



BELEDI BEAT



A publication of Jawaahir Dance Company and The Cassandra School

2021: Volume 29, Fall Edition

Note from Cassandra

November 2021



On October 12th, I made the last flight arrangements for our much-anticipated guest artists for *Sparkle*³, Luna of Cairo and Susu Pampanin. We are honored to present them - you know Susu Pampanin as the great drummer who has appeared here before with the Georges Lammam Ensemble; Luna of Cairo has lately returned from a successful dance career in Cairo, Egypt. They are both exquisite artists, and ready to share talent, art, and soul with all of you, our audiences! Dancers, musicians, and dance lovers are in for a treat! The show opens THIS WEEK on Thursday, November 18th, through Sunday November 21st. Tickets are available now on our website!

I write to regretfully inform you that as of the end of October 2021, I stepped down as Artistic Director of Jawaahir Dance Company. This was not an easy decision; my time has come to a close after 32 years of beautiful and fulfilling work with Jawaahir, *which all of you helped me to achieve*. The depth of my gratitude cannot be expressed in words, and I will cherish this time of my life to the end. My heartfelt thanks to all the beautiful dancers I have been fortunate to work with, both here in Minnesota and around the world.

I am not cutting all ties immediately! I have asked Lauren Olson Fraga to be the interim "caretaker" director (and am working closely with her) until the time that our Board of Directors is able to name the new Artistic Director. I AM STILL TEACHING and directing The Cassandra School class schedule, along with

my Cabarets and Dance Parties!

If you have suggestions of suitable candidates to explore – please forward their names and contact information to me at cassandra@jawaahir.org, and I will present qualified candidates to the Board.

Elision Playhouse Re-Opens With a Full Season



Elision Playhouse Vocal Director Christine Wade.

Last November I spoke with Christine Wade of The Elision Playhouse while researching the state Twin Cities performing arts venues for 2020's fall issue of *Beledi Beat*. Reconnecting with Christine a year later, the Elision Playhouse has been revived and is blooming.

After closing in March 2020 just days prior to the opening of Theatre Elision's *First Lady Suite*, the Elision Playhouse remained relatively vacant for 17 months. A full season of performances cancelled, the Playhouse was rented for occasional rehearsals or video shoots, and the 119-seat theater sat mostly empty. Theatre Elision re-opened the Playhouse in July 2021 with their production of *Islander*, "a brilliant piece of music-theater and just the kind of thing that Elision excels at." —Cherry and Spoon

Since a successful re-opening, the Elision Playhouse has been quite busy, with a full season planned in the year ahead. "Several previous renters have come back (like Jawaahir!) and we have some new renters that include a wide range of performing arts genres — dance, improv, comedy, theater, music. We continue to work through all of the COVID protocols to make sure we have the safest possible environment for performers and audience members," says Christine. The upcoming calendar includes Danger Committee's annual holiday show - you may have seen them on America's Got Talent - as well as productions by several youth theater companies, Comedy Sportz, and of course, Jawaahir's *Sparkle*³!

Sparkle³ - Upcoming Performance by Jawaahir Dance Company

Sparkle³ is the third *Sparkle* concert to be presented by Jawaahir Dance Company, featuring choreography by Jawaahir company members, Cassandra, and guest artist Luna of Cairo. ***Sparkle³* will take place at the Elision Playhouse, located in Crystal, MN, Thursday through Sunday, November 18-21.**



Creating the mood for *Sparkle³* and playing live music between dances will be Amwaaj, the Minneapolis-based Arab music ensemble. Amwaaj performs classical, folk and modern music of the Arab world on traditional instruments. Founding members playing in the five-person group are Dawn Doering, Laura Harada, and Tim O’Keefe, joined by newer members Yaron Klein and Mohamed Lulu. And, as our special guest, Susu Pampanin will be flying in from San Francisco to join Amwaaj on percussion this year.

Last September, founding Amwaaj member Alexis (Vaubel) Hernandez-Abreu passed away due to cancer. Alexis was not a current member of Amwaaj at the time, yet her influence is ever-present. Tim described the feeling of holes left when local musicians pass on. The Arab music scene also lost David Stenshoel locally, and Michel Merhej and Bassam Saba globally. “I intend to let their examples help shape my future path and connection to music and community,” says Laura. “I try to remain ever optimistic,” says Tim. “Music is spirit-lifting. The harder times are, the more we need to be lifted.”

Setting the Mood

Amwaaj will present selections from their repertoire of the Golden Age as well as newer compositions by living composers, including two pieces by the remarkable Lebanese musician, oudist Charbel Rouhana.

