



THE INTERNATIONAL FOLK ENSEMBLE



"... one of the finest ethnic companies anywhere. Repeat: anywhere"

Martin Bernheimer
Los Angeles Times



AMAN THE INTERNATIONAL FOLK ENSEMBLE OF DANCERS SINGERS AND MUSICIANS



AMAN came into being as the expression of a deeply felt love for ethnic music and dance; not only folk music and dance, both rural and urban, but also classical traditions and the arts of the hired entertainer.

To present this material in a manner faithful to both its substance and spirit, much consideration is given to the limitations as well as the advantages of a theatrical setting. The preparation of dances for the stage requires great care in selection and arrangement, just as documentary film footage needs considerable editing before it becomes coherent. In order to do this intelligently, it is essential to know the people of a region—how they live—their complete cultural background; and it is for this reason that Aman's research program extends beyond the dances, the music and the costumes.

In performing before an audience, it is not enough to dance at the level of the ordinary participant in a village festival, but rather to demonstrate the degree of proficiency attained by the finest individual dancers in each cultural community. In Aman's stagings and choreographies, therefore, some aspects of village performances are not reproduced; but every effort is made to insure that no essential element is lost. In effect, Aman seeks to embody these people's highest concept of their own cultural attainments.

The validity of this approach seems justified on the many occasions when, after a concert, older people from the various ethnic communities come backstage to tell the performers—sometimes with tears in their eyes—"This is how I remember it!"

When Aman was founded in 1964, its first performances were little more than cabaret turns, with so few performers that some had to do frequent solos in order to provide time for the others to make costume changes. But it was not long until Aman's special approach to the presentation of ethnic dance began to attract talented singers, dancers and musicians from surprisingly distant places, and as a result, the ensemble was able to stage its first full-length concert in 1967. The young company's reputation was already sufficiently well-established to produce a sell-out performance which received highly complimentary reviews in the press.

Following its local success, Aman began to receive many requests to perform outside of Los Angeles; first for ethnic communities in other Southern California cities, and next for university and public concert engagements.

In 1971 Michael Alexander, the company's impresario and general manager, brought Aman into the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion for its first Music Center concert. It was sold out days in advance, and audience and critics alike gave their enthusiastic approval. Six months later, Music Center Presentations sponsored a run in the Ahmanson Theatre, The Music Center's first presentation of any California dance company. Aman was on its way toward becoming a major dance company.

In the following years the company has increased its touring schedule, which now includes many western states besides California. In December 1977, Aman's audience increased dramatically when a one hour special of the company in performance was broadcast by Los Angeles public television station KCET.



The Caucasus Mountains divide the land between the Black Sea and the Caspian; this is where Europe ends and Asia begins. Among the many different peoples of this region are Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaidjanis—each with their own language—some are Christian, some Moslem. Their cultures are richly varied, yet together they present an immediately identifiable regionality.



KAVKAZ BAR
A dance from Transcaucasia.



ALGERIA

Young women of the Ouled Nail tribe have traditionally earned their dowries by dancing in the oasis towns of the North Sahara. The money, invested in valuable jewelry ornamenting their costume, enabled them to return to their tribe as wealthy brides.



JOTA Aragonesa



The ŠOP region of Bulgaria is famous for the wild, impelling rhythms of its dances, and the beautiful minor harmonies of its music.





A MIH from Dalmatia. Bagpipes of many kinds are played throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The Mih is one of several types found in the Balkan Peninsula.

AMAN musicians are extremely versatile, for they must be able to play in a wide range of styles on a great variety of instruments. In a typical concert one musician may play as many as ten different kinds in the course of the evening. These may be several types of plucked stringed instruments, but sometimes the same musician will be called upon to play a bagpipe, an end-blown flute, a drum and two stringed instruments—one plucked, one bowed.

The skill of individual instrumentalists sometimes extends into the area of craftsmanship, and the faithful reproduction of rare instruments here parallels that of unobtainable costumes.

AMAN's singing is remarkable not only for its beauty, but for its difficulty. Many widely differing vocal idioms must be mastered, as well as the pronunciation of the languages in which the songs are sung.

APPALACHIAN mountain music



The GUEDRA dance of Goulimine, in southernmost Morocco.





