



## BIOGRAPHY & CV

### **SASHAR ZARIF, MA**

*Research Associate - York Centre for Asian Studies, York University*

*Artistic Director - Sashar Zarif Dance Theatre*

*Joshgoon - The Canadian Academy of Azerbaijani Dance*

*Dancers for Peace International Festival*

*Centre for Dance Studies*

With 20 years of professional dance experience over 29 countries across the globe, researching, educating, creating, performing, and producing dance. Has extensive experience in practice in academic, community, and rural environments. He is the founder of Dancers for Peace festival that worked with cross cultural community and schools in Toronto to provide workshop and performances to public. Has worked with community programs such as Harbourfront on cross cultural programs. Has been on the roster of OAC arts in education program.

Inspired by a strong artistic family background, Sashar Zarif is an internationally renowned multi-disciplinary artist, educator, and researcher in the field of dance ethnology and ethno musicology based in Toronto, Canada. A recipient of numerous awards for his excellence in the arts, he received his formal academic training in performing arts at the Azerbaijan Conservatory of Music and Dance where he was awarded the honorary title of "Artist for People of Azerbaijan." He continued his studies in Toronto receiving Bachelor Fine Arts, Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Performing Arts and Master of Fine Arts in Dance at York University. Zarif has studied various forms of dance and music including Uzbek, Tadjek, Persian, Georgian, Chechen, Afghan, Middle Eastern, Flamenco, Bharatanatyam and Lezginka.

He is a part-time faculty member at York University teaching "Fundamentals of Dance Performance" and "Introduction to World Dance Practices: Dances of North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia" in the Dance Department and "Performing Arts in Global Perspective" in Fine Arts Cultural Studies.

Among many other fields, Sashar specializes in the field of Sufi and Shamanic dance rituals of Near and Central Asia. Through many years of fieldwork and study, he has been able to share the result of his research and creativity internationally by teaching and performing across the globe. His accomplishments in this field have brought him golden opportunities such as his collaborative project/performance with internationally renowned singer Alim Qasimov from Azerbaijan and Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali, the prodigious nephews of legendary qawwali master, Nusret Fateh Ali Khan. He has collaborated with many well known Canadian artists such as Holly Small, Carol Anderson, Keiko Kitano, Soheil Parsa, Terrill Maguire, Anne Bourne and Suba Shankaran, to name a few. Zarif and Susan Cash have collaborated on a number of cultural, global projects that are revealing intriguing creative results.

Sashar Zarif is a recipient of the 2006 Toronto International Dance Festival's Paula Citron Award and was awarded a Chalmers fellowship grant from the Ontario Arts Council in 2010. He was named the 2008 recipient of the Skills for Change New Pioneer Award for the Arts and titled an Artistic Ambassador for Multiculturalism and Diversity. He was also nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award for outstanding performance in 2008. In 2011, he received the honorary titles of Master of Dance from Uzbekistan State Institute of Choreography in Tashkent as well as Honorary Faculty Member at this institute for his work and contribution to dance in Uzbekistan in the second half of 2011. In 2012, Sashar Zarif was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

## EDUCATION & TRAINING

Current Phd. Program PhD Cand. Middle Sex University, UK (studies there currently on hold)  
2004- 2006 Master of Arts in Dance York University, Faculty of Fine Arts

## EDUCATION PROJECTS AND RESIDENCY HIGHLIGHTS

2004 - pres. Contract Faculty - York University Dance Department  
2013 Guest Artist - From tradition to contemporary, Meknez National Theatre School, Meknez, Morocco  
2013 Residency - Cross-cultural collaboration - Conservatory of Music & Dance-music, Marrakesh, Morocco  
2013 Guest Artist - Dances of Islamic Societies, Ohio University, Ohio  
2012 Residency - from tradition to contemporary, Baku Drama Yug Theatre, Baku, Azerbaijani  
2012 Residency - Choreographies of Migration, Westminster Highschool, London, Ontario  
2011 Residency - Dances of Western Asia, Tashkent National choreographic Institute for higher education, Uzbekistan  
2011 Residency - Dances of Western Asia, Dushanbe National choreographic institute, Tajikistan  
2010 Residency - from tradition to contemporary, Dance of the Islamic societies, Institut Supérieur d'Art Dramatique et d'Animation Culturelle, Rabat, Morocco.  
2010 Residency - Dances of Euroasia and Central Asia, Bratislava univeristy of performing arts, Slovakia.  
2009 Residency - from tradition to contemporary, Dance of the Islamic societies, Institut Supérieur d'Art Dramatique et d'Animation Culturelle, Rabat, Morocco.

