

Miss Belly dance South Africa 2009,  
Carla Shepperson, performing on  
stage.

Photo by Zanique Thome 2009



**MISS BELLY DANCE SOUTH AFRICA ©™**  
**By: Marion Nowak**

South Africa was very privileged to host an event that could possibly change the face of belly dance in South Africa forever. A new concept: Miss Belly dance South Africa 2009 was hosted and organised this year for the first time by Angela Angilotti from Belly dance Goddess. She felt the need for the competition was mainly for knowledge in South Africa. She understands that to get South Africa on the same level as other countries, South Africa would need to have more workshops with international teachers and some sort of healthy competition to uplift the standard of Middle Eastern Dance in South Africa.

Many of the best and most respected belly dancers in South Africa, who also offer some amazing intensives for dancers, decided not to enter due to the "pageant" stigma attached to the competition, but it turned out to be an event where all the new faces can be seen and appreciated. The idea is great and can offer many up and coming dancers great exposure and hopefully for some unique ones, a boost into the world of belly dance, as with this year's winners.

A 15 year old, Carla Grace Shepperson, won the title of Miss Belly dance South Africa 2009, and has a flair and passion which is very rare and quite special for a dancer of that age. She has been dancing since she's been a little girl and started with belly dance when she was 11, and has gone from strength to strength in this art form. Her teacher, Senta Seele, from Maya Dance Company (Durban, South Africa) says she is very humbled and extremely proud of Carla. "Carla deserves the title, not only for her beautiful performances at the competition, but also for the months of hard work that went into it!" In 2007 Carla performed with the Maya Dance Company performance group in the South African Dance Teachers Association (SADTA) production of Shall We Dance at the Playhouse in Durban. In 2008 she was invited by the SADTA

to perform a solo at the Hilton Arts Festival and again in Shall we Dance at the playhouse. Carla is just one of those dancers who has what it takes. Anyone can learn the technique and know it really well, but only a special few will be dancers to the true sense of the word, and she is one of them!

Nafoura was privileged enough to chat to the young star and got some insight on how it feels and what it took to become Miss Belly dance South Africa 2009.

Nafoura: How does it feel to be Miss Belly dance South Africa 2009?

Carla: Amazing! It is a dream come-true. I have been working solidly since February 2009 for this.

Nafoura: We're curious to know what you won, anything special.

Carla: A crystal trophy which I keep; a large floating trophy with my name on it; free advertising on a local dance website, a huge chocolate hamper and goodies such as a pretty note book, and a gold medal for my sword solo (which was an extra category). However, the greatest prize for me was the achievement of winning.

Nafoura: Do you think that there were enough contestants?

Carla: I think for the first ever Miss Belly dance South Africa it was a good turn out. I'm convinced that this competition will just keep growing, in size and popularity.

Nafoura: Do you think that a competition of this nature might have crossed the line between beauty pageants and dancing competitions with the title being; Miss Belly dance South Africa?

Carla: No, I feel that this competition was completely based on belly dance. The registration forms clearly stated the requirements, which

were all dance orientated. The judges are all highly respected belly dancers, such as Rania, who I feel would never have judged the competition like a beauty pageant based on looks and body types.

Nafoura: What inspired you to enter this competition?

Carla: I entered for the experience of sharing the stage with the other wonderful dancers and the opportunity of getting my name out there. I also wanted to improve my dancing, by extending my knowledge.

Nafoura: What are your goals for your belly dance career in the future?

Carla: My dream is to be a Belly dance Superstar, to be able to travel the world doing what I love. My short term goal is to keep learning and to train in Egypt.

Nafoura: Which national or international belly dancers inspire you?

Carla: Initially, Shakira was my inspiration to start belly dancing. Today my international inspirations are the members of the Belly dance Superstars, as well as the more folkloric dancers such as Mahmoud Reda. Nationally my inspirations are my amazing teacher Senta Seele and my mom, who has been to every belly dance lesson with me.

Nafoura: What are your views on the standards of belly dance training in South Africa?

Carla: Belly dance is growing here and improves every year tremendously. South Africa has had international belly dancers such as Rania, Mahmoud Reda and Tamalyn Dallal teach workshops, which I felt privileged to attend.

Nafoura: Will you enter the competition next year again?

Carla: It was a great experience, however I will be writing my final HIGCSE (University of Cambridge) exams next year, and would not want to do the competition half-heartedly. So I will have to see how the year goes.

Nafoura: Who do you think is the next up and coming belly dancer in South Africa?

I feel that with determination and hard work any belly dancer could be the next up and coming dancer in SA. There are a lot of talented belly dancers in South Africa and hopefully Miss Belly dance South Africa will inspire this dance form to grow.

For more information on this event please visit [www.missbellydancesa.co.za](http://www.missbellydancesa.co.za)

## INTERCONNECTIONS DE LA DANSES ORIENTALES EN LE MONDE



# NAFOURA Magazine

EN DIFFUSION GRATUITE JUSQU'EN MARS 2010!: [WWW.NAFOURA.COM](http://WWW.NAFOURA.COM)

© 2009 NAFOURA Magazine, all rights reserved, copying content is not permitted.