

Hathor
DANCE STUDIO

Café Riche

LIVE ARABIC MUSIC RECITAL

SUNDAY JULY 12, 2026

PROGRAM

CAFÉ RICHE RECITAL

As Café Riche begins its next chapter, tonight marks the final Café Riche Recital to be held at the iconic Amera's Palace.

Live Arabic music has always been at the heart of my work. Café Riche grew from many earlier productions including the Big Egyptian Day Out, Sunday Sahla, Live Music Summer Intensive, Music Magic Workshops and Simply Tarab theatre productions.

Each has shared the same vision: creating meaningful opportunities for dancers and musicians to connect through live performance.

In a time when rising costs continue to challenge live productions, I remain more committed than ever to preserving this tradition. Café Riche was created as an intimate cabaret-style experience where the music itself could be celebrated, each musician heard and appreciated, and Raqs Sharqi shared with both dancers and audiences in its most authentic form. A space where music and movement become one, allowing the true spirit of tarab to unfold.

While this chapter at Amera's Palace comes to a close, the journey continues through workshops, intensives, performances and new creative collaborations. The venues may change, the projects may evolve, but my commitment to live Arabic music remains unwavering.

Amera's Palace has played an extraordinary role in that journey. From my earliest years as a dancer, Amera Eid believed in my work, encouraging me to teach, perform and pursue opportunities both in Australia and overseas. She supported my successful World Dance grant application, introduced me to many of Egypt and Lebanon's most respected artists including Raqia Hassan, Mahmoud Reda, Dr Mo Geddawi and Madame Georgette Gebara, and encouraged me to perform with a full Arabic orchestra at the closing gala of the Ahlan Wa Sahlan Festival in Cairo in 2002—one of the defining moments of my career. Her generosity, vision and unwavering commitment to our art form has inspired generations of dancers.

For the past 13 years, Ali Higson has proudly continued that legacy. Her trust, friendship and willingness to embrace new ideas have provided a home where so many live music projects have flourished, and for that I am deeply grateful.

This year's Big Egyptian Day Out focused not on choreography, but on musical appreciation. Together we explored the structure, emotion and richness of Baladi, encouraging dancers to truly listen, respond and find their own voice within the music. It reflects what Raqs Sharqi has always meant to me: an art form deeply rooted in tradition, connection and shared celebration, while leaving space for every dancer's individuality to shine.

Thank you for joining us this evening. Your support of live Arabic music, dance and community makes evenings like this possible. Together we celebrate the remarkable legacy of Amera's Palace while helping shape the future of live music and dance for generations to come.

With love,

• Jrisi Jusakos

CAFÉ RICHE RECITAL RUNNING ORDER

ZILL THRILL - Ali Higson

A thrilling zill interactive and totally improvised performance to open the night.

Jrisi Introduction

LOUD TAQSIM - Kosti Sifri

An improvised ode to the Oud, the cornerstone of Oriental Music.

BALADI JAM - Participants of the Live Music Intensive

The dancers share a Baladi progression,
embracing improvised moments that celebrate individuality,
musicality and connection.

VIOLIN TAQSIM - Emad Nosir

MAWOOD

by Abdel Halim Hafez

Performer: Jrisi Jusakos

YA HELW SABBAAH

by Mohamed Qandil

Performer: Rachel Bond

NAY TAQSIM - Stuart Vandergraff

CAFÉ RICHE RECITAL RUNNING ORDER

AHWAK

by Abdel Halim Hafez
Performer: Jessica Moreno

SOUQ BENA YA OUSTA

by Hoda Sinbati
&

WOOSTIK KAMANGA

by Mohamed El Mougi
Performer: Amera

FI YOUM WE LEILA

by Warda
Composed by Mohamed Abdel Wahab
Performer: Geraldine

DRUM SOLO IMPROVISATION- Atif Badria & Tony Alashkar

ZAY EL ASSAL

Sabah
Performer: Virginia Masri

AUDIENCE DANCE MIX

Your chance to get up and dance!!

