

# "Gothlaween Spirits Pandemonium" Belly Dance Workshop: An Exploration of the Dark Mystique of Gothic Belly Dance

Fall is the time of year in which a shadow is cast between the dead & the living on earth. Harvest dies back, animals recede in preparation for the coming season's cold & dark slumber/sleep. Awaken your senses & be inspired to express yourself at this mystical time of year by exploring Gothic Belly Dance.



Study the Dark Mystique of Gothic Belly Dance. This form of dance is an emerging fusion form that draws from the gothic subcultures with its musical and stylistic expression. It draws from the darker side fused with cabaret and tribal styles. Music ranges from romantic to post-punk which may or may not include Middle Eastern rhythms.

## **Study the Attitude of Movement:**

Gothic Belly Dancers access the whole vocabulary of moves found in belly dance, but more often than not, there is an additional aura to the performance. Some of things we will explore in Gothic Belly Dance: a trance-like feeling to the movements, a mysterious, sultry, and/or passionate intensity to facial expression and actions, often the use of mudras (sacred hand gestures) and other classical Indian dance accents, levels, and the application of ritual elements. A performance will often feature harder accents to traditional movements. We will view a short video performance before we begin the workshop.

**When: Saturday, October 16, 2010**

**Sign-in: 4:00**

**Class: 4:30-7:00 (with breaks)**

**Where: Debary, FL**

**Fee: \$30**

**Attire:** Common costuming includes but is not limited to Victorian, Steampunk, Cyber/Industrial, Vampire/Dracula Goth. Gothic belly dance somber and theatrical version of tribal belly dance, with dancers exploring darker themes of self-expression. The make-up is heavy & dark, and facial expressions are often intense & dramatic. Hairstyles are exaggerated, with uncommon colors and cuts and/or extensions. Dark colors (mainly black) predominate in costuming, often with lace, leather (fake or real) and fishnet fabrics; spiky metal jewelry, body piercing and many tattoos are typical.

Please contact Effie to register or for more details 386-848-4368 or eheotis@yahoo.com

The music is often modern and diverse than tribal style. Sometimes there is a strong sexual undertone to this dance.

**Intro:** Gothic Bellydance emerged in the U.S. around the 1990s. Because it is similar to its costume and make-up, Gothic style is considered to be more of an offshoot of tribal bellydance.

Stark...sublime...intense.

The phenomenon of Gothic Bellydance or Raks Gothique is a multitude of poetic visions born out of the Goth, or Gothic, subculture, music, imagery and fashion, and expressed in the language of Bellydance. Modern "Bellydance" is an amalgam of historical dance styles coming from both East and West. Its diverse vocabulary allows the dancer to experiment with the widest range of creative movement, musical trends and cultural elements. A century after its arrival in the West, the art of Bellydance is emerging as a new world of unconstrained creative experimentation. No longer bound by its ethnic origins, it is one of the fastest-growing and most artistically-open contemporary dance forms.

"Gothic Bellydance" incorporates many Bellydance styles and motifs: Cabaret, Tribal Fusion, modern dance, echoes of Gypsy dance, Flamenco, Asian, and Indian dance - all called to express the darkness of the unknown, and the mysteries of life, death, and eternity that have inspired Goth philosophies and lifestyles.

This first of its kind, groundbreaking collaborative project brings you the work of innovative and uncompromising "dark fusion" artists including a number of the recognized pioneers of Gothic Bellydance. The DVD features Tempest, and Ariellah of California; Asharah, Ya Meena and Raven of Washington, DC; Jeniviva, Ayshe, Jehan, Tanna, Blanca and Neon of New York City, as well as music by outstanding composers and performers including Solace, Jehan, Collide, Knossos and Gypsy Caravan.

Enter our dark labyrinth and meet an exotic array of striking characters and creatures: Souls possessed by an ancient evil spirit; a black-winged fallen angel; an incarnation of Kali and Isis; a leopard-woman from the island of Dr. Moreau; a tormented silent movie vamp; a Gothic "Lolita" in love with Death; a wanderer in spiritual exile; a snake morphing into a human; a seeker violated and redeemed by divine domination; a Siren exercising her lethal charms; a worshipper of a winged serpent; a flame whose deadly habits are all-too-human; a run-away gargoyle; a maiden transforming into a warrior sorceress; a haunting *deja vu* where victim, violator and avenger merge into one... and more.

What makes a costume goth? Does it have to be black? To those not familiar with the Goth community, one could say there are many ["types" of Goths](#), which does allow for variety in costuming; yet no matter the nuances between a "Cybergoth" and a "Graver," there tends to be something that just exudes Goth which pulls it all together visually. That something could be akin to the notion of *duende*, that it's a spirit-like element, or simply no matter the parts used, there's an overall look that's accomplished. No matter what it is, read on for some key costuming elements found in Gothic Belly Dance:

**-fishnetting and lace:** whether it's a bodysuit, gloves, stockings, small weave or open work, fishnetting and/or lace tends to play a big part in the dancer's costume.

**-black:** although a costume doesn't need to be entirely black to be goth, generally black is the base for the costume. Common accent colors: reds, wines, purples, metallics, stripes.

