



Bellydance with Nicola

Video review: Belly Dance with Suzy: A Prenatal Exercise

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One of the most common questions students ask is "Can you recommend a good technique video? (There is a shortage of well-produced, well-taught, and quality technique videos on the market. Many of the videos that are commercially available and/or rentable through the local libraries leave much to be desired. (Catch me on a grumpy day and I'll use less polite words than that!) It has become a mission of mine to find and assess technique videos, so that I can recommend more than Hadia's (which are, still, excellent).



Cheryllynn Saramaga of Saramaga Middle Eastern Dance recently gave me a copy of Suzy's Belly Dance: A Prenatal Exercise. (Thanks again, Cheryllynn!) I was very excited to view it, as Suzy's workshop was coming up soon (March 2004). I had seen Suzy dance both live and on video and had heard many reviews of her teaching and dancing through her students and several colleagues in Calgary. I was also curious to see how she presented the dance as prenatal exercise. I was still dancing at the time, teaching 2 classes and directing Ahlan Dance Company. It would not have occurred to me to stop dancing because I happened to be pregnant. However, I wanted to see how Suzy would and could present beginning belly dance moves for pregnant students, who had never taken classes before. This is the premise of her video.

Suzy introduces herself and the video in some detail, outlining how it will progress, in a set that is tasteful, pretty, and well lit. She guides a warm-up, which later proved to be consistent with the warm-up she used at the workshop. Her explanations are very clear, and movements are always easy to see on her very trim and limber body. The warm-up was the one area of the video that I think needed some more information. Suzy is a well-trained, lifelong dancer with excellent flexibility and strength, and while looking about 6-7 months pregnant, is able to do a scissor stretch and put her torso on the floor. There should have been some blatantly explicit cautions for those go-getters who may fast-forward through her subtler, introductory advice, and not consider they, themselves, are not professional dancers. (Pregnancy softens the cartilage, tendons and muscles for birth, which mean a greater risk of strain and injury.) The rest of the video includes a good selection of beginning movements, such as basic hip circles, torso circles, shoulder isolations and basic travel steps such as Egyptian diagonal. Suzy is easy to follow and breaks things down well. She uses 3 first-time students to follow her in a short combination of these movements. It was pleasant to follow along, paced well for us pregnant persons, and she used great music. She also includes a short performance, in all her pregnant, juicy glory, in a gorgeous Bella costume. My only other beef with the video would be that the sound quality was mediocre. Many videos tend to use an overdubbed commentary, to avoid studio sounds, breathlessness from the instructor, or other distracting noises. But, for a modestly produced, well-priced Canadian video (yeah, Canada!) it is still well worth purchasing. I would rate it 3.5/5. I look forward to her other technique video.

Order Suzy's video [here](#)

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Last updated: 2005/10/10