

Storydancer To Perform at Benefit

By [Kathaleen Roberts / Journal Staff Writer](#) on Fri, Nov 30, 2012

Sometimes, the simplest of movements can open a gateway to the soul.

International "storydancer," wellness teacher and dance instructor Zuleikha performs with cellist Michael Fitzpatrick and percussionist Issa Malluf at 7:30 p.m. today at the Railyard Performance Center. The production is a benefit for Esperanza Shelter for Battered Families and Solace Crisis Treatment Center (the former Rape Crisis Center).

An international performer and teacher in the art of movement for wellness, Zuleikha is known for her one-woman concerts, combining stories with dance, as well as collaborations with world musicians and poets. Those pairings have included the renowned Rumi concerts with translator Coleman Barks. Today's performance will also raise money for her nonprofit Storydancer Project to promote self-care and resiliency.

"I literally tell stories with my voice and movement," she said. "And my feet have bells on them."

Her dances often end in a whirling blur of movement.

The "storydancer" has contracted with both Esperanza and Solace to teach her techniques to counselors in hopes that they can pass them on to their clients. The workshops are free.

"She has extensive experience in working with trauma, and that's pretty much what we do here," Solace executive director Maria Jose Rodriguez Cadiz said. "She helps you to understand that in a mere minute you can get grounded. It's letting go of whatever you've been exposed to. She does a combination of movements and breathing that clears your mind."

Zuleikha helped Solace's six counselors. The therapists work with traumatized clients who often break down during sessions. The techniques turned their pain into resiliency, Rodriguez Cadiz said.

The nearly 40-year-old center sees about 2,500 clients annually, 66 percent of them children and youths.

"This is helping the clients," Rodriguez Cadiz explained. "This is helping our own staff. She's such a philanthropist."

Zuleikha also worked with 15 staff members at the Esperanza Shelter. The work is stressful, and her approach helped the employees take a minute for themselves by learning eight core wellness exercises.

"They're stretches, but they're more than stretches," Jeannette Baca, the shelter's residency services coordinator, said.

"It's been really positive," Baca continued. "It's just a little piece of renewal — to just take time for ourselves. Part of this is about remembering to breathe. How often do we remember to breathe?"

Zuleikha grew up in San Francisco, where she trained in classical Indian dance. She has also studied in India, Bali and Japan. She developed a unifying system of her own to weave together the various world traditions. She also plays the piano and harmonium and has released three CDs.

Zuleikha first came to Santa Fe to perform, then to teach. She moved here at the end of the '80s and continues teaching across the globe.

"When you drop into your body finally, you feel lighter," she said. "It might not fix the situation, but you'll be inspired to continue."

"We move through the joints," she explained. "When you open up all the joints, all the rivers can move. In Chinese medicine, they call it meridians."

"When you work with women who are shut down and traumatized, they start to smile and feel better. There's a feeling of safety."

If you go

WHAT: "Harmonia/3 — Michael Fitzpatrick, Zuleikha and Issa Malluf, Music, Dance & Story: A Trio of World Artists Unite for a Great Santa Fe Cause." The performance will benefit Esperanza Shelter for Battered Families, Solace Crisis Treatment Center and The Storydancer Project.

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. today

WHERE: Railyard Performance Center, 1611B Paseo de Peralta

COST: \$20/advance; \$25/door; children 12 and under \$10

CONTACT: 1-800-838-3006 or harmonia3.brownpapertickets.com

-- Email the reporter at kroberts@abqjournal.com. Call the reporter at 505-992-6266

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