

LIBERATION

Thursday February 27th, 2003

Leila Haddad honours Oriental Dance

Would the Franco-Tunisian choreographer Leila Haddad have found the solution to bringing Oriental dance out of the apathy from which it had been lingering for more than a quarter of a century?

Blending Oum Kalsoum's voice with dance is perhaps the way to find again the true emotions of a feminine art that together with the body has known since the dawn of time how to reach Tarab (ecstatic state) so dear to Arabic music.

In order to see her reasoning through, Leila Haddad, who has been fighting for more than twenty years for the recognition of Oriental dance, chose the song Zikrayat ("memories") to mark the occasion with a double approach. By choosing a text which allowed the blending of popular and classical music, she demonstrated that dance is apparent at every level of Arab society, she also paid a tribute to Oum Kalsoum and Ahmed Rami who wrote the song, this at a time when today's Oriental stars are signing their name to works by the dozen, works they have not written, in order to get royalties.

The dancer Leila Haddad asserts with conviction: "The Star of the East" was always content with her role of singer, leaving writing to the poets of genius of her country.

Nidam Abdi