Charbel lives in Lebanon and performs and teaches in Lebanon and around the world. Laura mentions, “These pieces have a distinctly contemporary Lebanese feel, with some use of harmony and a lightness and feel that reflects the particular cultural mix in Beirut, which used to be commonly known as the Paris of the Middle East. Most members of Amwaaj have studied at the Arabic Music Retreat and some have had the opportunity to be coached by Charbel on these compositions.”

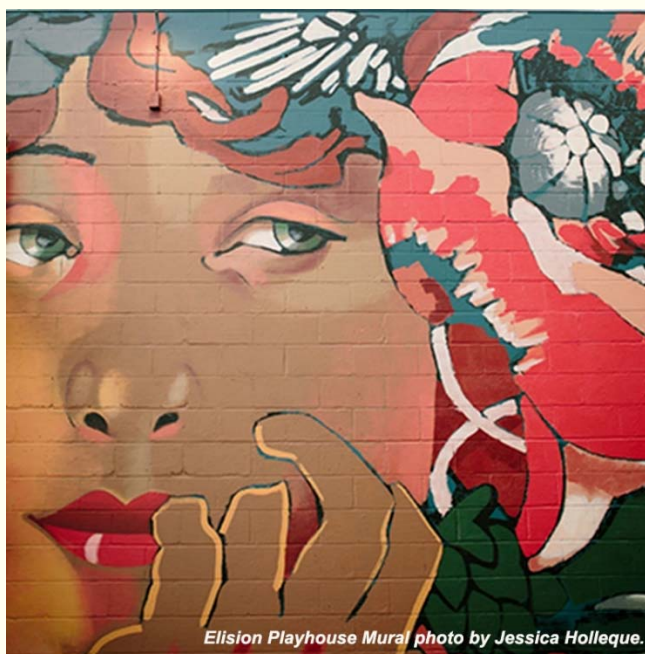
“We will also be featuring a composition by Simon Shaheen, our esteemed teacher who founded the Arabic Music Retreat (and who currently teaches at Berklee College of Music),” says Laura. “It’s important to Amwaaj that we program music that is part of the rich past and tradition of Arabic music as well as the work of contemporary composers. Arab music, like all music, is not frozen in time.”

*Sparkle*³ boasts guest performer dancer Luna of Cairo and drummer Susu Pampanin. Tim and Susu will be creating a duo especially for the performance. Tim speaks of the importance and novelty of hearing and seeing Arab music performed live. “It’s always different when it’s happening right in front of you. You’re hearing the real instruments-acoustic instruments that are not heard in American music. It grabs your ear and then you realize, Oh! This is what that instrument looks like.”

Amwaaj is always excited to share live Arab music with audiences. “We’ve played many Cassandra shows and I’ve loved every one of them,” says Tim. In the coming months Amwaaj will be developing new repertoire and looking for opportunities to present more concerts in early 2022.

We hope you will join us at the Elision Playhouse for *Sparkle*³!

Scroll down to Upcoming Events for more details.



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund; Heidi Heffelfinger Todd and Steven S. Todd Fund; Lisherness Foundation; O'Shaughnessy Foundation; St. Paul & Minnesota Foundation; Target; Employers Matching Grants from Allstate, Conoco Phillips, Marsh & McLennan Companies, Medtronic, and 3M Foundation; and friends of Jawaahir.





Give to the Max Day is November 18!

Mark your calendars! You can make your donation go further by supporting Jawaahir Dance Company on Thursday, November 18th. Giving is **EASY** on our [GiveMN profile](#).

Thank You!

We'd like to thank YOU, our audience members and supporters, for your generous contributions to all of Jawaahir Dance Company's activities. Our mission is ambitious, yet with the support of many people we have accomplished much of lasting value here in the Twin Cities and in communities abroad.

Be a jewel and support our work! Want to join our 2021-2022 Sponsors? [Click YES!](#)

I want to support Jawaahir and enjoy my tax-deductible contribution to the fullest extent provided by law.

Fall is the perfect time to say Thank You to all our supporters:

DIAMOND SPONSORS (\$1000 or more)

Fred and Patricia Auch, Charmaine Lee, Anonymous.

RUBY SPONSORS (\$500 or more)

Katherine Coon, Nancy Courteau, Eileen Goren, Sarah Maas, Wendy Nemitz, Dr. Susan Raatz, Sue Walters, Jovi Wilson.

