

In The Fire of Grace

Dancing Rumi's Journey of the Soul

A DVD of Dance and Passion

Banafsheh Sayyad and Andrew Harvey

Banafsheh Sayyad has blazed a unique trail in contemporary dance. Born in Iran, her electrifying and wholly original dance style fuses together Flamenco, Tai Chi, Gurdjieff Movements and the sensuous ecstasy of Persian Dance with the austere rigor of Dervish whirling. "As an embodied mystic of the divine feminine, her presentations are not performances but transmissions which transform your vision of dance forever. Dancer and dance become one initiatory flame of grace." - Andrew Harvey

In *In the Fire of Grace*, **Banafsheh** interprets five stages of the soul's archetypal journey to union with the Beloved in movement that marries as Rumi's mystical vision does, the serene peace with the fierce gorgeous passion of the divine. She is accompanied by **Andrew Harvey** as the voice of Rumi, summoning her deeper into the flames of death and rebirth.

Andrew Harvey is the renowned mystical scholar, Rumi translator, poet, spiritual teacher, writer of over 30 books, and architect of Sacred Activism. **Harvey's** Rumi is a thunderous, poignant Shakespeare of the soul, catching one unaware and making retreat impossible. The dances are illumined by discussions exploring the urgency of Rumi's message to our turbulent world and the devastating, glorious paradoxes of the mystical journey.

Music by ZARBANG, Davoud Azad, Dr. L. Subramaniam, Pejman Hadadi and Babak Sharifi

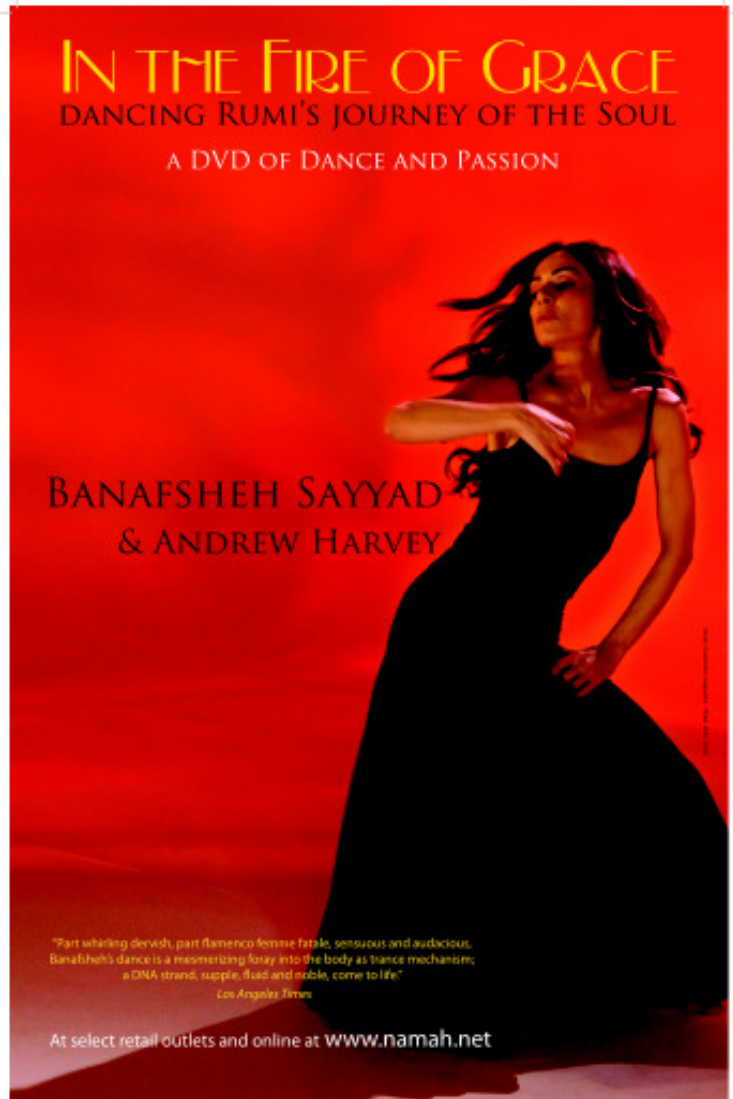
Special Feature: Interview with Andrew Harvey and Banafsheh Sayyad

