

From a family devoted to belly dancing, Turkish-bred Aussie resident Seda Jurin developed an activity combining this art with aerobics. Vanessa Proctor catches a glimpse of her colourful life



MOTIVATION

Vanessa Proctor

BELLY UP

SEDA Jurin looks like a dancer, even as she sits down to lunch in her local Korean restaurant. As she tucks into a bowl of *hwe dup bab* (rice topped with raw fish, fresh vegetables and chilli sauce), her back is straight, her arm movements graceful, her long hair tied back in an elegant ponytail. "Nutrition is very important," she smiles. "I try to eat healthily." This morning she took her four-year-old daughter Serra to kindergarten for the first day of term. Serra, like her mother, has been belly dancing since she was three. Serra represents not only the fourth generation of belly dancers in this Turkish family, but also the new Australian branch of the family.

On a trip to Sydney in the late 1990s, Seda met Zeljko Jurin, a professional soccer player who was playing for Sydney Croatia. The romance quickly turned serious and it wasn't long before the couple married and made Sydney their permanent home. It was in Australia that Seda put into practice ideas she had been developing for years, about combining her love of belly dancing and fitness. Seda began SEDADANCE – BellyRobics, which is, as the name suggests, a mixture of belly dancing and aerobics.

Seda, 33, was born and raised in Turkey, in an artistic family immersed in the belly dancing culture. From an early



“
I dance for
art, I teach
for fun and
fitness
”



age she knew that she wanted to be a dancer. Her grandmother belonged to a famous belly dancing troupe and so did her aunt. However, when Seda's aunt married, she gave up dancing. She now makes belly-dancing costumes, each one a unique creation requiring many hours' work, with hand-sewn sequins and beading in an array of colours. Costumes are an important part of the dance and Seda owns a rack full of spectacular outfits, which she buys from Istanbul.

Seda is the youngest of three children – her mother was a singer. Her older brother works in retail, and her older sister is one of Turkey's top belly dancers. “We were always playing music, always dancing,” she says, “It was part of our life.” Dancing was a way to express happiness and friendship in the home where there were often spontaneous gatherings of family and friends. This is where Seda learnt her craft. The emphasis in Seda's family was on the spiritual and social side of dancing rather than dancing purely for exercise.

Seda turned professional at the age of 13. She joined *Tolgahan*, one of the biggest dance groups in Turkey, and toured the country's major cities. In the same year, she won Turkey's most prestigious belly dancing competition and was hailed as Turkey's top belly

dancer. She was also interested in other dance styles, such as salsa, rock and roll and freestyle dance, but she was always drawn back to belly dancing. Her career took off as she performed in *gazinos* (stage shows similar to Western cabaret) and she performed for the Turkish Prime Minister of the time, Kenan Evren. She further diversified by becoming a model and starring in several dance-related Turkish films directed by the well-known singer and director Ibrahim Tatlis.

The history of belly dancing goes back to ancient times in the Middle East. The movements of belly dancing used to be a purely female domain – men were not allowed to see the dancing. The sisters of pregnant women would take responsibility for the health of their siblings. As their sisters were giving birth, these women made undulating movements with their bodies to help their sisters deliver their babies. Later, in the time of the Ottoman Empire, belly dancing became a form of entertainment whereby the women of the harem would dance for the sultan and his guests. Today, belly dancing is an art form that is practised worldwide.

As Seda became well known in her native Turkey through her performances and teaching, she sought to find a different image for herself and began to create her own dance moves. Slowly,

she began to change her dance style to modern dance. “I was already belly dancing in my own way.”

While still in Turkey, Seda took a fitness instructor's course and that was when the seeds of the idea of *SEDADANCE – BellyRobics* took hold. She wanted to introduce something new to the fitness industry. Based on her experience as a belly dancer, she combined traditional belly dancing movements with folk dancing steps, and then added her own movements. One of her favourite sayings is, “I dance for art, I teach for fun and fitness.”

