

Leila Haddad's **Zikrayat**

Belly-dancing or "danse orientale" as it's known in France has become the latest dance trend in Paris for women since Leila Haddad inspired its revival in an upgraded, respectable form, bringing it out of sleazy cabarets and performing it exclusively on Western-style theater stages.

Performed by 10 dancers, Haddad's new show "Zikrayat" (which means memory in Arabic) pays tribute to the mythical Egyptian woman singer Oum Kalsoum whose music is much admired throughout the Arab world. Leila Haddad is an indefatigable advocate of this misunderstood art, as well as of women's rights and creative expression. She was born in Djerba on the Tunisian Mediterranean coast, and took on the mission to transform and transmit oriental danse in the early 1980 session. She was born in Djerba on the Tunisian Mediterranean coast, and took on the mission to transform and transmit oriental danse in the early 1980s.

Haddad's Paris classes are enormously popular. "European students have a different attitude about their bodies... they discover a new continent by practicing oriental dance....," Haddad explained in a recent press statement. "It makes women feel good about themselves and creates solidarity among them."

by Carol Prati