

She wants to change image of belly dancing

BY RANDALL G. MIELKE

For Sun-Times Media

Roxanne Larcher is determined to change what she believes is people's misconception about belly dancing.

One of our goals is to elevate the art form of belly dancing," said Larcher, who is co-producer, artistic director and a dancer in "Confessions of a Belly Dancer: Secrets of the Hieroglyph," which is being presented on Nov. 3 at the Copley Theater in Aurora.

"The common perception is that belly dancing is presented by a Hollywood vixen or someone who performs at a 40th birthday party. With 'Confessions of a Belly Dancer' we want to elevate the art form."

Larcher, whose stage name is Raksanna, co-produces the show with choreographer and composer Momo Kadous. The show is the theatrical adaptation of the book written by Larcher. The book will be released on the same day that the show debuts in Aurora.

The performance of "Confessions of a Belly Dancer: Secrets of the Hieroglyph" features an international cast of 14 women and one man representing six countries and seven of the United States.

"I am a professional belly dancer and I teach all over the world," Larcher said. "Over the years I have met thousands of women who have shared their stories with me. One woman was diagnosed with breast cancer. She took medication and ate properly, but she insists that she was healed with the help of belly dancing. That is one of the stories that we put on stage."

Ruth McEachnie, the assistant director and also a principal dancer in the show, believes the show is important to preserve and share the collective experiences of belly dancers.

She refers to a hieroglyph, which is Greek for "sacred carving," a character of the ancient Egyptian writing system.

"The idea of the book and the stories from all over the world is that we haven't changed that much," McEachnie said.

"Women discuss things with each other because they want to be heard. Women have all come together for the dance. It is a sisterhood. Belly dancing comes from ancient times. You see it on the hieroglyph. It depicts women dancing."

"Confessions of a Belly Dancer: Secrets of the Hieroglyph" is a collection of vignettes telling the personal stories of real women by Oriental (belly) dancers. By bringing their stories to life on the stage through mu-



Roxanne Larcher goes by the stage name Raksanna in "Confessions of a Belly Dancer."

| COURTESY OF COPLEY THEATRE

'CONFESSIONS OF A BELLY DANCER: SECRETS OF THE HIEROGLYPH'

- ◆ 8 p.m. Nov. 3
- ◆ Copley Theater, 8 E. Galena Blvd., Aurora
- ◆ Tickets, \$35-\$99
- ◆ (630) 896-6666

paramountaurora.com

sic, dance and monologues, the dancers tell such tales as a smoldering rendezvous on the banks of the Mediterranean Sea, the joy and chaos of "a day in the life" of a belly dancer and a secret ancient ceremony as seen through the eyes of a hieroglyph.

"The satisfaction for me is seeing how we've all grown," she said of the cast. "Putting stories on stage and making them real has connected us and we've grown as human beings."

Larcher feels that the show will appeal to audience members on several levels.

"I think the greatest appeal will be discovering the confessions," Larcher said.

CHEER
ERSTANDING
HUMBUG!
ment
USIC
beauty
ily
JOY

CHARLES DICKENS' **A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

ADAPTED BY TOM CREAMER **35**

MAKING HOLIDAY DREAMS TRUE FOR 35 YEARS

NOVEMBER 17 - DECEMBER 1

THEATRE 31
GOODMAN Go

GROUPS OF 15 OR MORE: 312.443.3820 or GoodmanTheatre.com

BMO Harris Bank AON KPMG