Subtitles: Persian and Spanish

Length: Feature - 45 minutes, Interview - 25 minutes

Available online at www.namah.net

For booking contact Manager, John Imlach at NAMAHA: info@namah.net or 310.266.6866



THE RELEVANCE OF *IN THE FIRE OF GRACE*

In The Fire of Grace begins a fresh new way to receive sacred information, combining talents from previously unrelated performance genres of dance and mystical teaching, to serve as an invitation from Rumi to joyous, conscious existence.

These are pearls for serious thought in our lives now.....and crowning the thoughts in action, the most-luscious and wild dance by Banafsheh, a beckoning by which we can feel and whirl along in our own spaces or witness, in the contemplation of the journey we share.

**WORLD PREMIER *IN THE FIRE OF GRACE* 4/11/11 - a huge lovely success!
All Saints Church, Pasadena, California**

A capacity crowd, in a fantastic venue, enjoyed the discussion with Banafsheh, Andrew Harvey, and leading percussionist Pejman Hadadi whose music is featured in the film. Led by Rev. Ed Bacon, the discussion centered on the making of the film, the realities and obstacles of being a female dancer from Iran, performing from the heart, and Rumi as the beacon for embodying and living the Transcendent in the world. Following the screening, there was an impassioned Q&A session with the audience.

“Part whirling dervish, part flamenco femme fatale, sensuous and audacious, Banafsheh’s dance is a mesmerizing foray into the body as trance mechanism; a DNA strand, supple, fluid and noble, come to life.”

Los Angeles Times

“In watching Banafsheh dance, I knew I was witnessing a master performer in action.”

Caroline Myss

“From the very beginning of (Banafsheh)’s performance, I realized that we are faced with something entirely different and distinctive from what has commonly been called Persian Dance. Banafsheh’s dance was not only a highly artistic and virtuosic work both in terms of choreography and execution, but also for the first time I was witnessing a dance that one could call contemporary or modern Persian Dance – a dance with its own artistic language”

Renowned Critic, Shokooh Mirzadegi, A Woman’s View

One day in your wine-shop, I drank a little wine and I threw off the robe of my body and I knew drunk on you this universe is harmony ...

creation ... destruction ... I am dancing for them both

Mowlana Jalleldin Rumi

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Recent Review of Banafsheh Sayyad's live performance *Into the Vast* in Madrid, Spain on March 15, 201, featured in Spain's leading newspaper El Pais

The Voyage of Separation of Soul from Body

The dance performance *Into the Vast* invokes the hypnotic essence of Persian dance

By MIGUEL PÉREZ MARTÍN March 16, 2011

Presence, trance, surrendering to hypnotic tribal music, were all elements of the intricate performance created by Persian dancer Banafsheh Sayyad, the Persian percussionists of ZARBANG and Greek musician Matthaios Tsaourides for the closing night of the Festival of Sacred Arts at Teatros del Canal in Madrid. *Into the Vast* is much more than an hour and a half of entertainment. It is a voyage rich with feeling that surpasses all common sense to demonstrate the separation of soul from body, just as Turkish Dervishes do when they whirl to enter into trance.

Blue Dress: The Invocation of the Divine.

Sayyad dances softly to the rhythm of the water drum, her arms moving in hypnotic slow motion up towards the sky. Each movement is intensely meaningful as if calculated to the smallest millimeter, as a voice claims in Persian and then in English, the poetry of Jalāl-e-Din Rumi: 'I cried, oh my hypnotised heart, where are you going? Silence, said the Emperor. She comes towards us'. Sayyad, accompanied by the lament of the Greek Pontic Lyra of Tsaourides, realizes her inner voyage to abandon her body. After her gradual departure, the musicians enter into improvisation that gradually builds towards a climax.

