

Exotic Eastern dances Uxbridge glimpses harem



The Maria Morca dance group of Toronto perform a Tunisian water pot dance while (below right) Rosalin Britton, organizer of the show, dances a modern cabaret style belly dance number. Mrs. Britton's act was the only modern, interpretive routine performed.

Uxbridge Music Hall was transformed into a scene from One Thousand and One Arabian Nights last week as silk clad dancers undulated to the hypnotic drumbeats and strains of Eastern music.

The smartly attired crowd watched with obvious approval as Moroccan dancers worked themselves into a trance-like state in the tradition of the whirling dervishes, as the secrets of the Arabic harem dancers unfolded and much more.

Anyone who showed up at the Near East Caravan show Saturday night thinking they were going to see a burlesque type show quickly learned otherwise.

"I wanted to do this to dispel the bad name of belly dancing," explained Rosalin Britton, organizer of the show, "and to raise money for the arena fund."

Due to somewhat less than a full-house at the \$25 a couple show, only about \$150 was actually raised.

As well as seeing reproductions of authentic costumes in gorgeously resplendent colours used in the traditional sinuous dances, the crowd learned that belly dancing is a folk art whose history reaches back into antiquity.

It was decided to forego using the stage and instead the performers did their dances on the floor right in front of the tables. From the point of view of audience involvement it was exactly the right thing to do.

In all, three dance groups and Mrs. Britton performed some 35 dances which ranged from the traditional to a modern interpretive cabaret style belly dance.

One group, the Troupe des Amate, travelled all the way from Ann Arbor, Michigan for a fee that would barely cover travelling expenses for the 12 person group. They specialized in Moroccan and Turkish

dances and unlike the other groups, actually brought their own musicians with them.

During the first half of the show, they performed four powerful Moroccan numbers which finished with one of the dancers, with waist length braids flying, working herself into a trance to the pulsating beat of the drums. The dance, to cast out evil spirits, carried the crowd light years away from the small town ambience of Uxbridge.

The Hellenic Dance Group, an all male group, performed a number of Greek dances. Mrs. Britton performed the only modern cabaret style dance of the evening and the Maria Morca Middle Eastern Dance Troupe demonstrated an amazing variety of

Eastern dances ranging from Spanish, to Egyptian, to Gypsy, to Turkish.

During the second half, the show really got rolling with members of the dance troupes in the balcony urging on the performer of the moment with high pitched, ululating Arabic cries of encouragement made by sticking the tongue in the back of the mouth.

During one solo dance involving finger cymbals, Maria Morca dropped a cymbal and brought the house down by skillfully dancing down to the floor to pick it up.

It is to be hoped that Mrs. Britton will be encouraged to arrange a return engagement.



Maria Morca, leader of the Toronto dance troupe, performs the ritual of the serpents, a dance of Egyptian origin. Below, one of the American performers works herself into a hypnotic trance-like state. The number was one of four Moroccan dances performed by the troupe. Dancers were known as whirling dervishes and worked themselves into a trance by flailing about to a constant drum beat.



Suheyly, (above) a member of the Michigan troupe, does a Turkish tambourine dance while at right the Veil Dance, a typical harem number, is performed. This dance was reconstructed from old writings and drawings as it is no longer performed in Arab countries.



Photos and story by John Montgomery