JRISI JUSAKOS – Director / Performer / Choreographer

Chilean born with Greek heritage, Jrisi is a cross-cultural multi-disciplinary dance artist who has made dance her full time profession for over 35 years.

She is considered one of Australia's leading artists in Middle Eastern Dance.

With extensive training, international travel and research, a Bachelor of Arts in dance, Jrisi has carved out a unique style that is both captivating and recognisable.

She has directed/produced over 20 theatre shows, produced 3 Training DVD'S which have sold world wide and currently teaches classes/workshops across Australia. International sponsor, choreographer, curator, wife and mother are also part of her job description. Her passion lies in uniting dancers and musicians, preserving live Arabic music as an essential foundation of Raqs Sharqi.



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VIRGINIA MASRI – Guest Interstate artist / Performer / Choreographer

Virginia is a highly respected and sought after teacher and performer often described as "the real thing" by her peers and audiences alike, famous for her authentic smooth, elegant Egyptian style. With parents hailing from Egypt and Greece, the rich sounds and dances of the East were an undeniably ubiquitous part of everyday life.

A consummate professional with a passion for authentic bellydance that has led to an enduring and successful career both in Australia and abroad in five star dance contracts, long term dance residencies and teaching advanced level workshops in choreography, Egyptian technique and stylisation.

An ambassador of Egyptian dance, Virginia's immense experience and passion for the art-form consolidates her deep love of high artistic achievement, need for authentic expression and emotional connection, and most importantly the preservation of culture and tradition.



aida.egyptiandance



THE BAND

STUART VANDERGRAFF – Saxophone / Nay

Stuart is a multi-instrumentalist performer, composer, arranger, producer, music coach and director. Based in Sydney since 2000, he has performed locally, nationally and internationally in a diverse range of musical settings. He performs on saxophones (alto, soprano, tenor and baritone), Clarinet, Silver Flute and various hand percussion. He is among Australia's small handful of students and performers of the Arabic flute, the Nay (Nay, Nei).

In all his culturally diverse music, he explores the frontiers of creative expression, connection and healing through music, while maintaining deep respect for the traditions from which it draws.