Seda has specifically designed her *SEDADANCE – BellyRobics* routines to be more high-energy than traditional belly dancing, with faster music and more aerobic content. In traditional Turkish belly dancing, Seda explains, dancing to the music takes a long time to learn because of the frequent rhythm changes. What she uses for her classes is a modern version of traditional Turkish music. The instruments are the same but there is an underlying pop beat, which is consistent and therefore easier to dance to.

Seda's aim is to introduce Turkish dance to non-Turkish people in a fun, exciting way. She has devised several programmes, with beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Her

“

The routines are high-energy, with faster music and more aerobic content

”



and August this year Seda will begin her SEDADANCE – BellyRobics Certificate course for members of the fitness and dance industries. She also has performances and workshops lined up around Australia. As belly dancing becomes more popular throughout the world, Seda says that she would like to do more fitness videos and take her dancing to new places, perhaps even into popular music videos. She is determined to make this belly dancing-aerobics combo an international fitness phenomenon that lasts the distance. “I want to share the joy of belly dancing with the world.”

method of teaching is easy to understand and isolates each movement. She starts with the steps, many familiar to regular gym-goers, then adds the hip movements. As she is fond of saying, “In my class you discover what your hips are for!” Then, finally, she adds the arm movements such as snake and butterfly arms to complete the dance.

Seda devised the SEDADANCE – BellyRobics programme so that people can have a workout in a friendly, enjoyable environment without dealing in too much detail with the technical side of belly dancing. “What’s really great about my programme is that you can do it at your local gym, so you don’t have to specifically seek out a belly dancing class.”

The emphasis is on fun, so that people can forget about their daily lives during the class and lose themselves in the dance. Seda often uses hula hoops as part of the warm-up. This encourages students to move their hips in the correct way for belly dancing. She also encourages students to wear colourful scarves tied around their waists. Metal discs are sewn onto these scarves and make a jingling sound as the dancers move their hips. They work particularly well during hip shimmies and add to the atmosphere of the class.

SEDADANCE – BellyRobics exercises different muscle groups, in particular strengthening the back and abdominal muscles. Stretching and strengthening

floor exercises are also part of Seda’s classes. Several students have told her that they began the class with a bad back and are now feeling much better. “Dancing makes you feel good,” Seda smiles as she sips her tea.

She is very happy to be living in Australia and feels that this is the best time she’s ever had. “I have a good balance between my dancing life and my family,” she says. After leaving Turkey, she had to build up her career again in Australia and found this to be an important learning experience. She feels fulfilled in that she is not only doing what she loves (dancing), but also finds great pleasure in teaching others her craft. She still maintains close ties to Turkey and goes back to see family and friends, but she emphasises that Australia is her home.

Recently Harry Michaels, producer of *Aerobics Oz Style*, approached Seda about making a belly dancing DVD. She worked with two professional belly dancers as well as members of the *Aerobics Oz Style* team. “We had a lot of fun making that DVD on the beach,” she grins. “Through it I want to reach out to people so that they can enjoy dancing at home.” The DVD is being sold internationally.

What next for SEDADANCE – BellyRobics? Seda is preparing to train fitness instructors so that her fitness dance routines can be enjoyed by more people in more places. “I’m only one person,” she laughs. In July



To find out more about SEDADANCE – BellyRobics, visit Seda’s website, www.sedadance.com.au
 DVD *Aerobics Oz Style 'Fitness Belly Dancing: For Beginners'* was released in February 2005 and produced by www.zero1zero.com.au
 Contact info@aerobicozstyle.com.au or visit <http://www.aerobicozstyle.com.au>

Epsilon fashion parade King Street Wharf



Julia Mitchellhill and George Vardis.

hit Three catwalk shows in succession accompanied by baklava martinis and hearty traditional mezze from the Georges' kitchen reminded us why we're fond of Greece. Even better, the parades showcasing 10 hot Greek designers - including Modus Vivendi, Makis Tselios, Vassilios Kostetosos



Yemma Sholo and Seda Jurin.



Stuart Bedford-Brown, Natalie Tomasic and Branko Pesic.