Dance is probably the most spontaneous of all artistic expression. We dance for joy and we dance for each other, and in towns and villages all over the world people dance to ward off demons, propitiate the harvest gods, celebrate victories and tell stories.

By dancing one can be transformed, for a moment, into almost anything. And that is magic, whether folk magic or theatrical magic. But dancing is a lot of other things, too. Dance helps give definition to ethnic uniqueness, and because dance is a social art, it also strengthens this individuality.

Folk songs and folk dances are a source of inner strength for the people whose special way of life they celebrate. For people who have emigrated from their native land to a new country, folklore is a means of spiritual survival. And for a people still living in their own land, but oppressed by conquerors, song and dance provide a cultural salvation.

Ethnic dance—at any level of artistic realization—represents affirmation of traditional values, a concept that is growing more and more important in this world of blurring identities.

Much of Aman's repertoire has come from countries that were once under the influence of the Ottoman Empire. Many Eastern European countries were governed by Turkey for centuries, and most of North Africa, Transcaucasia and the Middle East were also, for varying lengths of time, under Ottoman rule. This historic reality is reflected in many of Aman's costumes, dances and musical idioms.

Today Aman draws upon the diverse folklore of more than a dozen European countries, including Spain and the British Isles, and about half that number each from

Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Repertoire from the Americas is continually being added, and the company now looks to the Pacific for its new frontier.

Aman is a veritable folk-arts museum, with a growing collection that now numbers more than a thousand authentic costumes and musical instruments. Many of these were purchased in villages at the same time that Aman's researchers were learning the music and dance of the region. Others have been painstakingly reproduced from heirloom originals.

Up to three hundred costumes and seventy five musical instruments are used in a full company concert; and because the repertoire is always growing, the purchasing and sewing of costumes never stops. When an unusual musical instrument must be found, members of the company write to friends in the old world to find one or have it made.

While most of the members of Aman live in or near Los Angeles, and only a few belong to the many ethnic communities of the city, all of them are dedicated to preserving the authentic music, dances and costumes that are an important part of our worldwide cultural heritage.

The pictures on these pages represent only a small part of the company's repertoire, but they illustrate the variety of dances to be seen in a performance by the full company. These photographs were taken in several different settings. Some show the large company being videotaped at the KCET studios and on stage at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion of The Los Angeles Music Center; others show small groups performing out-of-doors, for audiences of children, and on-stage with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