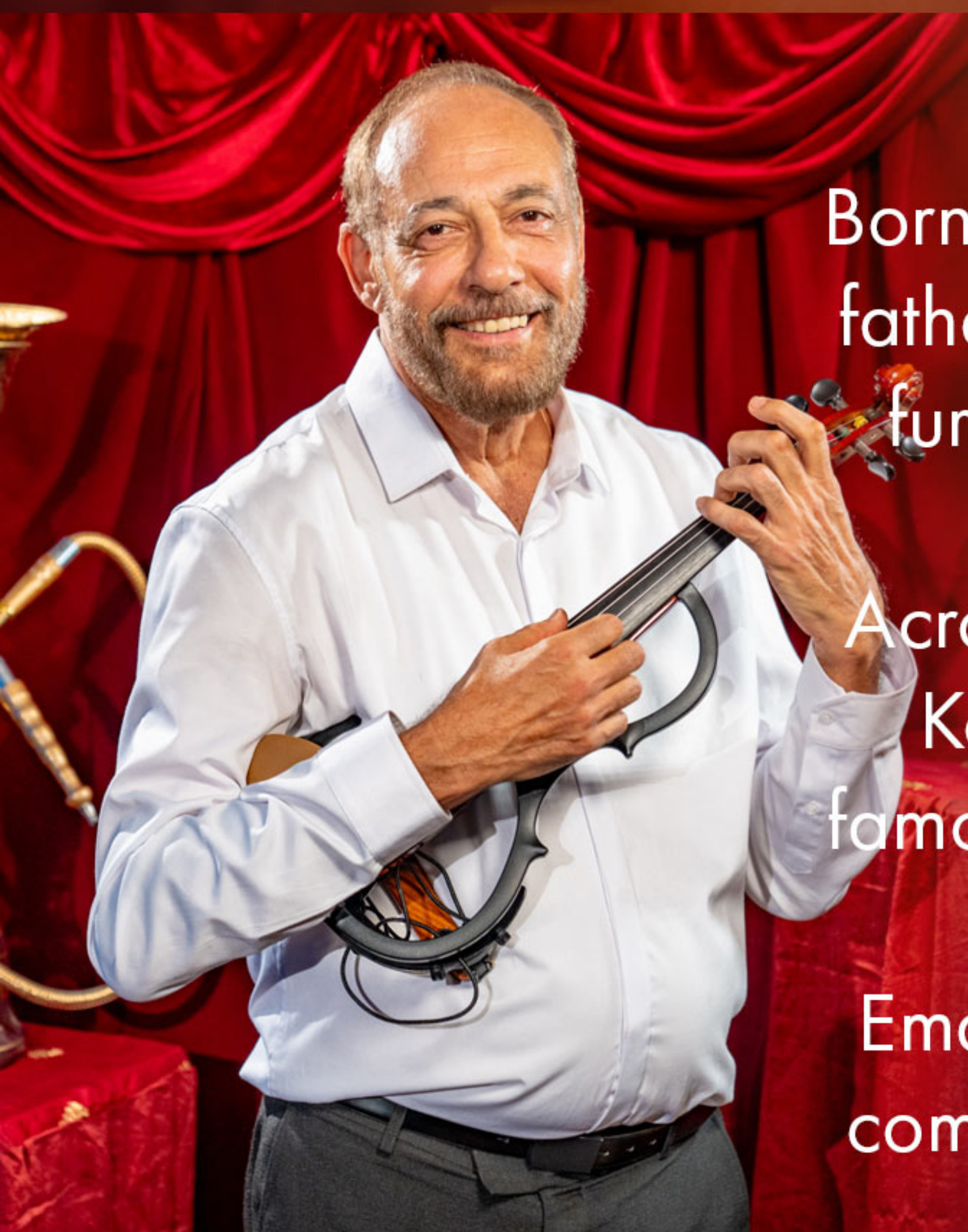


EMAD NOSIR – Violin

Born in Cairo Egypt, Emad began playing the violin from the age of 12. Having his father play the violin as a hobby, this had an influential impact on Emad where he furthered his Violin training as a secondary instrument at the Music Academy of Cairo & also piano training as his primary choice.

Across Egypt, he has performed in various orchestras & bands including the Oum Koulthoum Band, Cairo Orchestra and was one of the main musicians for the famous Egyptian dancer Lucy. He remained as part of her orchestra until migrating to Australia in 1988.

Emad became the much loved and sought after musician in the music and dance community to this very day. When he's not performing or rehearsing, you will find him in his studio teaching Violin & Oud.



KOSTI SIFRI – Oud

Kosti Sifri was born in Jordan into a deeply musical family, where music shaped everyday life. His father played the Oud, an instrument Kosti began studying at the age of eight.

Influenced by the Golden Era of Arabic music, particularly Farid El Attrash, these sounds shaped his musical ear and expressive style. Music was so embedded in his upbringing that neighbours would open their windows simply to listen.

Kosti spent 16 years in the United States, based in Portland, Oregon, performing regularly with full bands in restaurants, nightclubs, and weddings. For Kosti, the Oud is an emotional language, a lifelong connection to heritage and expression.



ATIF BADRIA – Percussion / Vocal

Originating from Syria, Atif began his performance journey at the tender age of 12, sneaking out to play darabuka in clubs. He arrived in Sydney on tour with Saria Sawas and Khaldoun Soudan in 2012 and never left, now calling Sydney home. Atif is renowned for his precise technique, lightning speed, and effortlessly calm stage presence becoming one of the scene's most respected percussionists, regularly playing with the Arab world's most famous touring performers including Wael Kfoury, Melhem Zein and Najwa Karam to name only a few.

He is also an accomplished singer and generous teacher who is passionate about sharing his love of music and learning.