Michelle Levin.

and Aslanis Xzeno - featured real live Adonises. The strapping blonde one in Trojan-style warrior boots made Brad Pitt look like the school nerd.

miss The latest celebrity no-show - or "ghost guest" as we've taken to calling them - disappointed those who'd come to see famous Greek Eurovision Song Contest star Helena Paparizou. And even those gorgeous male models couldn't convince us that orange terry towelling undies are a good look. **AC**



On the catwalk.



Nick Savos and Maryanne Satouris.

Jamie Wright and Danielle Walker.

Pictures: JANIE BARRETT

Sydney Theatre Company 2006 season launch Walsh Bay

hit When STC artistic director Robyn Nevin joined the company in 1999, her vision was to form a "team" of full-time employees. This has come true with the creation of the Actors Company, an ensemble of 10 actors with permanent exclusive STC contracts for the 2006-2007 season. Another highlight in the schedule will be the directing debuts of Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton.

miss It was a long, self-satisfied night of drinks and canapes - but spare a thought for the other theatres, who will miss out on the talents of Deborah Mailman, Pamela Rabe, Dan Spielman, John Gaden and others for the next two years. **KC**



Dan Spielman and Brendan Cowell.



Rachel and Vincent Healy and Alan John.



Chris Mead and Alyssa McClelland.



Deborah Mailman and Theresa Huska.



Cat Terracini.

Pictures: JANIE BARRETT

Star City celebrity charity poker match Pyrmont



Yemma Sholo and Seda Jurin.

hit Celebrities wore sunnies and deadpan faces for a poker match marking the 10th birthday of Star City and opening of the Bluff Bar. In a showdown between Geoff Huegill, Tracey Spicer and Dwight Yorke, the Sydney FC striker called the newsreader's expert bluff and won \$14,000 for the Royal Blind Society of Australia. (Spicer's winnings went to World Vision and Huegill's to CanTeen.)

miss Although Spicer and Erika Heynatz were more than a match for their male opponents, the crowd of 300 eager poker players was mostly male. While that's a nice ratio for single chicks, we need to show we can beat the boys at this traditionally blokey game. **AC**



Wayne Pearce and Erika Heynatz.



Nikki Giteau and Geoff Huegill.



Monique Koryzma and Luke Noonan.



Dwight Yorke.



Tracey Spicer.



Robert Ian Bonnick and Ashley Johnson jr.

Pictures: SIMON ALEKNA

Belly dancer from the Bosphorus

"DANCING was for me the most natural thing. As far back as I can remember, there was always music and dancing going on in my home. My grandmother and her two sisters were all dancers, my mother was a singer."

Seda Jurin is referring to her home in Istanbul. She grew up on the banks of the Bosphorus. Dancing is in her blood. Her professional career started 18 years ago at Studio 54, one of Istanbul's largest discos. Then 13, Seda won a break dancing competition and subsequently landed a job as a performer in the club. There she was spotted by Turkish music mogul Ibrahim Tetlisis. He cast her as the lead in his movie 'Dertli Dertli.'

Over the next nine years, Seda became a familiar face in Turkish movies, television series, and cabaret shows. She also had a successful spell as a model.

Today, Seda Jurin, 31, lives in Pyrmont with her husband, and three year-old daughter. The two met in 1993 while Seda was holidaying in Sydney. She came to settle here with him two years later.

Every Thursday night for the past four years, Seda has been giving belly dancing classes at the Pyrmont Community Centre. She also started her own dance group, Journey of Dancers, with whom she performs at social

events and clubs, and she has been doing TV advertisements, most recently for American channel WGN.

She says teaching at the community centre was a bit of a stretch at first. "I didn't think I had teaching skills but I enjoy it now." So do her students. All of them appear to have different reasons for attending.

Deborah, who has been going there for the past six months, says she was looking for something different. "It was as much a spiritual experience as a good workout," she says. Simone, a professional dancer, says she started the classes with Seda hoping to add more moves to her dance repertoire.

