

Performance mixes culture, dance of Middle East, Hawaii



Photo by Kathy Haveman

'Nancie's Winds of Magic,' a belly-dancing class, performs the first act Saturday.

By Shane Hall
Reporter

The exotic cultures of the Middle East and Hawaii came to Bryan Saturday in the form of dance.

"Nancie's Dance Across the Junes" featured belly-dancing troupes and solo performers at the knights of Columbus Hall in Bryan. They gathered for a day of classes and seminars and a show that night.

Nancie Cortiaus, a University Plus belly-dancing teacher, sponsored the event. Members of the Texas A&M Italia dance organization also were involved. Cortiaus said most of the students are Italia members.

The day-long event featured classes taught by dance instructors Maria Amaya — a leading Middle Eastern dance instructor — and Carle Stockton, also known as Keahi.

Before she moved to College Station, Cortiaus was one of Amaya's students in Austin and performed with her as a member of the Tamoura dance troupe.

Amaya is in her 12th year of teaching belly dancing. She also has taught and performed around the world, including Germany, Egypt, Morocco and Australia.

Stockton is a native Hawaiian and director-choreographer of the Austin dance troupe Kona Isle, which performs in Texas and New Mexico.

In the show, Amaya performed three dances, two of which she described as "Egyptian cabaret." Egyptian

cabaret, she said, is a flashy style of dance performed to Egyptian music. Her third dance was a veil dance performed to a song that combined country and western, Spanish and Middle Eastern styles of music.

"It (the veil dance) is a kind of dance that is very lyrical," Amaya said. "You can create designs in the space around you. It's an extension of yourself."

Stockton also performed three dances, including a "modern hula" with her student, Gail White.

Stockton performed two solo dances in the second act. The first was a traditional Ipu dance, performed with a gourd (called an Ipu).

"Basically, you use the gourd as a percussion instrument," Stockton said. She said the dance is a traditional Hawaiian dance called the Ko Mai, which was performed to honor the Hawaiian King, Kamahaha.

Stockton described her second solo as a "cowboy hula," a dance that honors the Hawaiian cowboy.

Local dance troupes also were represented. Attired in colorful costumes adorned with sequins and glitter, and billed as "Nancie's Winds of Magic," Cortiaus' performing class opened the first act. Her intermediate class opened the second act.

For audience members who might prefer a more conventional type of dance, members of the Brazos Academy of Performing Arts performed ballet numbers.

Dancer Brian Webb, a senior fi-

nance major at A&M, performed a short section from a recital.

Webb said he has studied ballet for about nine months. It was something he had wanted to try, but, "It's kind of difficult for a guy to decide to take up ballet," he said.

In addition to the classes and the show, dancers had the opportunity to add to their costumes with jewelry and fabrics from a boutique.

Mila Crowell, the boutique owner, performed an Egyptian cabaret.

The dancers expressed enthusiasm for what they do, saying that belly dancing is not only an art form, but good exercise as well.

Cortiaus said the dances are good for the abdomen and back.

Judy Webb, a graduating senior in chemical engineering at A&M and a member of Cortiaus' intermediate class, said she likes not only the exercise but the attitude of the dance.

"It's a lot of fun and not really competitive," Webb said. "There's no real pressure involved. It's a lot different from engineering."

Amaya said it was the traditional belly-dancing music that originally prompted her to study the dance.

"I like the earthiness of the music," she said. "It's moving, it's emotional. It can be lyrical, sad or happy."

Stockton agreed, adding that she likes the opportunity to express herself in dance. "I think dance is the most wonderful form of self-expression there is," she said.

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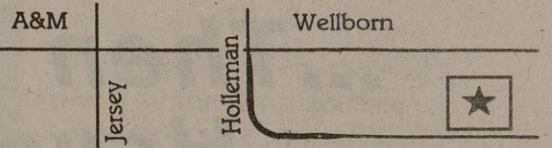
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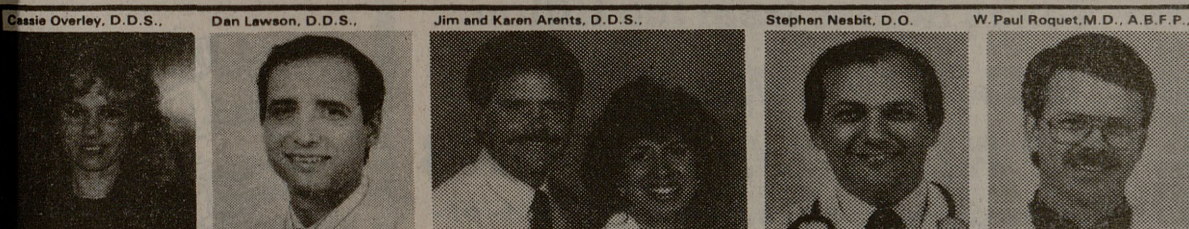
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