**-make-up:** while standard belly dance make-up generally stays within the realm of "stage" make-up---normal evening-out make-up made extreme to stand up to the intensity of show lights and dark atmosphere, Gothic make-up tends to be more whimsical and artistic in nature, especially when it comes to the [eyes](#) and lips. Pallor of the skin depends on your natural skin-tone---in contrast to the popular stereotype of the white, deathly pale Goth, Goths come in all colors--so whatever best accents your natural color. Glitter and/or unusual colors.

**-metal:** chain maille, bells, link fringe, spikes/punk accents, and also, a touch of the exotic, some dancers prefer to use antique jewelry from India and other tribal localities. *(thanks Aradia!)*

**-art/history-based:** Goth has many historic costuming influences, so you may find one costume that leans toward the 1920's, another that's more Medieval, and another that's pure Punk--wherever there is dramatic/romantic human expression in art and word, Goth has had its way with it!

**-fabrics:** costumes made from lace, vinyl, latex, PVC, leather, Assuit, velvets, gauze,

sari, imported textiles, and heavy satins

-**hair:** Artistic hair is a big thing for Goths, both male and female. Unusual colors and cuts, [fake hair in a variety of materials](#), hair adornments, and more.

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### **Attitude of Movement:**

Gothic Belly Dancers access the whole vocabulary of moves found in belly dance, but more often than not, there is an additional aura to the performance. Some of things you'll see in Gothic Belly Dance: a trance-like feeling to the movements, a mysterious, sultry, and/or passionate intensity to facial expression and actions, often the use of *mudras* (sacred hand gestures) and other classical Indian dance accents, unabashed use of floorwork, and the application of ritual elements. A more Industrial or Cyber performance will often feature harder accents to traditional movements, incorporating moves from the Gothic club scene (what we often like to call "stompy! stompy! moves). And yes, there's a very specific kind of dance found on the Gothic dancefloor. If this is news to you, you've probably never been to one---but if you visited on in San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and everywhere in between and beyond (I've got confirmations in the UK, Australia, and Japan), you'll see a similar grasp of the music.

Also, it becomes clearly apparent to the viewer that a story is unfolding before their eyes. This storytelling is the result of consideration for the movements made and the purpose and intent of the performance.

Gothic Belly Dance is a complete entity, from all sides. It's not just dancing to "gothic" music in bedlah, or dressing goth and dancing to standard/traditional Middles Eastern music...and believe it or not, it's not just looking the part and dancing to gothic music either---there is a third element that is vital to the performance: a sense of theatrics, emotional intensity, drama, and purpose. The Gothic Belly Dancer part actress, part vamp, part gypsy, part rebel, part sorceress, and part priestess---and all focused on a known or perhaps unknown (occult) intent. I would liken this third element to phenomenon known as *duende* in flamenco: a possessive, present, yet ethereal spirit/power, where both the dancer and subsequently, the audience, fall under its spell.

How does one achieve this state? Well, it tends to fall into the realm of you only know when you see it or it happens to you. But that's not much help, so we'll outline a pattern elements that coax it:

*-the dancer's connection to the music...being able to know, not just mentally, but instinctively with your body--the accents as well as the subtle undertones.*

*-to know your body and feel the metaphysical connection between the body, spirit, and soul.*

*-allowing spontaneity and interaction. Gothic Belly Dance is very "in the moment" and doesn't necessarily rely on a strict choreography. There has to be room to feel the music while it's happening, not just by planning ahead. While you're out there, anything is subject to change.*

Gothic Belly Dance can come in slight variations or flavors, depending upon the dancer and their intent. The reason behind this is the fantastic diversity found within the Gothic subculture. Here's a few that are pretty easy to identify:

-**"Burlesque"** -right now, Burlesque in itself is experiencing a renaissance, and there's a lot of crossover between burlesque and belly dance, and gothic elements and burlesque.

-"**1920's/ the vamp**" - Think silent film, flappers, and drama. Think Theda Bara, the original vamp, mixed with the vampy tendencies of Goth.

-"**priestess**" - I use this heading to describe more ritualistic tendencies, crossing into spirituality, Paganism, and the mystery of the temple dancers from days of old. Think Ruth St. Denis.

-"**cyber/techno/industrial**" - a futuristic hardcore edge from the Industrial side of Goth. A good example would be the djinn scene from Ultra Gypsy's "Medusa and The Machine."

In the instance of the latter (the dedicants), it should be noted that the majority of Gothic Belly Dancers are extremely familiar with traditional belly dance music and movements, and consider this genre of dance to be an exploration of one's talent in a valid manner---the same way one may say they perform Cabaret Belly Dance, and specialize in Turkish and Classic Egyptian styles. Turkish and Classic Egyptian (*mere examples here, we could chose Ghawazee, Modern Egyptian, Tunisian, etc*) are primarily defined by the music and its interpretation, as well as culture-based costuming. The same is true for Gothic Belly Dance. The base movements are the same, the underlying beats of the music are often Middle Eastern (and other traditional non-Western composures), and the music influences the attitude of the movements and costuming.