Seda stands out among belly dancers who are, curiously, plentiful in Australia. She says dancing is part of her culture and she is the only professional belly dancer of Turkish origin. "Turkish moves are quicker, there is more hip movement."

She agrees that belly dancing is regarded as somewhat cheap in Australia. "It is looked on more as a sexual gimmick than an art." However, watching Seda dance and teach at the Pyrmont Community Centre, you become aware that belly dancing has considerable cultural significance.



CHEYENNE Seda Jurin presents belly dancing as an art.

tuition promotion nine to five

TOP 4 COURSES

9T05 has the pick of the city's best courses, no matter where your interests lie.



Saucy salsa

Always been intrigued by the seductive art of salsa? Ever wanted to shake your stuff on the dance floor with some saucy moves? One of these fantastic two-month courses could be just what you need to unleash the Latino within. With courses catering for absolute beginners through to intermediate level dancers, there are classes to suit people of all ages and abilities. You'll be steaming up Sydney's salsa clubs in no time!

What: Salsa classes, all levels
Where: City Dance Centre, 161 Castlereagh Street, Sydney
When: Every Thursday for eight weeks, starting 2 June
Cost: \$125 (\$110 for advanced bookings)
How: Call 8300 8090 or visit www.salsavibes.com.au



Make-up artisty

Ever wanted a career as a make-up artist? Study for a certificate in Fashion, Glamour and Bridal Make-up Artistry at Napoleon Perdis Make-up Academy in glamorous Paddington. Transform runway to reality and bring out the celebrity in you. You can learn Napoleon's tricks of the trade and study for Corrective, Glamour, Fashion/Catwalk, Photographic, Asian, Bridal and Retail. If you aspire to a more creative and glamorous line of work, then we want you!

What: Napoleon Perdis Make-up Academy certificates
Where: 74 Oxford St, Paddington
When: Eight weeks, various timetables
Cost: \$950
How: Call 1300 791 699 www.napoleonperdis.com



Event management

Established for almost 20 years, APM Training Institute is Australia's leading training provider in Marketing, Public Relations and Events Management. APM's July intake includes their nationally recognised Diploma of Business (Marketing) major in Event Management. By studying two nights per week and the occasional weekend, you can graduate in just 12 months. Make a move towards an exciting new career in event management without quitting your job and sacrificing your current financial position!

What: APM Training Institute
Where: St Leonards
When: Mid July
Cost: POA
How: www.apm.edu.au



Move that belly

Forget ab-crunching your way to a flat stomach, do it the fun way with BellyRobics at Sedadance! This exciting new workout can be done in your lunch hour or at evening classes at the City Dance Centre, located in Castlereagh Street. Classes are taught by Turkish belly dancer Seda Jurin, who recently instructed a belly dance fitness DVD with Aerobics Oz Style. Spaces are limited, though, so you need to book in advance.

What: Sedadance
Where: City Dance Centre, 161 Castlereagh Street, Sydney
When: Monday lunch classes 1pm-2pm, Wednesday evening classes 5.30pm-6.30pm
Cost: Call 0414 597976 for info
How: www.sedadance.com.au/ or www.aerobicsozstyle.com.au

S30

unwind

Compiled by Alexandra Boyce. Send event information to planner@sunherald.com.au.



> PLAN YOUR WEEK

17
today

Head up the freeway to see a live gig from the Finn Brothers (below). Civic Theatre, Newcastle. 7.45pm. \$84.90. Bookings www.ticketek.com.au or phone 132 849.



Settle in for a traditional Sunday roast and left-field electronic music at Frigid. Acts include Sub Bass Snarl, Sir Robbo and Spoonbill. @Newtown, 52 Enmore Road, Newtown. From 6pm. Free (roast \$10). Phone 9557 5044.

Pack a picnic lunch and follow the Sydney Sculpture Walk in the Botanic Gardens. Pick up a map from the Gardens Shop and admire the gleaming artwork. Many sculptures have recently had "facials" to remove layers of grime and bat poo. Mrs Macquaries Road, Sydney. 7am-5pm. Phone 9231 8125.

