

ISSUE #15, 2015



# DANCING IN "DUST"

*an experimental dance film*

**Plus:**  
DanceCraft by Zoe Jakes  
Hafla for Humanity  
Dance Therapeutics: Intrinsic  
Body Love Conference

**AND MORE...**



# Dancing for Humanity



by Irina Dumitrescu, aka, Atisheh  
[www.atisheh.com](http://www.atisheh.com)

But the Syrian refugee crisis has intensified, and Haas realized she couldn't wait.

Chicago that will bring together Hip Hop, Classical Indian, and belly dance in support of the Hafla. What's more, Kami Liddle, Aziza, Sabrina, Sabah, and the Las Vegas Bellydance Intensive have all donated prizes to the online silent auction.

Belly dancers around the world have a complicated relationship with North Africa and the Middle East. Some of us look to Egypt, Turkey, Morocco and Lebanon for the roots of our dance, for music and "authentic" technique. Others are happy to develop the art in new directions, whether we are dancing in the U.S., Germany, or Japan. What's more, international belly dancers have sometimes been accused of appropriating a dance form that does not belong to us, without necessarily helping the societies that helped developed it.

A few years ago, Lauren Zehara Haas envisioned a way to change this. She dreamt that belly dancers could work together to help women of the Middle East and Arab world. "I don't mean to imply that all women in that part of the world need help," Haas told me., "they do not. But some do. We're connected to them, through our art, and we're in a position to help them."

Haas imagined an international event called "Hafla for Humanity," which would sponsor a different charity each year. Her plan was to launch a new online magazine for belly dancers that would sponsor Hafla for Humanity.

Hafla for Humanity is now live at [www.haflaforhumanity.com](http://www.haflaforhumanity.com), and has already gathered immense support in the dance community. The idea is simple: dancers around the world will organize events on November 14, 2015, and donate the profits directly to the International Rescue Committee, a respected organization that provides necessary on-the-ground assistance to refugees in camps.

Food, water, medical care, and education are all badly needed and in short supply, especially since the United Nations World Food Programme announced on July 1, 2015 that they would be reducing their food assistance to refugees in camps around Syria. Haas chose the IRC because of their experience caring for people in need since before World War II, and because they have low overhead: 92% of donations go directly to services.

Although Hafla for Humanity has just launched, dancers from Brisbane to Chattanooga are already responding. Ami Amoré is organizing an event in St. Louis, and has donated her image for promotional materials. Nina Arora-Rowland is hosting a performance in

There are many ways to get involved. Dancers in established, active communities might indeed organize a hafla, but that is certainly not the only option. You can organize a workshop or teach a class in the community for donations. You can pass around a basket at a costume swap, potluck, or DVD viewing party. As Haas notes on the Hafla's website, "IRC can provide four children with nourishment for one month for \$20. It doesn't seem like much to you, but for those four children, and their mother, it's life-giving."

Haas has lots of tips for event organizers for a successful charity hafla. First, ask your local businesses for donations or discounts: your venue might give you a break on the rent, and local restaurants and bakeries can donate food to be sold for charity. Reduce your expenses by picking a small, simple performance space: your performers and audience will know this only helps you reach your goal of raising funds for the refugees. Ask dance vendors for donations towards an auction. Local dancers can contribute classes or private lessons. You could even organize a lottery in which the prizes are pitched in by the



# 7 WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

If your heart is hurting for the Syrian refugees, there are lots of ways you can help. You'll find information on all of these options at [www.haflaforhumanity.com](http://www.haflaforhumanity.com)

local community – many of us have a hip scarf, belly dance DVD, or pair of practice zills we're not using anymore, but that might would be a fun prize for someone else. Once you have organized the show, you can also encourage more giving by asking local vendors for donations to be auctioned, and setting up a big poster with a thermometer that shows the group's progress toward the goal during the evening.

If you can't organize an event on November 14, it's fine to plan something on another day. Even if you already have an event near that date and can't donate the proceeds, you can still help. Add a fundraising element like a silent auction to the event, and be clear in your ads about which funds go to charity. Even non-dancers can help out by attending their local event, spending a little in the online Souk or Silent Auction, sharing information about the Hafla widely, and even donating directly to the IRC.

"I think belly dancers, as a group, are some of the most intelligent, creative and, dynamic women on the planet, and I've always thought that if we banded together we'd be powerful," says Haas. Our dance's relationship to its countries of origin might often be fraught, but it can be a force for good too. Shared movement can join people across cultures, teaching us to recognize each other's humanity despite our many differences. The Hafla for Humanity offers another way to bridge the gap: using dance to help people in their hour of greatest need.

## Organize a Local Event

You don't have to be an experienced organizer to put together a Hafla for Humanity. An event can be as small as inviting some dancers over to share a potluck and watch dance videos in your living room. Every donation helps, and every event adds to the global energy of the project.

## Donate a Silent Auction Item

Do you have a costume, a veil, or some jewelry that you've been thinking about selling? Do you make handcrafted hip belts or hair accessories? Consider donating it to the Online Silent Auction.

## Join the Virtual Souk

If you have your own Etsy shop or other online store, consider donating a portion or your proceeds to Hafla For Humanity and being listed in the Virtual Souk.

## Shop for Humanity

Nothing to sell? That's great, because the Silent Auction and Virtual Souk need shoppers, too!

## Support a Local Event

Let your local organizers know that if they put something together, you're willing to perform, attend, or even volunteer. Invite your friends and family, too. Even your non-dance friends may want to support the refugee

## Donate

You can make a donation directly to the IRC from the Hafla for Humanity website. Your donation will be counted toward the total "belly dancer" contribution, and you'll receive a tax receipt by e-mail.

## Spread the Word

Share the event homepage ([www.haflaforhumanity.com](http://www.haflaforhumanity.com)) on social media and local groups. Pin it, snap it, post it, share it, gram it or tweet it. Use the hashtags #haflaforhumanity #oneshimmyatime #poweroftheshimmy