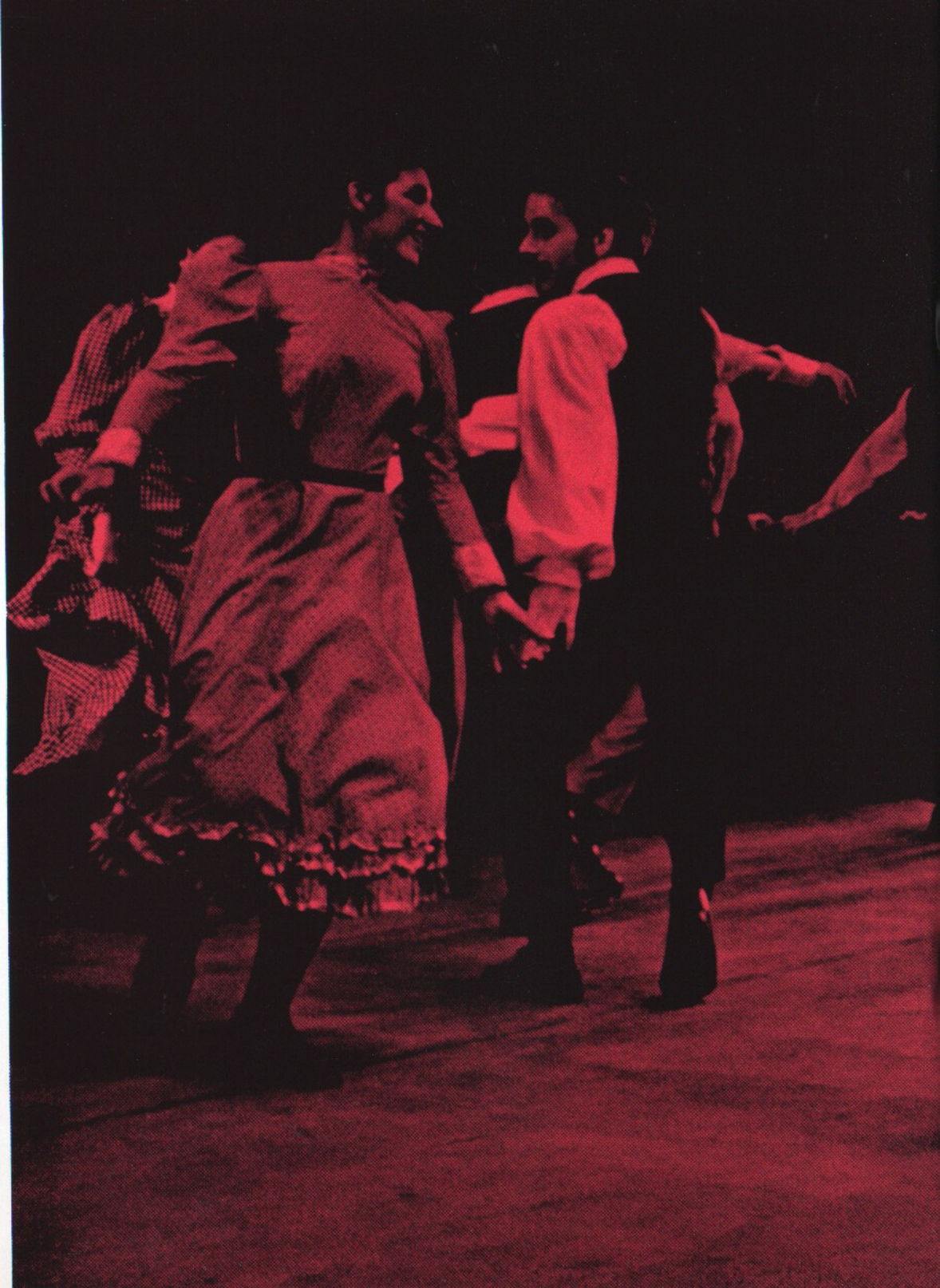


TADJIK DANCE

The vastness of Central Asia stretches from the shores of the Caspian to the borders of China. Here, between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, rise the turquoise domes of Samarkhand and Bokhara. In these ancient cities of the silk route, Turko-Iranian culture is preserved by both Tadjiks and Uzbeks. The region is noted for its folk arts, particularly textiles, but today its highest cultural expression is a great classical dance tradition.

As an American dance company, Aman takes pride in its presentations of American dance forms. Among these are music and dancing that began with some of the first newcomers to these shores.

Appalachian mountain people of the American South are descended from settlers who came here from the British Isles. Their dances, influenced by the dancing of the Black slave population exhibit an earthy exuberance that has come to be a completely American expression.





Hungarian CZARDAS

Members of Aman perform with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. Folk music has often been used in symphonic works, and Aman's special choreographies are in the authentic national dance idiom of the melodies used by the composer.



LEONA WOOD, founding Artistic Director of Aman, was for many years the company's outstanding soloist. Today she still performs on rare occasions, but the greater part of her time and energy is now spent in research, choreography and staging.

While studying ballet with the Novikoffs in Seattle, Miss Wood learned her first Caucasian dances, and has since spent many years acquiring a mastery of the demanding techniques necessary to the performance of the wide variety of Asiatic, Middle Eastern and North African dances in which she is an acknowledged authority.

Miss Wood has two careers in the arts. She gained her first fame as a painter, and has exhibited in Europe as well as in New York and on the West Coast. By 1960 dance had begun to occupy an increasing portion of her time, and she formed her first dance company.

For several years Miss Wood conducted extension lecture courses at UCLA. Her writing about dance appears on record jackets, in *Dance Research Journal*, and recently, as the narration for the Aman special produced by Los Angeles public television station KCET.

Miss Wood has received choreography and production grants from the National Endowment for the Arts which help to realize her innovative plans for the artistic growth of the company.

BARRY GLASS joined Aman in 1968, becoming Vocal Director in 1969, and a year later a Dance Director. In 1977 he became Associate Director, and in 1978 an Artistic Director.

In addition to his directorial responsibilities, Glass is one of Aman's leading soloists, and performs regularly with the company. He is also a founder and director of Aman's busiest smaller performing unit—a group that is responsible for a large number of special presentations, including hundreds of performances and workshops in schools each year. Glass personally conducts a large number of folkdance classes and is becoming very widely known as a teacher.