Take in colourful Indian court scenes at the *Rajput: Sons Of Kings* exhibition, then watch a free screening of *Devdas* (above), a Bollywood blockbuster. Art Gallery of NSW, Art Gallery Road, The Domain. Gallery open 10am-5pm, film starts 1pm. Exhibition \$6/\$4. Phone 9225 1700.

18
mon

Find out what Jennifer Lopez, David Hasselhoff and Hilary Swank do with their unwanted denim. The celebrity cast-offs have been decorated by local artists for the *Stars In Their Jeans* exhibition. The ArtHouse Hotel, 275 Pitt Street, Sydney. 11am-10pm. Free. See www.jeans4genes.com.au.



Watch some of Australia's most talented jazz musicians, including Matt McMahon and Julien Wilson, perform in a concert to determine the winner of the Freedman Jazz Fellowship. The Studio, Sydney Opera House. 7.30pm. \$28/\$23. Bookings 9250 7777 or www.sydneyoperahouse.com.



19
tue

Get a dose of French new wave cinema at the Film Factory's screening of Jean-Luc Godard's 1960 classic, *Breathless*. 536 Crown Street, Surry Hills. 7.30pm. Membership \$15, valid for three months. Phone 0400 085 355.

Hear electronica popster Moby (right) ahead of his appearance at the sold-out Splendour in the Grass festival. Enmore Theatre, 130 Enmore Road, Newtown. 7.30pm. \$72.90. Bookings 9550 3666 or www.enmoretheatre.com.au.

20
wed

Turn up the heat at the launch of Cubanismo Live (right). The 16-piece Mucho Mambo orchestra with guests from Son Veneno, Armandito y su Mecanica and DJs from Cubanismo Radio 89.7FM perform. The Basement, 29 Reiby Place, Circular Quay. 9pm. \$20. Bookings 9251 2797 or www.thebasement.com.au.



Chill out after work and search for your secret admirer during Numbers Up, a dating game at city bar Verandah, 60 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Free. From 5.30pm. Phone 9238 0888.

21
thu

Limber up, wiggle your hips and try a lunchtime workout with a difference at Sedadance BellyRobics, a combination of belly dancing and aerobics. City Dance Centre, 161 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. 1pm-2pm. \$18. Phone 9264 0426 or see www.sedadance.com.au.



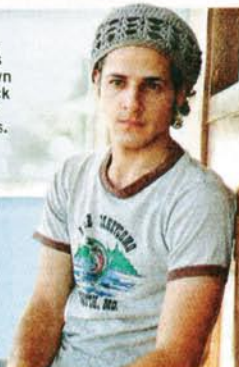
Giggle at Jimeoin's (left) quirky, nonsensical, observational style of comedy. Sydney Comedy Store, Bent Street, Fox Studios, Moore Park. 8.30pm. \$22. Bookings 9357 1419 or see www.comedystore.com.au.

22
fri

See human cartoon characters David Collins (above) and Shane Dundas (right), better known as the Umbilical Brothers, create mayhem with their extreme physical comedy in their latest show, *The Rehearsal*. Glen Street Theatre, Glen Street, Belrose. 8pm. \$39/\$29. Bookings 9975 1455.



Catch hip-hop acts including Soma Rasa and Urthboy, plus funky beats from Boogie Down regulars Blaze, Regal and Nick Toth. Candy's Apartment, 22 Bayswater Road, Kings Cross. From 8.30pm. \$10. Phone 9380 5600.



23
sat

Join writers including James Valentine (left) and Kate Forsyth, publishers, editors and reviewers at the NSW Writers' Centre's Writing for Children and Young Adults Day. Rozelle Hospital, Balmmain Road, Rozelle. 10am-5pm. Non-members \$25, half-day tickets \$15. See www.nswwriterscentre.org.au. Bookings 9555 9757.



Listen to the mellow tunes of singer-songwriter Lior (right). 8pm. \$20. Caringbah Bizzo's, 22-24 Mackay Street, Caringbah. Bookings 9209 4614 or www.moshtix.com.au.

C
M
K