

Artist Spotlight

Strength and Beauty: Sword dance teaches a sense of self

By Meghan Easterly
meghan@swspotlight.com

Bonita Springs — Angela Hicks finds her center in dance. The artist performs sword dance, combining the beauty of belly dance, with the strength of balancing a Turkish scimitar on her head. The blend creates a beautiful and intense presence on the stage.

“The sword dance is about overcoming fears,” Hicks said. “You have to have a whole balance within your body.”

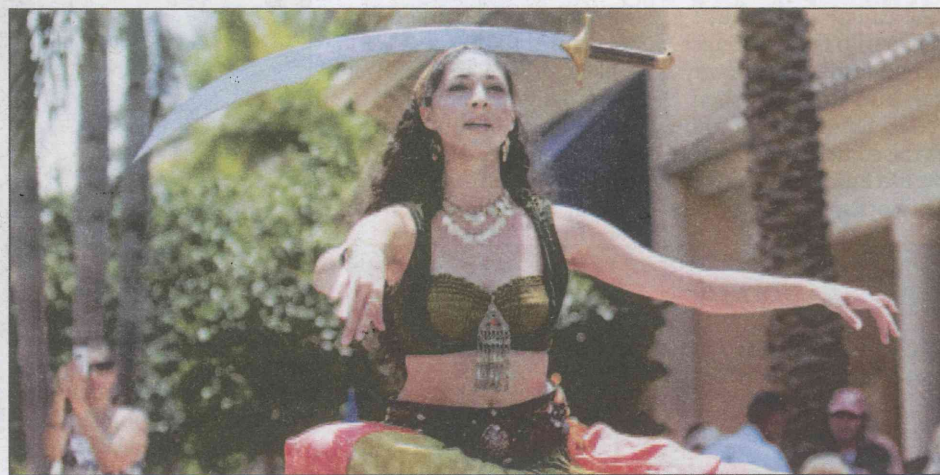
“Belly dance is such a beautiful sensual dance, but there is not only grace and beauty but the strength to overcome fears.”

Hicks has been dancing since she was a small girl, taking all forms of dance from ballet to modern, ballroom to hip hop. Her grandmother encouraged her to dance because she herself knew the power of dance.

“I grew up knowing about belly dancing because my grandma was a belly dancer,” Hicks said. “I was born and raised with her in the home and she would show me how to move my hips, how to use my hands.”

Hicks said she and her sister were in love with the Disney Princess Jasmine and loved dancing with their grandmother and mother at home. But, in their backyard, belly dancing is only an age appropriate thing to do in public. Hicks had to be 18 to be able to belly dance outside of the home. She continued to take all other types of dance.

“When I was younger I thought ballet was too strict so I liked it when I drifted toward the contemporary style,” Hicks said. “Later I



Meghan Easterly | meghan@swspotlight.com

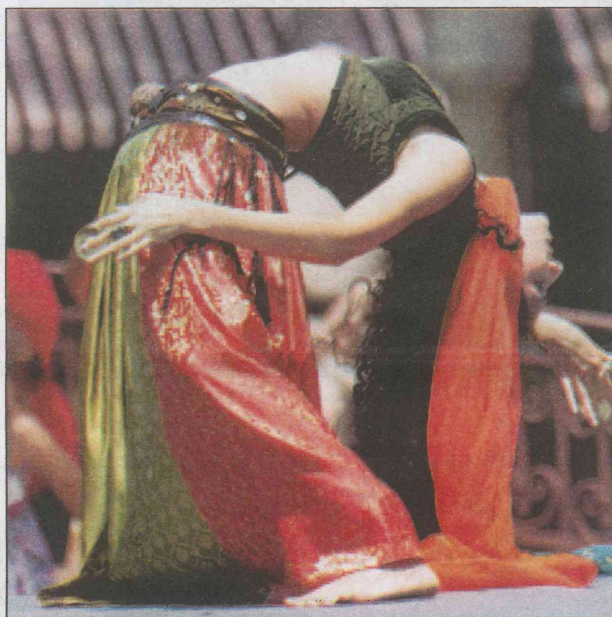
Angela Hicks combines strength and beauty as she performs traditional belly dance while balancing a Turkish scimitar on her head.

got into ballroom dancing when I was 16 and took off with that for a couple of years. But I didn't like that you always had to have a partner.”

When she was 17 she started training herself more as a belly dancer so that she would be able to start performing when she turned 18. She began her career of belly dancing with small performances in venues that she knew were familiar with the culture. As she has cultivated her reputation in the area, she has begun dancing for larger crowds at larger events, branching out and teaching people about belly dancing. She spent some time traveling around the state in a Polynesian dance troupe and learned a lot about costumes, music, props and the timing of performances.

“I knew I needed something exciting, so I thought of a sword,” Hicks said.

Her scimitar is sharp on both sides. She didn't begin with the sword. She began with books and worked her way up to the sword. She



Angela Hicks expresses herself fully by creating her own costumes and choreography and finding music that speaks to her.

said it helped that her grandmother was also an etiquette teacher so she had learned balance from a young age. So now she belly dances with the sword on her head, dazzling crowds as she moves across the stage twisting and bending.

“My dad cringes, he can't

stand to watch,” Hicks said. “He's always glad when it is over.”

Audiences all watch and cheer though. Children especially seem to be amazed by the sword and the elaborate costumes. Hicks says she makes many of the costumes herself with coins, shells and



Angela Hicks grew up learning the tradition of belly dancing.

other items that she has collected or people have given to her.

“Right now I'm working on a project on my own because I like to do costume design and video,” Hicks said. “I collaborated with a musical composer, he wrote the music for a video that I am doing that features my sword balancing and costumes.”

Hicks also spends a lot of time teaching dance and volunteering. She keeps a full teaching schedule at the Center for the Arts of Bonita Springs where she teaches dance to children ages 3 through 18.

“Kids are major to me, they teach me to relax, how not to take everything so seriously,” Hicks said. “I know

now that it doesn't matter what age you are you can still grow and change, they are growing and changing, there is no difference.”

Her performance schedule is as busy as her teaching schedule and often includes charity work, such as dancing for galas and events. Information on her work can be found on her website at www.swordbalancer.com.

“I performed at one of the auctions at the Shelter for Abused women,” Hicks said. “I wanted to give a message to women.”

“You have to have a whole balance within your body, you have to have an awareness. If you go in the wrong direction, the sword is going to fall. It's a great metaphor of sense of self.”