EMERALD SPONSORS (\$100 or more)

Laurel Adams, Cynthia Akagi, Lisa Bah, Cheryl Bates, Melinda Bobo, Tatyana Butkova, Christine Cameron, Kay & Gary Campbell, Ouhaib Chalbi, Georges Lammam & Jeanette Cool, Megan Cunningham, Janelle Dachtera, Dawn Doering, George Ehrenberg, Peter Ellison, Theodora Fair, Salah Fattah, Joan Gatzmeyer, Janet Geisen, Ali Hamidzadeh, Randy & Kelly Hamilton, Donna Hanbery, Libbie Henderson, James S. Hodges, Louise Indritz, Kathy Jacobson, Pam Kaufman, Mary Kertzman, Joseph & Julie Koegel, Jane Lafferior, Lamis, Lucia Lee, Laura Lee, Marvin O. Loxterkamp, Carrie MacNabb, Kay Marszalek, Dawn Meyer, Neva Mikula, Sandy Moore, Molly Morphew, Janet Mueller, Diane Mullins, Edward Olson, Molly O'Shaughnessy, Michelle Peterson, Debra Poldoski, Raymond D. Terrill Charitable Fund, Hung Russell, Sandra Larson Family Fund, Kathleen Shovelain, Hilary Smith, Kate Southwick, Karen Tschida, Heidi & James Waldron, Susan Whitehead.

SAPPHIRE SPONSORS (up to \$99)

Dorothy Aho, Hend Al-Mansour, Amazon Smile, James and Georgene Angrist, Anonymous, Lisa Backes, Cindy Beddow, Leo Bjorlie, Sara Brazil, Smith Carstens, Erica Christ, Michelle Clark, Kristen Collins, Laura Crocker, Karen Cyson, Felicia Elias, Pam Gleason, Sandra Haag, Wendy Hammond, Dr. Abdallah A. Hanafy, Laura Harada, Katherine Howard, Jody Johnson-Huerbin Michael Kanner, Jon Kerr, Yaron Klein, Donald La Course, Stephanie Lundquist, Marsh & McLennan Companies, Heidi Mischke, Mariann Nelson, Anne Ravenstone, Karl Schlotterbeck,

Joseph Schmidt, R. Silverman, Gloria Simon-Kuzma, Sharon Sloper, Jennifer Tether, Scott Van Wert, Diana Viteri, Jennifer Wagner, Dr. Cheryl Wall, Julia Weiler, Candi Williams, Denise Williamson, JoAnne Zingo.

IN KIND (items for our gala and other goods and services)

Thank you to all who donated in-kind items for our annual Caravan Under the Stars Gala: Alliance Francaise, Ancient Traditions Mehndi, Anders Genealogical Services, Ansari's Mediterranean Grill & Lounge, Black Market Barbecue, Blue Door Pub, Common Roots Café, Craft n Crew, Eastern Shore Natural Health, Foster Art and Soul, Lakewinds Co-Op, Landscape Arboretum, Mediterranean Cruise Café, Modist Brewing, Mother Earth Gardens, Oasis Dance Camp, ONX, Seward Co-Op, Tapestry Folkdance Center, The Bakken Museum, The Hook and Ladder Theater & Lounge, The Rock Camp Experience, Trader Joe's, Triple Aquarian, Turquoise International, Two Oaks Trading Co., Vanessa Barnhart, Vibrant Joy Movement Studio, Margo Abdo-O'Dell, Rana Campbell-Beams, Kate Coon, Jane Copeland, Susan Embum, Eileen Goren, Pook Grathwol, Laura Harada, Terrence Joyce, Tim O'Keefe, Jessica Paquin, Patricia Auch, Jenny Piper, Debbie Poldoski, Susan Raatz, Cassandra Shore, Shirley Taramelli.

Upcoming Events

Sparkle³

November 18 – 21, 2021.

Thursday, Friday, Saturday shows at 8:00pm.

Saturday and Sunday matinee shows at 2:00pm.

Performance is held at [Elision Playhouse](#), 6105 42nd Street NE, Crystal, MN 55442

Reservations through [Jawaahir Dance Company](#).

\$40 for adults and \$20 for kids 12 and under.

Friday night is our post-show discussion with Luna, Amwaaj, and the Jawaahir choreographers.

Saturday matinee is our pay-as-able show on a first-come-first-served basis at the door.

Doors open a half hour before show for general seating.

Jawaahir requests that all audience members who are not fully vaccinated wear masks while in the Playhouse, including during the performance.

For further information on any of our upcoming events, check out our [Jawaahir website](#) or [The Cassandra School website](#)! You may also call 612-872-6050, or email us at admin@jawaahir.org.