JESSICA – Guest Dance Soloist

Jessica's dance journey can be summed up by her favourite quote from Rumi: "Respond to every call that excites your spirit." Drawn to the heartfelt music, grace, self-empowerment and opportunity for self-expression, Jessica has grown into an engaging and deeply heartfelt performer.

Since 2008, she has studied with many renowned local and interstate teachers, numerous visiting international artists, and has travelled extensively in pursuit of her passion, including Cairo, New York, Christchurch, Jakarta, Stockholm, Savonlinna and most recently South Korea. Continually seeking to learn and grow, Jessica has developed an organic and versatile style that draws from Egyptian Theatrical Folkloric Dance, Raqs Sharqi and Contemporary Theatrical Belly Dance.



Her love of live Arabic music has seen her perform with ensembles including DAWN, Oud Vibrations, Jeff Martin (The Tea Party) and Masha's Legacy. Jessica is a much-loved teacher at Shimmy Juju Belly Dance (Hurstville and Zetland), and proudly serves as the Sydney Team Leader for Shimmy Mob, an international dance movement that raises awareness and funds for survivors of domestic violence.

Whether performing as part of an ensemble or captivating audiences as a soloist, Jessica brings warmth, authenticity and genuine joy to every performance, embodying her love for the art form in every step.



jessieshimmyjuju

RACHEL – Guest Dance Soloist

Rachel Bond has studied, taught, and performed Middle Eastern dance for over 25 years. In 2009, she founded Inspire Bellydance, creating a welcoming and supportive community where women of all ages and backgrounds can experience the joy, confidence, and connection that dance brings.

Today, Inspire Bellydance shares that passion with hundreds of women each week through classes, workshops, and performance opportunities. For Rachel, dance is about far more than movement. It is about building genuine connections, to community, to the rich cultural traditions and origin that have shaped this beautiful art form, and to oneself.

Her teaching encourages dancers to develop not only strong technique and musicality, but also confidence, authenticity, and a lifelong love of learning.

Rachel is delighted to be part of Café Riche, celebrating the beauty of live Arabic music and dance in an evening that honours tradition, artistry, and the shared experience of performance.

 **inspirebellydance**

 **racheldancersyd**



AMERA – Guest Dance Soloist

Amera Eid is a trailblazing entrepreneur who played a pivotal role in introducing bellydance to Sydney and Australasia, contributing significantly to its integration within Australia's multicultural dance landscape. An accomplished international performer and teacher with over 40 years of experience, Amera is widely respected for her vision, determination, and creative leadership.

She founded Australia's first Bellydance Boutique, which became an iconic hub for dance education, Egyptian-made costumes, music, and cultural exchange. During the 1980s, Amera held dance contracts across the Middle East, at a time when international performers were rare. She has produced music CDs and instructional videos, and now focuses on fashion, foster care, and leading cultural tours to Egypt and Lebanon.



amera_eid_australia

GERALDINE – PEOPLE'S CHOICE

One of my earliest memories is of dancing around the house, something many little girls do. After refusing to attend ballet classes because, to my three-year-old self, running around the room simply wasn't ballet-esque enough, I continued creating my own dances in front of a tiny mirror for as long as I can remember.

Belly dance entered my life by chance more than ten years ago after I unexpectedly found myself without a ballroom dance partner. What began as a happy accident quickly became my artistic home. While I've continued exploring other dance styles, including jazz, locking and contemporary—belly dance has remained the constant, the place where I feel most connected, challenged and inspired. For many years, I was content to be the dancer who simply followed the choreography. Eventually, I decided to face one of my greatest fears: performing solo. Letting go of the pursuit of perfection taught me that growth begins where comfort ends, and that there is always another lesson waiting just beyond the next performance.

I firmly believe that while talent is valuable, purposeful practice, curiosity and perseverance are what truly shape a dancer. Regular training with Jrisi, my teachers in Portugal, and master teachers from around the world has continually broadened my understanding of the dance and deepened my appreciation for its richness. The more I learn, the more I realise there is still to discover—and for me, that is one of the greatest joys of this lifelong journey.

