



Bellydance with Nicola

General Guidelines for Informal Recitals or Haflahs

Informal recitals (e.g. where dancers perform in a large open area, in a community centre or gym) and *haflahs* (parties) are often students' first foray into performing. They can, however, present logistical challenges, and have unique issues and attributes that every dancer, regardless of ability, must face.

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Informal recitals and haflahs often (but not always):

- take place in a large room with poor acoustics
- have highly variable flooring (often dirty)
- have no place to change, no mirrors, no backstage area
- have variable sound system quality, no microphones, no special lighting, no curtains, no stage set, no "ambiance"
- will have people coming to and fro, getting food, drinks, shopping, or just fidgeting
- may have people standing, sitting on chairs, or on the floor - but often on 34 sides of the performance are - adapt your dancing to perform for everyone no matter where they are sitting
- may have a designated performance space in the middle or at the end of the room
- have a very receptive, friendly, excited audience, comprised of students and their family and friends - most will know very little about dancing, unless it is an intermediate class
- include introductions to each dance and dancer
- have interruptions in the performances to explain what is happening, to fiddle with the stereo, and such

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- showcase student talent
- have the teacher(s) dancing last
- permit picture taking - your permission should be requested - speak up ahead of time if you don't want pictures
- have strange barricades and blockages to your dancing - wandering children, bags, shoes, facility equipment, etc.
- attempt to offer an overall picture of what bellydance is

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### **If you are preparing a solo...**

...and it is your teacher's choreography, or another local teacher's, talk to them ahead of time and give them a head's-up--it is courteous.

...prepare a short introduction to you and your dance--don't get to flouncy, boastful, or extravagant--keep it simple and honest.

...find out when you are expected to dance. If you are in the room to watch others, consider wearing a coverup, and try to at least appear as if you are paying attention to the others who are dancing. Otherwise, wait outside the room.

...keep your costuming tasteful and on the conservative side, and make sure it is in keeping with the style of your dance. Not sure? Double check ahead of time with someone who knows.

...keep your performance short--under 10 minutes.

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...remember to thank the host/teacher.

...remember to take your bow and accept your applause.

...be aware of where you will and won't be visible and how close you can be to people without them being uncomfortable. If you are too far away, they will have trouble connecting with you. Too close and they will lean away or look away.

...realize this is not the place to try anything avant-garde or theatrical--they won't get it. It is okay to try something comical or different for you, e.g. new prop, new music.

...remember there may be children present. They, or the adults, may talk while you dance. Choose to believe they are saying good things.

...know that some folks are very reserved at recitals because they don't know how to watch or behave and don't want to be rude to someone their friend or family member is in classes with. They may not know where to look. They may look uncomfortable or tense. Smile and be relaxed and persuade them to enjoy your dancing by enjoying it yourself.

...seek feedback from your teacher, and remember to ask her in advance for this.

Take feedback and commentary from other teachers (not your usual ones) with a grain of salt. Some will be very honest, which you may not be used to. Some can be really nasty or passive aggressive, or try to court you for their own classes by telling you how great you are and how far they could take you if you only signed up. That is an old dance teacher sales tactic. Accept most of it as sincere, even if you think it isn't. As my grandmother said, "If someone says

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something nice to you, smile, say 'thank-you' and *shut up!*"

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