

# The Artistic Impact of the Reda Troupe

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## The Aesthetics, Inspirations and Adaptations of Mahmoud Reda



Mahmoud Reda, as an innovative choreographer always said that all his works were inspirations of what he saw around him. He and his co-founders were deeply immersed in their cultural heritage and understood the traditions, moral codes, and aesthetics of their countrymen and women. His earlier experiences as a gymnast and dancer enabled him to recognize the basic qualities and components found in the movements and body language of the Egyptian people. His kinetic experience and his knowledge of the history, customs, and beliefs of why, as well as how Egyptians dance gave him a deep perception and sense of discrimination. His aesthetic judgment enabled him to create a dance genre that embraced many styles which were all culturally and aesthetically relevant to the Egyptians.

## **Inspirations**

In his book "In the Temple of dance", Mahmoud Reda wrote that the problem was never the lack of ideas, but the problem is for the artist to pick what suits his taste, and what he sincerely feels he wants to translate into his own medium. He goes on to say that concepts for a dance would develop and evolve during hours spent in conversations and discussions with his co-founders or with members of the troupe. Some ideas were the outcome of sudden inspirations that resulted from direct interaction.

## **Adaptation**

When Mahmoud Reda choreographed his dances, he presented his own vision of the movement qualities of the Egyptians. His choreographies remain to this day his personal interpretation of the essential ingredients of posture, carriage and gesture of his country's men and women, whether it is in dance or in every day activities. When he adapted movement to stage, he paid particular attention to how Egyptians utilize their energy and shape their movements. When he introduced new movements, he strove for what was culturally consistent and relevant to the premise he was working on.

Mahmoud Reda's emphasis on certain movement qualities enabled him to reveal the strength and masculinity of the male dancers, and by his process of selection and elimination he endowed his female dancers with feminine qualities while preserving their integrity.

## **Modes Of Presentation**

The repertoire of the Reda Troupe shows that Mahmoud Reda's work can fall into three modes of presentation that do not progress systematically, but overlap or coexist and cannot be categorized in a chronological order. There are, nevertheless periods when one of these modes is predominant, and in some cases elements pertaining to more than one mode are combined in one dance. Because of the different characteristics of each mode, I chose to refer to them as: *Dramatization*, *Imagery*, and *Folklore*. In the following articles I will only deal with the movement process of modes of Dramatization and Folklore.

## **Dramatization**

The sources for his dances in the earlier repertoire were derived from the environment that influenced him as a youth. They are his impressions of the customs and traditions of the society he grew up in. He chose to represent in a dance form identifiable Egyptian figures that lived in the surrounding areas where he grew up, and that he was familiar to. These figures were lampooned in plays and films, but were never represented in a dance idiom. He picked out the physical attributes of these characters such as their body language, mannerisms, and movement idiosyncrasies. He produced dance movements out of their familiar actions. He introduced in these dances, identifiable figures that were familiar to the Egyptian people. Characters such as: the licorice vendor, the urban policeman, the village yokel, the village mayor and others, were represented on stage in a dance form.

Later, elements such as popular songs, fables, mythological characters and nationalistic events as well as from his field researches in many parts of Egypt were his sources of inspiration.

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