Today, I continue to approach every class, workshop and performance with the same curiosity that first drew me to the dance. I hope every opportunity to perform not only helps me grow as a dancer but also celebrates the joy, connection and community that belly dance has brought into my life.



ALI HIGSON – Guest Dance Soloist

Ali has been a vibrant and influential figure in Australia's Middle Eastern dance community for over 35 years. She began her dance journey under the guidance of Leonie Sukan, becoming one of the original members of The Turkish Delights one of Sydney's first professional Middle Eastern dance troupes. The company appeared on television talk shows, in short films, and at festivals, helping to introduce audiences across Australia to the beauty and artistry of Middle Eastern dance.

Performing professionally under the stage name Zeina, Ali was a familiar face throughout Sydney's thriving Lebanese restaurant scene during the late 1980s and 1990s, holding long-term residencies at many of the iconic venues that once lined Cleveland Street in Surry Hills. A true multi-disciplinary performer, Ali's creative career has extended well beyond dance. She has trained in circus arts, including stilt walking, and performed extensively as a roving artist. Her passion for music also led her to establish Kush Cabaret, an innovative ensemble blending folk, Middle Eastern, and jazz influences into a unique live performance experience.

An accomplished percussionist, Ali has taught Middle Eastern drumming for many years and has collaborated with respected artists and companies including Cristie Fuller, Caravan Dance Company, and Devi Mamak.

Her musicianship and deep understanding of rhythm continue to enrich both dancers and musicians alike.

In 2013, Ali became the owner of Amera's Palace Boutique and Studio, lovingly transforming the space into a welcoming sanctuary for dancers, musicians, and the wider community.

Through countless sourcing trips to Egypt, she has personally curated the boutique's collection of authentic costumes, jewellery, textiles, instruments, and treasures, creating a destination renowned throughout Australia. While the physical doors of Amera's Palace are closing, the boutique will continue online. Ali looks forward to continuing her regular journeys to Egypt, sharing authentic Egyptian and Turkish treasures with dancers across Australia, and contributing to the community she has so passionately supported for more than three decades.



ameraspalace

THANK YOU's

TRISTAN BAKER

Lights, Sound, Live Stream, Photography and being the most multi talented and generally fabulous human.... and eternally patient. You are my superman!

VIRGINIA MASRI

A truly gifted and generous soul. These collaborations are always a dream because of your brilliant and easy going nature. Your knowledge and inspirations are unsurpassed. You help me better define my ideas and help them come to life!

THE SYDNEY ARABIC MUSIC ENSEMBLE

For their exceptional talent, professionalism and for generously sharing their knowledge. Gratitude to Tony Alashkar for accompanying on Maktoum/Riq.

ALI HIGSON

For your eternal good vibes, supportive spirit and amazingly creative eye for detail. Making Amera's Palace a place for us all to feel welcomed & inspired. For creating the Vintage Corner. Your unwavering support, chats and laughter always makes these productions extra fun!

TINA DELUCA

For being our fabulous bar attendant and amazing support team throughout the intensive.

AMERA

For coming out of your "semi retired" life to make a final Cafe Riche Recital performance and supporting these events at your former home. It's truly a full circle moment and I'm honoured to have shared the stage with you.

BIG EGYPTIAN DAY OUT PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for your trust and confidence in the work we do. I'm grateful we have such a beautiful and enriching dance community who not only support each other but who continuously invest in their art to keep growing, learning and experiencing. The arts should never stay stagnant, there's always so much more to learn.

TO MY GUEST SOLOISTS

Thank you for your support, energy and professionalism. Your support and friendship makes these events all the more better.

TO YOU, THE AUDIENCE

Thank you for supporting these intimate but very important events.

**Keep up to date on my instagram page @hathordancestudio
and watch for the next incarnation of Café Riche Recital
and the Live Music Intensives for 2027 and beyond!**