

Dance notes

Brains and belly

A dance that arose centuries ago to help women prepare for childbirth, raks sharqi -- also known as belly dancing -- is still indispensable at Egyptian weddings, where it retains vestiges of its first association with ritual.

Soraya, a Syrian and Moroccan artist based in Margate City, has made a thorough study of raks sharqi, acquiring a degree in anthropology and sociology from Richard Stockton College of New Jersey to reinforce her dance training.

Soraya can often be seen at the casinos in Atlantic City. On Saturday, she appears as part of a concert of world dance and music, also featuring artists from Brazil, India, Spain and Mexico, at 8 p.m. at Woodrow Wilson Hall, Monmouth University, 400 Cedar Ave., West Long Branch. \$5. At the door,

