.

See our list of teachers at the end of this program...

Baksana is delighted to present to you the inspirations for each of the pieces in our set:

Baksana Theme Song: Inspired by bardic storytelling through song, with a touch of contemporary musical theater. It is a fantastical introduction of a traveling band of musicians and dancers. Audiences are welcome to sing along! Music by Bevin Victoria, co-choreographed by the ensemble.

Dabke: This is a line dance found throughout the countries of: Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Jordan. Each region has unique stylizations. People hold hands or arms and keep rhythm with their stomping feet. Sometimes the leader of the line will dance more acrobatically with jumps, kicks, and getting low to the ground. Often scarves, sticks, or beads are twirled as well. It is a dance of celebration and joy, and also a dance of resistance and mourning. Representing the strong, community-oriented, resilient spirit of the people. Music by Bevin Victoria. Choreography by Carla Choleo.

REFERENCES:

<https://youtu.be/KqCePDdPGQk>
https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=IHEPgQ_po2Q&feature=youtu.be
https://youtu.be/ZO_a8vHWq40

Reda Ru: Finger Cymbals are an ancient instrument with early variations found in Greece, Egypt and China. Called by many names, we know them in Baksana as *Sagaat* (Arabic) or *Zils* (Turkish). We play them not as mere dance accessories, but as the dynamic percussion instruments they truly are! This piece is an homage to 2 of our great inspirations: [The Reda Troupe](#) (Egypt 1959-1990) and [Hahbi Ru](#) (California, USA 1980-2012). Music and choreography by Danielle Elizabeth.

Caravansary: Along the Silk Road, from China to Turkey, Caravansaries were places to rest along the trade routes. Our dancers hold hands to represent this style of communal traveling. They stop to make camp, stretch their legs, and have some fun! The rhythm is in 7/8 meter and the dance is heavily inspired by line dancing from the Balkan Black Sea region. Music by Paul Evansmith. Choreographed by Danielle Elizabeth.

REFERENCES

https://sfdh.us/encyclopedia/balkan_dance_crum.html
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zB4mPIEdbPs>

Saidi E: In Upper Egypt, there is a martial art called Tahtib, practiced with long bamboo sticks. Dancers around Egypt mimic these martial movements with the assaya (sticks), adding spins and twirls, taps and flips... and of course some fancy footwork. Original music by Paul Evans. Choreographed by Danielle Elizabeth

REFERENCES

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWFsRAnE3ak>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GANahqsMpHo>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C750ZbRqC9Q>

Ozianauri: This dance was choreographed by one of our teachers, Mr. Ozgen (with the exception of one improvised playful section added by Danielle). It is in 9/8 rhythm and inspired by the Roman Havasi, aka Turkish Roman, style.** We have paired this choreography by Mr. Ozgen with music by Kaya Hellman.

REFERENCES

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5FswLiP-wk>
<https://aslahan.com/turkish-romany-dance.html>
<https://babayagamusic.com/Encyclopedic-Dictionary-Ethnic-Arts/turkish-romany-dance.htm>

Scarf: Originally danced with baskets, Bevin Victoria created this piece based on a reimagining of a historical scene inspired by her research of Egypt during the Turkish Ottoman Empire of companions dancing in a market-place. The signature Baksana costume coats were produced especially for this piece, researched directly to this time-period. It has evolved slightly from Baskets to scarves, but the playful nature of friends causing a bit of mischief rings true. Choreography and Music by Bevin Victoria.

Sword of Truth: Sword dancing is a historically ambiguous element of North African dance, with stories told of Bedouin dancers entertaining ottoman troops, similar to how Raqs Assaya dancers mimicked Tahtib martial artists for entertainment in Egypt. The accuracy of these stories is debatable, however dancing with swords is now a highly technical, modern element commonly seen in Raqs Sharqi dance sets. We find it fits well with our renaissance faire performances. YES, the swords we dance with are made of REAL, SHARP metal. NO there are

no tricks when balancing the swords, nothing sticky or magnetic involved... just lots of practice and skill. It is dangerous, acrobatic, mesmerizing, and because it's Baksana... it's also fun!
Choreography and Music by Bevin Victoria.

Journey: Music and dance are universal languages that connect all humans. Baksana members travel world-wide, meeting and dancing with many different people from many different cultures as they do. We also have multi-cultural heritage within the group. This piece speaks to those things, and is presented in the casual "learning round a fire-side" style. The piece takes us (briefly) from Egypt to Spain, Ireland, and Brazil. The percussive rhythms follow the basic cultural dance moves. Arranged by Bevin Victoria with Kaya Hellman.

