



Belly Dance

New England

Ombellyco presents a day with Donna Mejia - March 26, 2011

by Cat Waltzer

I had the extreme privilege and pleasure to take both of the fabulous workshops offered by Donna Mejia (www.donnabodyvision.com), courtesy of Ombellyco (www.ombellyco.com). I would take them again in a heartbeat. At the end of the day, I felt like a bit of a spoiled brat; all smug n' stuff, because I got to take two classes with one of the most amazing dance instructors ever. EVER. I already knew Donna Mejia as a phenomenally singular dancer, having seen her in action on stage. However, I have now come to regard this warm and brilliant lady as a spokesperson for dancers everywhere. Not only is she even more gorgeous in person than on stage (a stunning, caramel goddess with electric periwinkle eyes), but she is accessible, approachable, patient, engaged, unassuming, non-egocentric, and kind. Mix all of these adjectives with some more adjectives like dynamic, passionate, genius, and phrases like "wicked sense of humor" and "professor at Smith College", and you have the illustrious Donna Mejia (and one killer run-on sentence!). She is in it purely for the art itself. It is from this celestial creature that I received a serious, five-hour ass-kicking on a Saturday...and I have no regrets.

The workshops were held at The Dance Complex in Cambridge, Ma. The morning workshop, *Clarifying the Technique: The Art of Refinement and Physical Integrity*, focused on how to not only preserve, but improve the body's flexibility and range of motion in order to significantly prolong our shelf-life as dancers. Donna took us through an elegant and powerful series of deep, muscular awareness exercises of her own devising, which were designed to bring a heightened mindfulness to balance, as well as keen sentience to core musculature. It was an entirely user-friendly learning experience, and the techniques I learned will certainly be incorporated into my own practice. This class was an overly ripe plum dripping with informational juice that my body instinctively knew it needed. All dancers know that we've left this plum sitting in the sun, in a windowsill, somewhere in our brains. We need to chomp into it, and when we do it's like sweet honey elixir filling in the nutritional gaps for the dancer body/mind/soul. It's a potent reminder that we need to take special care of our precious selves by honoring the intuitive wisdom of our own bodies.

The afternoon workshop *Beyond Stationary Practice: Near Eastern/Electronica Fusion in Full Blown Motion*, was an awesome, non-stop, highly aerobic trip around the globe of dance styles and techniques. We explored hip-hop, African, salsa, tribal fusion, modern, flamenco, and ballet. We explored them with so much enthusiasm, in fact, that I was sincerely grateful that we all appeared to make the wise choice to follow Donna's advice and only eat a light lunch between workshops. Had we chosen otherwise, we may have run the slight risk of rocking a seriously gross version of the "slip n' slide". All in all, it was a very rad experience. Thank you, Ombellyco!

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