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Contact: Andrea Leinberger-Jabari
or Mirah Ammal
Al-Bahira Middle Eastern Dance Theater
612-703-7002
press@aalimschool.com
www.albahira.org

DISCOUNT CHIC GETS EXOTIC CELEBRITY TREATMENT IN THE MINNESOTA FRINGE

MINNEAPOLIS, MN, 24 JULY 2010 — Al-Bahira Dance Theater debuts their latest dance and multimedia work, *Always Take Your Celebrity Guests to Walmart (and Other Adventures in Dance)*, through the Minnesota Fringe Festival August 6-15 at the Ritz Theater in Northeast Minneapolis.

With this show, Al-Bahira veers somewhat from the repertoire of folkloric and classical dances for which it is often known to explore contemporary themes and storylines. The resulting works are theatrical, fanciful, comedic, dramatic, at times experimental, and yet true to the troupe's roots and performance aesthetic. They incorporate musical themes from the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe, live percussion, beautiful costumes, and a rich variety of dance and movement styles.

Performances will be at the Ritz Theater located at 345 13th Ave NE in Minneapolis with showings Friday August 6 at 10 p.m., Saturday August 7 at 2:30 p.m., Monday August 9 at 8:30 p.m., Friday August 13 at 7:00 p.m., and Sunday August 15 at 4:00 p.m. Tickets are \$12 with a \$4 Fringe Festival admission button, and can be purchased at the festival website www.fringefestival.org or call (866) 811-4111.

The show includes several world-debut numbers, vignettes, and components of other works in progress, featuring a celebration of the golden age of Egyptian cinema, a comedic fairytale fantasy suite, Stepford-style housewives, down-home rodeo gals, the haunting "Diaspora", percussive vocal and drumming numbers, and a special surprise one could only dream at a discount superstore.

For nearly two decades, artistic director and choreographer Mirah Ammal has been fascinated with the central role dance, music and oral tradition occupy in the histories, cultures and day-to-day lives of peoples of the Near East regions. She carries this interest through her work as a dancer and teacher.

"This is an ever-evolving art form," says Ammal. "The music, the poetry and the dance—like the people and the culture—are creative, alive and changing all the time, but the roots are very, very deep. It's important to me that Al-Bahira respect and help preserve the traditional forms, but I also enjoy exploring the ways we can extend these ideas creatively, and use dance and music to touch new audiences, make new connections between groups. For me, that's what this show is about."

As to the unusual name of the show, Ammal says the inspiration came from a real life experience.

"We were fortunate to study with a master dancer—the most famous movie star of the Arabic world who came to the U.S. After an amazing workshop and show she told us she wanted to go out...to Walmart!"

Although this will be the first time Al-Bahira performs in the Minnesota Fringe Festival, Ammal is no stranger to the Fringe and the Minnesota arts scene, having previously produced other Fringe Festival

shows and dance productions outside of the Fringe, and having operated a dance school in the area since 2003. Several Al-Bahira performers have also performed in past Fringe Festival shows.

For more additional information on *Always Take Your Celebrity Guests to Walmart (and Other Adventures in Dance)*, please visit <http://www.albahira.org/show.htm>. Video links and images are also available.

About Al-Bahira Middle Eastern Dance Theater

Established in 2007, Al-Bahira is a professional Middle Eastern dance troupe consisting of 16 company and apprentice members, under artistic direction of Mirah Ammal. Al-Bahira's educational arm, the Aalim School of Dance, provides dance and music instruction at multiple locations across the Twin Cities for beginner through professional dancers. Al-Bahira seeks to foster an appreciation of the beautiful, powerful dances and musical forms of the Middle East and surrounding regions by introducing them to new audiences, and presenting them in original, compelling, and theatrical ways. Al-Bahira's mission is to:

- Present, preserve, and foster appreciation of the art forms through works rooted in the dance and music arts of the Middle East, North Africa, Greece, Turkey and surrounding regions.
- To facilitate education in and about the art forms and cultures of these regions among American and international communities.
- To present these dance and music forms as relevant, living, and ever-evolving art forms and a part of the daily lives and cultural stories of the people.
- To foster cross-cultural understanding, cooperation, and community-building.

For more information about Al-Bahira Middle Eastern Dance Theater, visit www.albahira.org or call (612) 703-7002.

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