Baksana Dance Vocabulary Improvisations: In 2013 Baksana Director Danielle Elizabeth began work on a group improvisational format of dance phrases that could be put into any order on the spot to create unique and fun dances. No performance of Baksana Dance Vocabulary is exactly the same twice! The dance movements come primarily from Egyptian Raqs Sharqi (Raqs Sharqi - "dance of the east") and Turkish Oryental dance styles. The dance combinations are paired with dynamic finger cymbal patterns, mini-compositions that support and accent the movements. Over the years, other members of Baksana have contributed to the vocabulary (Morgan Fay, Carla Choleo, and Bevin Victoria). To learn more and take our trainings, visit: <https://baksanaensemble.com/bdvonline/>

Finale: Let's Party! This piece is a bombastic, energetic, get up and dance celebration. Playing music while dancing - we're thanking the crowd for sharing their time with us and inviting folks to stand up and have a good shimmy! Concept & Choreography Morgan Fay.
Music by Bevin Victoria and Kaya Hellman.

Baksana is often asked at our Events, "**Where did you learn to dance/play like that?!**" We are ALWAYS continuing our studies with our teachers, learning the languages, as well as traveling to Egypt and Turkey directly to spend time within the cultures. We allow our own authentic expressions to inspire us as well, and we perform with our hearts on our sleeves for all to enjoy. While we all have our individual artistic journeys and formal training, listed below are some of the teachers that have the most influence on the style of Baksana:

[Karim Nagi](#) - Arab Arts (Tahtib/Assaya, Sagaat, Dabke)

[Mr. Ozgen](#) - Turkish Oryental and Roman Havarsi

[Reyhan Tuzsuz](#) - Roman Havarsi

[Gigi Dilsha](#) - Turkish Oryental and Roman Havarsi

[Tito Seif](#) - Raqs Sharqi, Tathib

[Faisal Zadan](#) - Percussion (darbuka/derbekki, riq)

[Rumen Sali Shopov](#) - Davul/Tapan

[Hany Morgan](#) - Sagaat (cymbals)

[Daniela Ivanova](#) - Bulgarian (Balkan) Line Dance

[Heather/Henna](#) - Raqs Sharqi

[Rachel Brice](#) - Modern Fusion, Group Improvisational Formatting

[The Salimpour School](#) - Raqs Sharqi and folkloric dances

We are also inspired by others who have come before us in the lineage of American west-coast Renaissance Faire performance: Hahbi Ru, Bal Anat, and Silk Road Caravan.

****Please note:** the word “Gypsy,” originated as misinformation, and has been (and still is) sometimes used as a derogatory word throughout Europe aimed at unjust racial discrimination. There are other misleading and often over-romanticised notions of the term coming from American culture that erase the reality, dignity, and rich diversity of Roma people. The culturally specific, and requested, word is Roma, Romani, and/or Romany. We believe that everyone has a right to request how they would like to be addressed. Roma people may choose to refer to themselves by using the word, and we respect that. However, we feel that does not give us, as non-Roma, permission to use the word “Gypsy,” especially when speaking to other mainly non-Roma audiences who likely do not know the cultural and historical context attached to it. It is also not our place to generalize based on individual requests or personal relationships.

Example: “My friend is Roma and says the word Gypsy so it’s okay if I say it too.” One Romani person does not represent all Roma peoples, so out of respect, we refrain from using the term, and request that you consider doing so as well if you are not Romani. This is something we hear quite a bit at the Renaissance Faires we perform at and wanted to share our thoughts.

Romani culture now exists world-wide, mainly stemming from people who traveled common trade routes from India all the way to Spain, and arrived as early as the 1400's in the UK. Roma people share genetics, as well as culturally historical roots of a nomadic/traveling lifestyle and the Romani language - but there are many unique linguistic dialects, and widely diverse music, dances, and other customs specific to each Roma community across Europe and the diaspora. Many contemporary Roma have settled in their respective areas, rather than maintain a nomadic lifestyle. We encourage further learning of Roma culture from these organizations and links: [MRGI](#), [Open Society Foundations](#), [Voice of Roma](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Roma Support Group](#), [LiveScience](#)

We are also grateful for our other Turkish Roman dance teachers from Turkey [Reyhan Tuzsuz](#), [Gigi Dilsha](#), and Ozgen (from Cyprus).