



## *Bennington Beledi Tribal Bellydance*

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## **New Student Packet**

Welcome to Bennington Beledi Tribal Bellydance (BBTB)!

BBTB offers instruction in American Tribal Style Bellydance® (ATS®) for students who wish to participate just for fun and exercise as well as for those who have an interest in performing. Our classes are open for people aged 16 and above. Students aged 13-16 are welcome with a responsible adult student. No students younger than 18 are eligible to perform.

Bennington Beledi is home to the student troupe Sisters of the Shawl as well as the professional troupe Sahidi Sisters. It is run and managed by a core council.

American Tribal Style Bellydance (ATS) is a modern form of bellydance with ancient roots. Forerunner troupes such as FatChanceBellyDance of San Francisco and Gypsy Caravan of Oregon have gained world-wide acclaim with their performances, workshops and classes.

ATS's evocative style is known for its grace, power and celebration of the female spirit. It is danced primarily as group improvisation to a wide variety of music ranging from ethnic to techno.

Bennington Beledi welcomes people of all types and dance ability to participate. Enclosed you will find information for new students about our vision, class structure, and expectations.

Salamat!

Sisters at Bennington Beledi Tribal Bellydance

# *Bennington Beledi Tribal Bellydance Vision Statement*

**B**ennington Beledi Tribal Bellydance is an organization comprised of troupe and student dancers, governed by a Tribal Council, that strives to:

- Be an umbrella organization for bellydancers of all styles
- Support, respect and appreciate the individual strengths of each dancer in the organization while fostering a collaborative atmosphere and achieving the goals of the group
- Offer on-going classes in American Tribal Style® (ATS®) Bellydance and related fusion techniques as well as customized workshops
- Be ambassadors for ATS® in the local dance community and the region
- Host student and professional performing troupes
- Perform locally on a regular basis and seek opportunities to perform regionally
- Seek out relationships with other area dancers, nurture those relationships and provide local performance opportunities for those dancers
- Experiment with music, costuming and dance moves and techniques to enhance our repertoire and incorporate the newest trends in bellydance
- Develop promotional materials that reflect the collaborative spirit of BBTB, Sisters of the Shawl and Sahidi Sisters
- Work toward having a studio of our own
- Accomplish all of the above in a manner that embraces consensus decision-making, is fiscally conservative, and supports its members in being fully engaged with their families and other interests.

## **General Information**

**All classes take place at the Bennington Senior Center at 124 Pleasant Street  
If class is canceled you will be notified as far in advance as possible.  
We do not offer make-up classes.**

## **Classes Offered:**

### **Level 1: Dance Fundamentals**

Thursdays from 5:15-6:10 pm

Dues for this class only are \$30 per calendar month, to be paid on the first Thursday of each month, or \$8 per class for drop-ins.

Level 1 includes both new and ongoing students. It is taught in a 6-week rotation. Each class will focus on basic slow and fast moves, zilling, leading and following and dancing in formations.



### **Level 2: Tribal Combinations**

Thursdays 6:15-6:45 pm

Dues are \$40/calendar month or \$13 drop-in per class for both Level 1 & 2.

This class is appropriate for Level 1 dancers who wish to improve their ability to dance improvisationally. Students may move up to Tribal Combinations after completing as many repetitions of Dance Fundamentals as they need to feel confident with Level 1 technique. It is expected that students advancing to Level 2 will continue to take Level 1 classes.

In a 12-week rotation, each class will build on the basic moves learned in Level 1. More advanced fast and slow moves will be added and students will focus on how to lead, follow and use the steps in formations. Strong technique in Level 1 moves is recommended for this class. Ask your instructor if you are not sure if you are ready to move up.



## Student Troupe Rehearsal

Thursdays 6:45 - 7:15 pm

This class is reserved for those students who perform with the student troupe Sisters of the Shawl. Anyone interested in pursuing this level must have good technique in all of the Level 1 and 2 moves, be able to zill the correct sustained pattern in chorus and while dancing in formations and be able to lead with strong, clear cues and transitions when dancing in formations.

Since this class is focused on more advanced technique, it is expected that you will regularly take Level 1 & 2 classes as well. One can never have enough of basic technique practice!!! Since it is expected that Student Troupe members will be paying monthly dues for two classes, there are no additional dues for this class.

