

DANCING

Continued from 1A

instruction of the Middle Eastern Dance class at Emory University's Center for Lifelong Learning, said belly dancing is a "low-impact, female-friendly" dance form, which incorporates hip work, hand gestures, and other expressive movements with items such as veils, hip scarves (usually decorated with coins or rhinestones) and *zills* (finger cymbals). She said the dance allows women of all sizes to feel more comfortable in their bodies.

"You have to embrace your voluptuousness," said Scott. "A little shimmy is a good thing. Hips are a good thing, so you can see the hip work."

While most professional belly dancers go by stage names (Scott's is Sha'ni, a Swahili word, meaning "marvelous"), belly dancing is the furthest thing from stripping, Scott said. She said that Egyptian belly dancing, her forte, is believed to have originated from temple dancing practiced in the time of the ancient pharaohs.

"Some people think it's close to stripping," said Scott. "When they say that, I ask them do they know how much a belly dancing uni-



Photo by Joel Hall
Belly dance instructor Stephanie "Sha'ni" Scott (right), demonstrates an expressive dance move lightly termed the "Lebanese headache" to her student, Tina Howard, during a practice session on Thursday.

form costs. She said a good student costume can run between \$250 and \$300, while a professional costume can run between \$600 and \$1,000. "You're not going to just tear that off and throw it in a corner somewhere," said Scott.

According to Scott, belly dancing is a folk dance which is spread widely throughout the Middle East, and each type of belly dancing incorporates the cultural norms of

that geographical region.

"You never show the bottom of your foot to an Egyptian because that is the ultimate insult," she said. "The foot is the closest to the ground, which is close to hell, so it's kind of like telling them to go there."

Roshawn Buxton, owner and director of N-Motion Dance, LLC, said prior to Scott becoming an instructor, the studio offered more traditional forms of dance, such as

ballet, tap, and jazz. Buxton said Scott's class "opens up the door to different cultures."

"It is our way of bringing all the different diversities of Clayton County here," said Buxton. "They don't have to travel all the way to Atlanta to get that."

Tina Howard, office manager at N-Motion Dance and one of Scott's students, said she enjoys the class because it makes her feel good about herself.

"It's an alluring feeling when you do the movements," said Howard. "It does give you a sense of encouragement, and that is kind of one of the things that makes you want to come back."

Scott hopes Sunday's open house will generate a buzz about belly dancing in the Southern Crescent. "We need a lot more dance on this side of town," she said. "We need some of these alternatives, because you can't just sit on your sofa and expect to live well for a long time."

Participants in the free workshop are encouraged to wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing (no jeans). For more information, contact N-Motion Dance at (770) 477-0110, or e-mail class@shaniGA.com.