Glass has been involved in music and dance since early childhood. He danced with several children's ethnic dance performing groups, and in addition performed as a soprano soloist with the Roger Wagner Chorale, and as a keyboard artist. He has continued his music and dance studies ever since, despite his active Aman schedule.

Glass received his undergraduate degree in Classics and French from the University of California, Irvine, where he graduated magna cum laude. A Woodrow Wilson Fellowship helped him to pursue his graduate studies in Classics and Folklore at both the Irvine and Los Angeles campuses of the University of California.

RICHARD ROWLAND was named General Manager for Aman in 1977. Rowland is an all-around athlete—and he emphasizes that this includes dance. At high school in Taft, California, where he grew up, Rowland was a letterman in football, basketball, track, diving and swimming.

After getting an Associate in the Arts degree from Taft Junior College, he entered California State College at Fullerton, where he was a member of Phi Chi Honor Society, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology in 1971. While still at Fullerton, he organized and served as president of local folk-dance groups.

Rowland joined Aman in 1970 and soon became a leading dancer. He participates in all other aspects of the company's activities, including lecture-demonstration and teaching sessions at many western states' colleges and universities, and was responsible for co-ordinating Aman's participation in the National Dance Touring Program.

Rowland has worked at a great variety of jobs, ranging from oil company well-puller to salesman at Disneyland, and has even returned to his alma mater as a part-time staff instructor in folk dance. For three years Rowland was a financial consultant with Security Pacific National Bank, a position he left to become Aman's Company Manager.

VRLIČKO KOLO
One of the silent dances of Dalmatia.



THE COMPANY

Mariane Allen
Mitchell Allen
Ron Allman
Ted Barajas
Ronda Berkeley
Don Bersticker
Anthony Biedul
Jennifer Brosious
Charlotte Byron
Irene Chappell
Sally Confer
Linda DeNike
Sara Dowling
Susan Duckett
Tom Easterday
Jose Faget
Leilani Formica
Mark Forry
Robyn Friend
Melanie Fryman
Van Fryman
Robert Gately
Michele Gerard
John Gibson
Barry Glass
David Golber
Dan Gold
Richard Goldman
Laurie Gordon
Mike Gordon
Philip Harland
Graham Hempel
Deanne Hendricks
Sharon Johnson
Adrienne Jovicic
Loretta Kelley
Jane Kirkland
Sue Komoorian
Patricia Ledner
Roo Lester
Mitzi Lutesinger
Karin Machleder
Beverly Mann
Jean Margolis
Craig Matis
Katia McClain
Don Meyers
Miamon Miller
Larry Modell
Tim Murphy
Maxine Ohayon
Douglas Oliver
Steve Pearlman
Dan Ratkovich
Kelly Ray

Mimi Rayes
Jerry Robin
Theresa Rochelle
Mardi Rollow
Ann Rowland
Richard Rowland
Jurate Rudzevicius
Carol Schneider
Richard Schneider
Roland Sedillos
Susan Shapiro
Barbara Slade
Terry Smith
Sue Smyle
Coskun Tamer
Ergun Tamer
Samira Tamer
Gwoon Tom
Hilary Tower
Mario Vlahovic
Chris Yeseta

DIRECTORS

DANCE

John Gibson
Graham Hempel
Jean Margolis
Mardi Rollow
Carol Schneider
Barbara Slade
Mario Vlahovic

ORCHESTRA

David Golber
Philip Harland
Miamon Miller
Chris Yeseta

VOCAL

Barry Glass
Sharon Johnson
Barbara Slade

COSTUME

Don Bersticker
Mardi Rollow
Costumers
Gwen Dean
Sandy Wodicka

TECHNICAL

Fred Allen Jr.
Lighting Design
Fred Allen Jr.
Sound Consultant
Jeff Mitchell
Stage Manager
Shoshana Hirsh

Development Coordinator

Evelyn W. Hoffman

KETE ATENE

A Ghanaian dance in honor of the Ashanti Queen Mother.



POSAVINA

Through the Yugoslavian countryside south of Zagreb flows the river Sava. This part of Croatia is noted for the beautifully embroidered costumes of the womenfolk, and its simple but charming dances.