## SELECTED RESEARCH

**Identity and Performance. Cross-cultural Collaboration in Dance and Music. Dance and Displacement. Reconstruction of Integrated Performing Arts – Mugham. Sufi and Shamanic Dance Rituals. Dance and Rituals of; Iran, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Daghistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizistan, Tuva, Mongolia and North Africa.**

2004 - pres. **Canada / Azerbaijan** . Research/Field Work/Construction/Creation/Internship . **Dance of Mugham**, Collaborative project with Master Alim Qasimov and Ensemble  
2013 **Kirghizistan** . Research/Field Work/Residency . **Kirkiz and Tuva Shamanic Dance Rituals**.  
2013 **Uzbekistan** . Residency . **Ethnochoreography** . National Choreographic Institute of Tashkent.  
2012 **Azerbaijan** . Residency . **From traditional to contemporary**, National Yug Theatre of Baku.  
2011 **Uzbekistan** . Research/ Field work/Residency . **Classical Dance and Music styles of Farqana, Khoarazm**.  
2011 **Uzbekistan** . Research/ Field work/Residency . **Bukhara Dance Style and Mevreghi Mystic Tradition**; Bukhara State Philharmonic, Bukhara.  
2011 **Tajikistan** . Research/ Field work/Residency . **Pamir and Kulabi Dance Rituals**. Various State ensembles and Masters across the country.  
2008 - 2010 **Morocco** . Research/ Field work/Residency . **Sufi Dance/Music Rituals** . Various locations.  
2009 **Bosnia** . Research/ Field work . **Sufi Rituals** . Sarajevo.  
2006 **Mongolia** . Research/ Field work/Residency . **Western Mongolian Khoton** dance and long songs. Cultural University of Ulaanbaatar.  
2005 **Iran** . Research/ Field work . **Zurkhaneh Martial Arts dance/music Practices** . Maraghe.  
2004 - Pres. **Canada** . Research/Field Work/Construction/Creation of the **Persian Classical Dance of Saghi**, a construction of a movement vocabulary/syllabus for Persian Classical Dance through reconstruction of a mystical character in Persian Classical Arts. York University.  
2004 **Iran** . Research/ Field work/Residency . **Turkmen and Katul** dance rituals, and **Ghashghai** Nomadic tribes , and **Iran-Azerbaijani** circle dances.  
1994 - 2003 **Canada** . Studied/Research . **Sufi Poetry of Persian, Turkish, and Azerbaijani** scholars with different Masters including, Master Kabiri, Master Yousefian, Mrs. Sa-adat, and through independent studies.  
1997 - 2003 **Canada** . Researching **therapeutic aspects of movement** in traditional dance.  
1998 - 1999 **Azerbaijan** . Researched . **classical music of Mugham**

## CHOREOGRAPHIC HIGHLIGHTS

- And Now** (23 min) 2013 North Africa and Central Asia Tour, including old town centres, bazaars, monuments
- Sama-e Rast** (55 min) 2012 Self Presented with Alim Qasimov and Ensemble, Toronto Centre for the Arts
- Sindirma** (13 min) 2012 Dance Ontario Dance Weekend 2012, Fleck Dance Theatre, Toronto.
- Lezginka** (10 min) 2011 Presented by Uzbekistan State Tashkent Choreographic Institute in Uzbekistan
- Shanlik** (10 min) 2011 Presented by Bukhara State Philharmonic in Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- Chabok Sanam** (7 min) 2011 Presented by Bukhara State Philharmonic in Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- Arshin Mal Alan** (30 min) 2011 Presented by Azerbaijan Embassy's AI Theatre in Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- Ala** (14min) 2011 Presented by Uzbekistan State Tashkent Choreographic Institute in Uzbekistan
- Solos of my life** (55 minutes) 2011 Presented by Danceworks at the Enwave Theatre
- Water** (70 min) 2010 Self Presented at Theatre Centre
- Choreographies of Migration** (60 minutes ) 2008 Presented by Danceworks at the Enwave Theatre
- Saghi** (60 minutes) 2007 a Danceworks Co-works, presented at the Betty Oliphant Theatre.
- Circles of Dance** (30 minutes) 2006 – 68 dancers, 6 different traditional dance groups in Toronto, world's biggest circle dance project for World Dance Global Assembly 2006 Official Opening, Toronto
- Bojnordi** (15 minutes) 2006 – 20 dancers , a Persian choreography, Meykhaneh, Roxy NoD, Prague
- Navayi** (20 minutes) 2006 – 18 dancers, Sufi choreography in Tadjik, Meykhaneh, Roxy NoD, Prague
- Wait** (10 minutes) – 2006 – a choreography for York University Dance Ensemble, York University, Sandra Faire/Ivan Fecan Theatre
- In the Letters of My Name** (18min) 2005 – Solo, collaboration with Holly Small, performed in over 12 countries and 19 venues including Toronto.
- Qizil Alma** (10min) 2005, 5 dancers, Based on Uzbek Dance Style, Harbourfront Centre, Sandra Faire/Ivan Fecan Theatre
- Unity Dance** (25 minutes) 2006 – 97 dancers, 9 Toronto based Traditional Dance Companies including African, Philippino, Greek, Azerbaijani, Latin American, Irish, Korean, Indian, Ukrainian. GOLDLINE Communication Gala, Paramount Hall, Toronto
- Saghi** (45min) 2005 – 7 dancers with original live music scores – part of Persian Classical Dance construction project, premiered in Frankfurt performed at Tanzhuse in Düsseldorf, Barcelona, and York University Fine Arts Festival Celebrates State-of-the-Art Accolade Project with Dance, The Sandra Faire and Ivan Fecan Theatre
- Circle of Sufi** (10 min) 2005 – 3 dancers, Persian classical dance, Choreographed for York University Dance Ensemble.