Black Dress: Abandoning the Body. Sayyad dresses in dark and frill to dance to the rhythm of the Flamenco Cajón, without abandoning the gracefully subtle movements of Persian dance. At this time, she asks herself: 'When will I acknowledge my own divinity?' This is not a replica of traditional Persian dances; it is an innovative fusing of the tribal, the ancestral, and the modern. The years of devotion to contemporary Persian dance are apparent in her movements and gestures which have earned her great recognition in North America, Europe and Australia. In the background, the musicians start to join in the trance and surrender as the dancer whirls with her long mane floating in the air. The music transports us to the plains and the deserts, to the wind that blows between the sand dunes, and the Pontic Lyra carries hints from Baroque Masters and songs of the Balkans.



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White Dress: The Joy and the Glory. The music accelerates and Sayyad, in white, and a red veil in her hands, is out of her body. The instruments travel through different genres of music: from dervish mysticism to tribal rhythms, from savage to Bulería. Sayyad dances with heartfelt bewilder - as she has also studied Flamenco - to arrive at an earthy dance with legs in wide stance, and from there, onward to her endless whirling. She loses her face between her voluptuous manes and hits her chest as she dances without stopping. The audience has now been driven crazy and do not resist to move their heads, shake, and break into a clapping rhythm while the music accelerates and the trance is converted into a shared climax throughout the concert hall. All the way from the balcony to the orchestra, the audience follows the rhythms with their feet, rotating their heads in circles and whistling. The music comes to a robust stop and the lights go up: the soul, that had escaped from the body, now returns. The bliss of the voyage converts into unstoppable applause.



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Banafsheh Sayyad

Biography

The internationally-acclaimed dancer, choreographer, and teacher **Banafsheh Sayyad**, communicates the universal messages of Mysticism in a passionate yet fluid, meditative way, an interplay between trance and directed movement. Her explosive movement is at once sensual and ritualistic, an organic trance of impeccable technique gone wild, yet holding a serene grounded core. **Banafsheh's** mesmerizing offering of the timeless Sacred Feminine inside a contemporary gypsy dervish beckons all to engage, impart, and exalt. The versatile, Iranian-born **Banafsheh** is also one of the few bearers of authentic Persian dance form in the world, the pioneer of Contemporary Persian dance, the founder of Dance of Oneness® and NAMA Dance Company, and an acupuncturist.

Known for her innovative movement vocabulary and high artistic and educational standards, **Banafsheh** draws from her extensive background in Persian dance, Sufi ritual, Tai Chi and Flamenco to present a new form, rooted in tradition yet universal, "fusing ancient forms with a postmodern punch" (LA Times). Her movement is comprised in part by the Persian alphabet she has translated into gestures and movement, which when put together, one dances out words and poetic stanzas, often taken from the works of Rumi, whom she has studied extensively.

The daughter of legendary performer and filmmaker, **Parviz Sayyad**, **Banafsheh's** form is what "for the first time one could call contemporary or modern Persian Dance— a dance with its own artistic language, neither Eastern like Arabic and Indian nor Western as in Flamenco, or Modern. The dance form created by Banafsheh Sayyad can only be called the Banafsheh dance, representative of Persian culture much like how Flamenco is particular to Spanish culture..." (prominent Iranian critic, Shokooh Mirzadegi).

Banafsheh Sayyad holds an MFA in Dance from UCLA where she taught Persian dance. She draws from her knowledge of Persian mysticism and the Taoist view of the body to create movement that is at once impeccable technique, healing, and connected to spirit. **Banafsheh's** solo work as well as ensemble pieces with her dance company **NAMA** have been presented extensively in festivals and by presenters in North America, Europe and Australia where she has gained tremendous acclaim. **Banafsheh** has been invited to Tanzhaus in Dusseldorf, Germany for 1-2 weeklong residencies annually since 2005. She recently performed and taught Master classes as part of her weeklong residency in the Dance Masters Series at the prestigious Dance Center of Columbia College in Chicago.

Banafsheh is available for solo performances with recorded or live music of 1 - 5 musicians. Her music partners are ZARBANG and Tony Khalife. She is available for ensemble dance pieces of up to 5 dancers with or without live music. Special performances are also available with noted Rumi scholar, writer, and mystic Andrew Harvey.

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