Classes will be taught in troupe format. You will be required to wear zills throughout class and should practice both new movements and zills at home. This requires a certain amount of self-sufficiency. A senior Sister is always available to answer questions and/or walk you through movements that are giving you a hard time. However, a lot of responsibility falls on the individual to learn (and PRACTICE) what they need to know in order to improve as a troupe member.

Students are encouraged to approach us when they are interested performing with Sisters of the Shawl. We may also recommend that a student consider advancing. Either way, the core council will review you and make a decision based on your proficiency with the basic moves, cuing, and zilling.

***\*\*\*It is important to understand that students will progress at different rates and will be taught (and will advance) according to their individual abilities.***

## Resources

- Student zills available for Level 1 and 2 students for in-class use
- A lending library for our students that includes:
  - instructional and performance DVDs
  - books
  - costume patterns
  - music

## Class Costuming

For students in Level 1 and 2, no official costuming is required. However, we highly recommend an outfit that is easy to move in and that leaves the belly visible. No jeans please! We suggest the following: an ankle length skirt, some sort of leggings or pantaloons underneath, a crop top or choli (the tops you see senior dancers wearing) and something for the hips (shawl, coin sash, etc.).

Students in Sisters of the Shawl must own a pair of full-size zills. Performance costuming includes cholis, pantaloons, performance skirts (10 yard, gauze, spinning, and/or brocade), coin bra, tassel belts, hip shawls, turban base wrap, ethnic jewelry, veil, fake flowers, bindis, and make-up. These should all generally be of nicer quality than basic class costuming.

Performance costuming should only be considered once you have been invited to perform. Keep in mind that Sisters has a costume code and that tribal costuming is a serious investment. ***Please DO NOT buy expensive costuming BEFORE you've talked to us!!!***

There are numerous resources for making and acquiring costuming. Please don't hesitate to ask us for help. Two good sources for tribal bellydance class costuming are FatChanceBellyDance ([www.fdbd.com](http://www.fdbd.com)) and Flying Skirts ([www.flyingskirts.com](http://www.flyingskirts.com)). A good source for zills is Saroyan ([saroyancybals.com](http://saroyancybals.com)).

Of course regular skirts and crop tops can be found in local thrift stores!!

**If you have any questions, please ask a Sahidi Sister:**

**Julz Irion  
Kathleen McBrien  
Bethany Perron**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the difference between a Level 2 student and a Sister of the Shawl (SOS) student troupe member?**

The only difference is how interested in performing you are. Students do not have to be working toward performing to learn Level 2 technique and may continue as Level 2 students as long as they choose.

If you are interested in performing only in our student haflas but not as a member of the student troupe, that is also an option.

If you are interested in joining Sisters of the Shawl, please let one of the Sahidi Sisters know. The Council will discuss your interest and give you an answer, usually after our next Council meeting (typically, the first Monday of each month).

### **What does it take to be part of Sisters of the Shawl student troupe?**

Commitment, commitment, commitment. You will need to be able to commit to rehearsal and performance times. Attendance at a minimum of three rehearsals prior to performances is mandatory. SOS troupe members should be mature, responsible, self-disciplined, and committed to practice at home as well as in class. They are expected to assume additional responsibilities for events, including, but not limited to, promotions, set-up, clean-up, etc.

### **Why is basic technique so important?**

Because ATS® is performed as synchronized improvisation, dancers must rely on each other to achieve a group best. Therefore, it is imperative that troupe members are adept in moves, cues, transitions, and zilling. As a chain is only as good as its weakest link, so is a troupe only as good as its least proficient dancer.

### **How would I become a Sahidi Sister?**

Level 3 is home to the professional troupe, Sahidi Sisters. Advancement into the Sahidi Sisters troupe is by invitation only. We invite people to Level 3 based on their dance ability, commitment level, interest in Bennington Beledi, and what they can offer the group as a whole. Sahidi Sisters strive to dance at the higher level expected of a professional troupe, and have additional duties and responsibilities that maintain the organization. The requirements for discipline, ability to receive critique, amount of time required, and additional responsibilities expected at this level are very high, and even a very skilled dancer may not meet these criteria. But we encourage everyone to strive to be their best!