



(F)10

Tummy tuning

Belly dancer reveals her artistry to eager learners



photos by DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Instructor Fatma leads her weekly belly dance class through proper techniques at the Jewish Community Center. The native of Yugoslavia believes the ancient form of dance leads to a fountain of youth.

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

BELLY DANCING requires some serious navel navigation. One of this area's well-known instructors contends its course leads to a fountain of youth.

Who's to argue? Agnes Mikulac, whose performance name is Fatma, is 55 going on 35, ravishing in her light blue Middle Eastern outfit revealing a rather flat midriff.

"This Middle Eastern Oriental belly dancing is the only form of exercise that helps keep internal organs in place," said Fatma, who is a native of Yugoslavia. "It is the secret of youth."

Some of the women who turned out for Fatma's first session of an 11-week course offered Monday nights at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield were haphazardly looking for a secret stash of flim-flam.

A few omelets and groans were heard as Fatma led the crew through a few warm-up exercises. But when the diminutive dance instructor heralded in the first lesson, it's a command performance.

The woman who looks like something from "I Dream of Jeannie" guides these clad-in-aerobics gear on how to sway side-to-side by shifting their weight onto the balls on their feet.

The next lesson involves learning to lean back and thrust the hips. Any close to the mirror, Fatma would be counting on seven years bad luck.

"THIS IS great," one student says. "This shows all the fat ladies can do this."

Belly dancing does have a lot to offer as a form of exercise. Some of the physical benefits include firming up under the chin, stretching the waist area, firming hips, improving posture and, of course, toning up the abdomen.

Belly dancing also is considered a tool for relaxation and meditation.

"When you take my class, you learn to listen to me and not your thoughts," Fatma says to her stu-



dents. "When you get to that point, you'll learn very fast."

What Fatma has learned is the history of belly dancing. She traces the origins of the dance art back to harems in Turkey prior to the birth of Christ. Eventually, belly dancing spread through the Middle East and onward to India and then back through Africa, Morocco, Spain, Greece and France.

Each culture added its own variations on movement. For example, India is where finger cymbals originated.

BELLY DANCING landed in the United States in the 19th century. Initially mesmerizing people with Egyptian style dance at circuses, Little Egypt, a Syrian dancer, caused a rather large uproar in 1893

at the Chicago World's Fair with her form of belly dance.

People tend to focus on the exotic aspects of belly dancing, but what gets overlooked is that it is an ethnic dance. Fatma believes the abdominal and pelvic gyrations are "the mother of jazz and ballet" dance.

Katie Levandowski of Farmington Hills, who's been involved in ballet and is taking Fatma's course at the Jewish Community Center, sees some similarities.

"Ballet is much more angular," said Levandowski, who's joined her neighbors Margaret Levitt and Nancy Pastor for the belly dance course. "This has more movements in your hips. It's the similar in the sense of the arm movements but not the hips."

While exercise is certainly one

motivation for taking the course, for Margaret Levitt it's more cultural. Levitt is Greek and has a collection of music from the Mediterranean country.

"I took a belly dancing class years and years ago," Levitt said. "I wanted to take another one but I couldn't find one. Somebody sent me to Dearborn to a night club to talk to someone, who referred me to a place in the Oak Park area where they had videos on belly dancing. But it was so outdated."

SO, LEVITT and her neighbors landed under Fatma's tutelage. She's been an instructor in belly dancing since 1975, researching the subject extensively as well as teaching it.

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Raising an objection is how to play the game

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

YOU DON'T have to be a lawyer to play the computer game *Objection!* In fact, says the local lawyer who created the game, lawyers generally do better at it than real lawyers.

However, the game is designed along rulings by the judge in the courtroom to the word, "Objection!" when raised by a defense lawyer in a criminal case. The game actually may be used for educational credits by lawyers in California as well as some other states.

Ashley Lipson, a West Bloomfield resident, is a member of the law firm Coleman, Lipson and Bradford in Farmington Hills. But he also is a computer-game buff who has spent several years developing this game, which has been given rave reviews by both legal journals and computer-game magazines.

"In California, it became the first computer game ever to be certified by the state," said Lipson, in his law offices, where he demonstrated how to play *Objection!*

"IT MAY BE the first computer game anywhere to be certified for CLE, or Continuing Legal Education) credits. Certain states have different requirements how lawyers must keep up to date," he said.

In California, for example, a lawyer is required to

obtain 36 credits within three years. The game is good for nine credits, or for 12 credits if you include three hours of audio tapes (which come with one version of the game) to satisfy a technical requirement.

In Florida, the game is certified for eight credits. Florida requires lawyers to obtain 30 credits every three years. Lipson said using the game for educational credits does not apply in Michigan.

The game is available in three versions. "The computer game is identical. The difference is in the supporting material," he said. The consumer version is \$49.95, the lawyer's version \$89, and CLE version is \$249. "That's where we make our bucks," he said.

The game simulates the examination phase of a courtroom trial, with questions put to the witness by the prosecuting attorney. When you play the game, there are a number of grounds on which you can object. As the defense attorney, you either hit "Q" on the keyboard, if the question is PROPER, or hit one of several keys signaling an Objection.

WITH AN Objection Key card to look at, you can hit "A" if the questions is Argumentative, "B" if it violates the Best Evidence Rule, "C" if it calls for a Conclusion, and so on, to register objections on such other grounds as Assumes Unestablished Facts, Violates the Hearsay Rule, Irrelevant or Immaterial, Leading, Multiple, Privileged, Speculative, and Vague.

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Ashley Lipson of West Bloomfield, a Farmington Hills lawyer, is the man behind the computer game *Objection!*

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