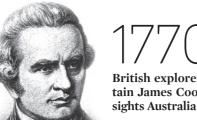
TODAY IN HISTORY



British explorer Cap-American Revolution begins in Lexington, Massachusetts. The "Shot tain James Cook first Heard Round the World" took place in Concord later that day

Joan of Arc receives beatification by the Roman **Catholic Church**

Fidel Castro resigns from the Communist Party of Cuba's central committee after 45 years of holding the title

Arab News | Jeddah

allet, one of the world's most demanding art forms, is enjoying soaring popularity in Saudi Arabia as a new generation discovers its physical, mental and social benefits, and a Jeddah-based studio is at the forefront of the dance's development in the Kingdom.

Sera McKnass, founder of iBallerina, said that the studio is shaping future ballerinas to be effective members of society.

"The goal is not only to pass on the art of ballet but also to raise up participants into healthy, classy and confident, caring individuals," the 30-year-old A kid practices ballet in a studio in in Jeddah Turkish-Lebanese master teacher said.

Ballet's popularity is growing among different age groups.

"Mothers sign up their daughters to be trained as ballerinas, but now young adults have dreams of learning how to pirouette, chasse and jete," McKnass told Arab News. "They come to iBallerina to start the journey and transstronger and more graceful women."

Widad Al-Kibsi, a Saudi ballet instructor at the studio, said that people in Jeddah were now familiar with ballet. "It's now in most of the main gyms, and private or international schools in the city.'

The 20-year-old advises aspiring ballerinas to start at a young age. "It's important to start early because improved strength and flexibility are easily acquired at a younger age."

Mothers sign up their daughters to be trained as ballerinas, but now young adults have dreams of learning how to pirouette, chasse and jete. They come to iBallerina to start the journey and transform their souls and bodies, becoming stronger and more graceful women SERA MCKNASS



she said. "It improves muscle tone and strengthens and increases flexibility." definition, elongates arms, and aligns the posture properly."

Al-Kibsi said that while many Saudis studio since February. saw ballet as an activity for children,

Ballet offers myriad physical benefits, with dedication and discipline, ballet People think you can't do ballet after a but also psychologically. It has taught Dana Garii, a 23-year-old Saudi writ-

With the rising popularity of Ballet in Saudi Arabia, the art is now at-

tracting more than young girls. Even

though ballerinas have to start at a

young age in order to improve their

flexibility and strength. Young adults

still aspires to twirl as well, seeing

that they were denied the opportuni-

ty as kids

er, has been practicing ballet at the

"not a lot of them are aware that adults young, but I couldn't find the opportucan also perform. They assume that nity. When I found they have classes form their souls and bodies, becoming you should be thin or flexible from here, I just went for it. People asked me, how to take on difficult situations be- lerina') and it inspired me. I've always



Farahnaz Forotan, 26, an Afghan journalist poses for a picture in Kabul

she told Arab News.

"Ballet is important to me. It's more "I've been wanting to do it since I was taught me how to be modest, and that ballet when she was 4 years old. nothing hard ever comes easy.

certain age, but you can start any time," me how to overcome my fears," Garii said.

A 13-year-old student at the studio, than just the physical aspects – it has Oroub Al-Shareef, said that she began

"There was a TV show for kids about "It has also taught me patience and the mouse that did ballet ('Angelina Balthe get-go. They don't understand that 'aren't you too old?' But that's a myth. cause it's not only difficult physically wanted to be a ballerina," she said.

> "Ballet is very important to me. Dance is one of the ways I express myself and I feel at one with myself when I'm practicing.

> "It's a very hard thing to do, but it brings me so much joy."

> Saudi graphic designer Sara Al-Sabaan, 22, has also been practicing ballet since she was a young child.

> "I started dancing in a ballet school in Guadalajara, in Mexico. Then I continued at the Kinetico dance school in Riyadh," she said.

> Al-Sabaan's mother inspired her to take up the art form. "I'm following in her footsteps. She was a ballet dancer herself."

> The young dancer has watched ballet's growth in popularity. "Dance classes were available when I was a child, but they have been most popular in the past decade."

> Practicing ballet is a form of self-expression, she said.

> "I have danced modern, contemporary and classical ballet, and it affects me immensely. Not only is it a great physical activity, it's also an outlet for self-expression through movement."



Kids take part in a ballet practice session

aring birds in warring Afghanistan

ter my death."

SPORT

ith uncleared mines, pollution, ducks hawks and sparrows. controlled building and general ounds at Kol-e-Hashmat Khan of the old city. the city's southwest.

tract passing flocks.

"I like this crane because it before testing their skills at dawn. on't be silent when the other bird.'

e caught or shot and Jan Agha, pleasure.' ho started hunting when he was

around 12 or 13, reckons he has The war has left much of the en- taken more than 1,000 cranes and ronment near Kabul devastated an uncountable number of quails,

The birds are usually taken to glect. Only in the last few years shops near the town of Bagram s there been an effort to restore or to Kabul itself, where there is a eas like the former royal hunting popular bird market in the centre

For Jan Agha, hunting is a re-Spring is the season of cranes, lief, taking him out of the daily hich the hunters try to catch round and into the harshly beauive in snares, using a specially tiful countryside, where groups ained tethered bird whose cries of hunters set out in the night, picnicking at night in the desert

"The pleasure of hunting is to g groups of cranes come, and it be in open space. I like the mounways forces them to come down. tain, desert, shotgun and being ike it because he is really a hunt- awake during the night to hunt," he said. "The pleasure of hunting

With environmental controls is to be a success in it. A hunter's rtually non-existent, there is hope is hunting. Being a success in tle check on how many birds every job in the world has a special



Jan Agha, 49, an Afghan hunter, inspects a crane in a field in Bagram, Parwan province, Afghanistan

With environmental controls virtually nonexistent, there is little check on how many birds are caught or shot and Jan Agha, who started hunting when he was around 12 or 13, reckons he has taken more than 1,000 cranes and an uncountable number of quails, ducks hawks and sparrows

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