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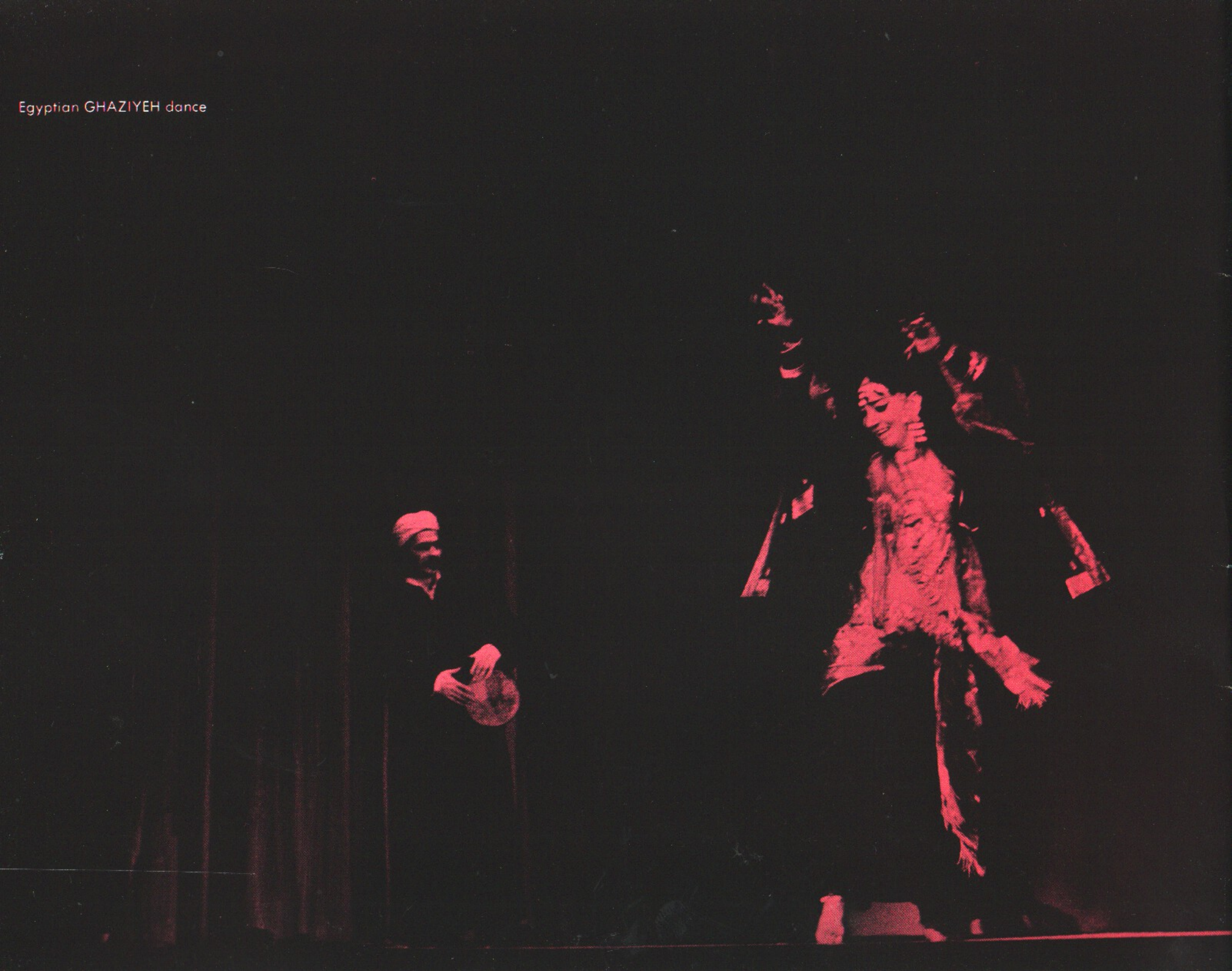
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Aman is supported through the generosity of its volunteer committees, which provide substantial support for its activities, and through the contributions of interested individuals. Aman gratefully acknowledges grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency in Washington D.C., the California Arts Council, a state agency in Sacramento, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles County Music and Performing Arts Commission and the City Council of Los Angeles.

Egyptian GHAZIYEH dance





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