

# Deeper Meanings Of Dance Unveiled At Performance

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Feature Correspondent

The world of Middle Eastern and American Belly Dance came to life in a special show last weekend at the Woodstock Town Hall Theater. Students and artists wowed a full house with a variety of performances of lead by Artistic Director Gina Capossela, who teaches dance all around the Upper Valley. The dances represent a merging of Eastern and Western cultures, with explanations by Capossela as to the importance and meaning behind them.

Regardless of their experience, the dancers, who live all over the region, put all of their heart and energy into the routines, including appearances by Woodstock's own Angela Day and Sabrina Brown.

"I'm incredibly proud of my student performers," Capossela said.

Capossela herself took the stage, performing masterful and enthralling pieces, in addition to her duty as emcee. She has an impressive background of dance education and work, and earned a master's degree in dance and social work.

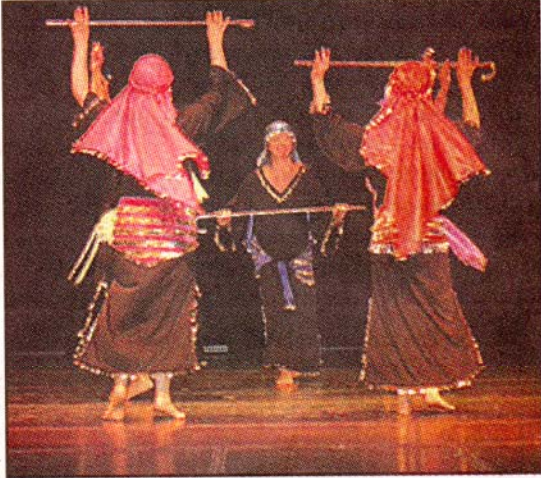
Although many of the performers were women, the pieces performed by men were just as impressive and intoxicating. Skip Cady performed Tahtib, a southern Egyptian martial art done with a long staff-like stick, moving with grace at lightning speed. Another student named Shmuel also took part in both group and solo dance, keeping up perfectly with his female companions on stage.

Another comical performance involved Cady along with Eric Nelson and Paul Perry IV, who played contractors who show up at a dance lesson and are lulled into actually trying the maneuvers of belly dancing themselves.

The dances were not simply stunning and entertaining to watch, but had deeper meanings, Capossela said. Both global and local peace and societal change were integrated into the meaning of the performances.

The piece "L'Histoire," a North African pop tune with beginner level

dancers, is not just about scorned love, Capossela said, but also about social justice and the cessation of violence. The dance was dedicated to Tyler Blain, of Enfield, NH, who died at the age of 28 on Memorial Day in



a swimming accident. Blain worked ceaselessly in the Upper Valley and beyond to help effect a better understanding between both individuals and humanity.

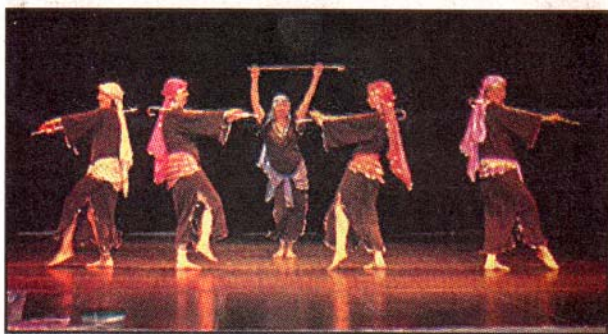
"He was someone who cared deeply about social issues," Capossela said. "He was a homeless outreach coordinator, and he volunteered for three weeks when Hurricane Katrina hit. This week

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he was going to be presented with an award for exemplary community service by Headrest, some place I worked for 12 years. I didn't know Tyler, but his life really inspires me and I hope that it inspires you too."

Capossela said the important work that Blain made his livelihood is close the heart of her own goals with Middle Eastern dance.

"What I want you to see is the



incredible transformative potential of this dance," she said. "My mission is to inspire personal and global transformation through the dances of the Middle East. That mission includes you. Through your support of this art you are enabling us to build bridges to the wider community, even the global community, to spread understanding and peace on the planet by learning about other cultures."

People interested in more information or taking part in dance classes, which start June 19, may contact Capossela by telephone at 802-763-8691 or by email at info@ginadances.com.