

[Badke\(remix\)](#)

Amir Sabra & Ata Khatab  
laGeste | Stereo48

## Interview with Amir Sabra – *Badke(remix)* – May 2026

- **Do they already dance dabke, or did they learn it for the occasion?**

Some of them were already Dabke dancers, others are from different dance background and they learnt Dabke for this occasion.

- **Why did you decide to produce and dance again Dabké ?**

Badke has been a significant project in the Palestinian contemporary dance scene, it was not only a performance. The journey to create the first edition in 2013 came after around 10 years of exchange between Belgian artists and the Palestinian performing arts scene. When the tour of *Badke* ended in 2016, the Project has continued through us. We created our own shows and the dialogue with Belgium kept going. Until the moment where everyone felt ready to revisit the show again as another stage on this journey, but this time with Palestinian artists leading the project and the Belgium laGeste as producer.

- **Have the issues changed from ten year ago ? what were they in 2013? What are they now?**

On a logistical level, the problems we faced in 2013 still exist today in 2026. In fact, visa and travel complications for Palestinians holding Palestinian passports may have become even more difficult. In addition, before the opening performance, the co-creator, Atta Khattab, was issued a travel ban by the Israeli authorities, which meant he could not join us during the performance period and tours.

The ten Palestinian dancers hold different travel documents. Those with Israeli passports can move easily within Europe without needing visas or permits of any kind. They are able to travel at any time. For those holding Palestinian passports, however, the process involves many complications. Yet this does not apply in places such as Tunisia, where the exact opposite situation occurred: Israeli passport holders were denied entry, while Palestinian passport holders were allowed through. As a result, we were forced to perform with only half of the team.

Meanwhile, those holding Belgian or American passports can move around freely almost anywhere with ease.

Although the political situation in 2013 was already tense, as Palestinians of this generation we had never witnessed anything like what the region is experiencing now. This has a major impact on the performance itself: on the dancers' motivation to present it, the audience's motivation to watch it, and the motivation of programmers and theatres to program it. The context changes all of this, even though the performance itself remains almost the same in its artistic content.



- **Is there a political statement?**

My experience with the performance makes it difficult for me to answer this question. I began working on it as a dancer, then became involved as a partner in the choreographic and creative process, and later I experienced it only as a spectator.

The Belgian choreographers did not add a political statement to the work, that did not concern me very much cause we all understand its political nature. What mattered to me was that they had a clear position outside the work.

When I watched the performance itself, I felt that it had moved beyond the control of both the Belgian and Palestinian makers, and had begun to create its own political stance in interaction with the current context and with what is happening in the world today.

As for me personally, as one of the creators of the work, I am not particularly interested in expressing my political views through the work itself. If I want to make a political statement, I would rather say it directly than create an artwork in order to say it.

- **What do you feel about dancing dabké? Do you feel rooted to a country? A community ?**

There is a collective feeling that takes hold of you when we dance Dabke. First of all, physically, we hold each other's hands and stomp on the ground in unison. This creates a powerful sense of togetherness and unity.

Moreover, what happens in the mind inevitably seeps into the body. All the ideas surrounding the relationship between Dabke and the Palestinian reality create a deep emotional connection between the performance itself and its association with a sense of national identity.

- **What is the meaning for you of this dance?**

When I begin dancing Dabke and feel the deep familiarity my body has with this dance, I feel that this body carries an experience of these movements that extends far beyond my own intellectual understanding of them — beyond me as an individual. This makes me more capable of connecting with others.

I feel that this bodily experience was passed on to me; I did not create it. And in turn, it will be passed on through me to others. This is the magic carried within heritage and tradition: it makes our lives collective and shared.

Contemporary dance, on the other hand, carries the magic of the individual — their creativity, uniqueness, and distinct expression. What is beautiful about *Badke* as an artistic work is that it allows me to feel both at once: my individuality and my belonging to a collective.



- **Is traditional dance a kind on weapon to claim identity ? soil?**

I do not know whether it is a weapon for reclaiming identity. Perhaps it is more of a shield for defending it. It does not attack anyone in order to assert something; rather, it exists to defend it when someone claims that it does not exist.

- **Do you feel that traditional dance is connected to nationalism?**

Today, yes, there is a strong connection between traditional arts and nationalism. We can see this nationalist tendency in everything today — clothing, dance, language, and more. Perhaps it is a reaction to the feeling that we are losing our identity. And this is not limited to Palestinians; we can observe this tendency toward nationalism all over the world. It seems to me that we need a clearer definition of the question of identity. This openness of the world has caused us to lose that definition. Turning toward nationalism is the easier option. But perhaps we need to redefine who we are in a way that is completely different from what we have known before . something more connected to a reality that blends the local and the global in ways we have never experienced previously.

- **Is using traditional dance a way to reconnect to ritual?**

I believe so. The ritualistic aspect of traditions makes them a spiritual experience that nourishes a need within us.

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