



**City of the World**  
A series of concerts celebrating  
the musical diversity of New York  
*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*  
365 Fifth Avenue (at 34<sup>th</sup> Street)



For Immediate Release

April 16, 2008

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## **Zikrayat Celebrates The Egyptian Movie Musical and The Art of Middle-Eastern Dance**

**Saturday May 3, 2008, 2:00-5:30 (Workshops) 6:30-8:00pm (Performance)**

**Jamaica Center For Arts & Learning** 718-658-7400 x 123

161-04 Jamaica Ave. Jamaica, NY 11432

\$10 (performance) \$15 (one class) \$25/\$30 (two classes) \$30/\$35 (two classes & performance)

**Thursday, May 15, 2008, 7:30pm**

**Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall, Graduate Center of the City University of New York**

365 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue New York, NY 10016

Free

The Egyptian film industry of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century engaged the most talented vocalists, dancers, and musicians of the Middle-East to produce hundreds of musical comedies and dramas of the highest caliber. Drawing upon the rich repertory of songs and dance pieces from this period, Zikrayat (2008 Independent Music Awards Finalist for their album *Live at Lotus*), the Long Island City-based ensemble of Arabic musicians, vocalists and dancers, juxtaposes classical songs with light-hearted belly-dance numbers, contemplative improvisations, and sparkling original compositions, in stage productions that recall the variety-show character of musical theater and portray the breadth of Arabic music and dance.

On Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup>, in honor of National Dance Week<sup>®</sup>, Zikrayat will bring its exciting stage show to the heart of Queens, at the Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, where Zikrayat members will also lead four workshops in the art of Egyptian-Style *Raqs Sharqi*, also known as "Belly-dance," starting at 2pm. The recipient of a 2008 Queens Community Arts Fund grant from the Queens Council on the Arts for this project, Zikrayat's dance director Robin "Dameshe" Shumays, an African-American woman who grew up in Far Rockaway, Queens and developed a love for Middle-Eastern culture at a young age, says "it's important to me to correct the misconceptions people have in this country about belly-dance. It's not just another kind of exotic dance, but an art form with thousands of years of history and a deep connection to the music and culture of the Arab world. Egyptian movies of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century presented that dance tradition in a

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rich context and a respectful light, showing both its serious and its fun sides.” She and other members of Zikrayat will teach the following dance workshops: “Introduction to Dancing with Veils,” “Drum Solo Choreography,” “Introduction to Egyptian Style Belly Dance,” and “Mastering Improvisational Belly Dance.” Following the workshops will be a full stage performance featuring Zikrayat’s musicians, vocalists, and dancers.

Then on May 15<sup>th</sup>, Zikrayat will put on a multi-media production at the CUNY Graduate Center, featuring clips from Egyptian cinema of the 1930’s, 40’s, and 50’s, accompanied by live music and dance performances of the numbers taken from those films. Paying tribute to the great singers and dancers who have served as their inspiration—Farid al-Atrash, Mohammed Abdel-Wahhab, Abdel-Halim Hafiz, Umm Kulthum, Asmahan, Fayza Ahmed, Hurriyya Hassan, Shadia, Naima Akif, Taheya Karioca, and Samia Gamal—this production will bring to life some of their best moments on screen, while Zikrayat’s performers take the audience through a historical tour of mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Egyptian Song and Dance, focusing especially on the decade of the 1950’s, when these art forms were in a dynamic process of transitioning from traditional to modern forms, in tandem with Egypt’s movements toward independence and a redefinition of national identity. The powerful 1957 film *Tamr Hinna*, a dramatic study in the clash between urban and rural, gypsy and gentry, will serve as a focal point for the production, as Zikrayat performs the film’s four main vocal and dance numbers.

Both of these performances feature Zikrayat’s pair of principal vocalists, Gaida and her son Salah Rajab, who, in addition to performing numerous solo and songs to accompany dancers, will perform a hilarious duet originally sung by Farid el-Atrash and Shadia, playing characters who dislike each other but are forced to feign passion. They will be backed by Zikrayat’s all-acoustic ensemble, led by Arabic violin player and vocalist Sami Abu Shumays, and featuring Tareq Abboushi on buzuq, Dimitri Mikelis on oud and accordion, Bridget Robbins on nay, and Johnny Farraj and Nicole LeCorgne on percussion. The lineup of dancers features, in addition to leader Dameshe, Yowalka, Leela, and special guest Jaida.



*These performances are made possible in part by the Queens Council on the Arts, with public funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (May 3<sup>rd</sup>), and by the Baisley Powell Elebash Endowment (May 15<sup>th</sup>).*



The Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is housed in a landmark building owned by the City of New York and is funded with public funds provided through the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency; the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs with support from Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg; Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin; the New York City Council; Council Speaker Christine Quinn; the Queens Delegation of the Council; Deputy Majority Leader, Councilman Leroy Comrie; and Queens Borough President Helen M. Marshall.



Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning is accessible for individuals with limited mobility.

For more information, visit [www.jcal.org](http://www.jcal.org) or call (718) 658-7400.

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