



# BELEDI BEAT



A publication of Jawaahir Dance Company and The Cassandra School

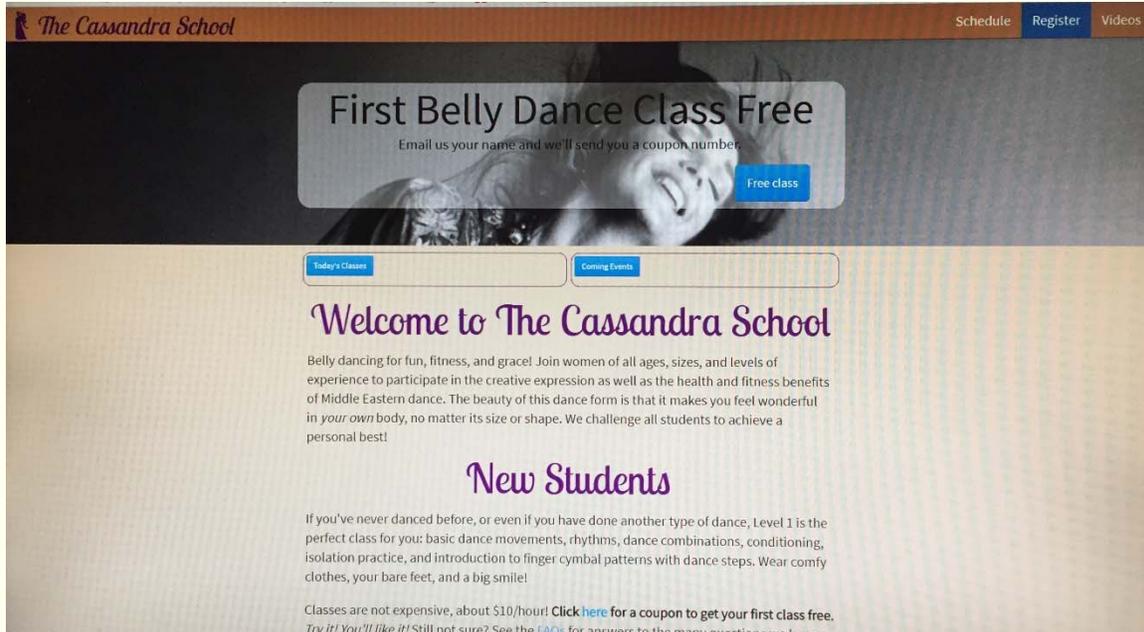
2017: Volume 25, Number 2 Spring

## Note from Cassandra



Much good news! Jawaahir had a wonderfully successful performance in the East lake Library, and we thank the Hennepin County Library system for the invitation. Be sure to check out their performance series – it's all community performers. The first weekend in May, we are honored to be able to perform in Yasmina Ramsy's unique Blossom Festival in Toronto, Ontario, premiering a new, contemporary work set to Lebanese composer/musician Charbel Rouhana's "Memory", choreographed by yours truly and performed by Heidi, Kate, Laura, Megan, and Paula. I am looking forward to seeing all the exciting new works in Toronto. Our upcoming May 11th Gala fundraiser will be packed with fabulous items from new donors – get your tickets! AND we made the Fringe Festival; look for our dates TBA.

# The Cassandra School Launches New Website



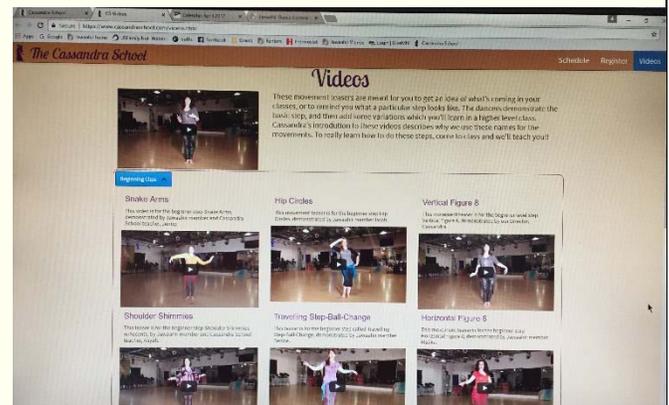
The Cassandra School has now created a website dedicated to belly dance class listings, online registration, and video demonstrations of what students can expect to learn. You can find all of this information at [www.cassandraschool.com](http://www.cassandraschool.com), and it's mobile-friendly. In the past, students would have to find The Cassandra School and a list of classes on the [www.jawaahir.org](http://www.jawaahir.org) site, which will continue to host information about Jawaahir Dance Company events and performances. Each site will have links to the other and the event calendar.

According to Eileen Goren and Terry Joyce who designed the new site, a big motivation for the change was for the school listings and events to be more accessible, especially for people using smartphones. One feature of The Cassandra School homepage is that interested people can get a coupon for one free class to try belly dance risk-free. "We wanted to make the website all about the school," Goren said. One important aspect of the new website is that there is a lot more information for people interested in beginning belly dance.

That's why there is an especially well-developed video library of many of the signature moves students will encounter in classes. It's a big part of demystifying belly dance for students. The videos are organized by beginner to advanced, so students can see what sorts of things they'll learn as they progress. "Most people start because it sounds like fun and it's good exercise," Goren said. "This website gives them more information and tools."

Sarah Jones-Larson was the videographer who recorded the videos, and Jawaahir Dance Company members and Cassandra School teachers did the demonstrations. Each video is about one-minute, making it very quick and easy to see a whole vocabulary of movements. Viewers can also see women of all shapes and ages doing the moves, showing how flexible belly dance is as a form of exercise and expression.

“Cassandra has a following all over the world. This way people from far away can also see what they could learn in her workshops and Weeklong Intensive,” Larson said. “These videos are a service to the dance community.” There’s no other belly dance website quite like it; one that offers a warm invitation, and lists so many classes, descriptions, and videos. “We want to show the joy and ability behind it. It’s like learning your ABCs,” she said. These videos are also designed to be shared on social media—so have at it!



*Cassandra would like to thank everyone who donated their time and expertise to launch this website and create the video library: Sarah Jones-Larson, Eileen Goren, Terry Joyce. She would also like to thank the following dancers for their video demonstrations: Malika Benachour, Tatiana Butkova, Laura Crocker, Megan Cunningham, Denise Domack, Lauren Olson Fraga, Genevieve Johnsen, Theresa Kane, Paula Miller, Iscah Paquin, Jenny Piper, Aliyah Sahar, Angela Skrade, Kate Southwick, and Renee Szudy.*

## Bellydance Blossom Festival



Bellydance Blossom Festival is one of the world’s most innovative belly dance festivals now in its second year in Toronto, Canada. It is the brainchild of Yasmina Ramzy, virtuoso performer, and founder of many artistic endeavors, including the Arabesque Dance Company and Orchestra, Arabesque Academy, and the International Bellydance Conference of Canada.

Bellydance Blossom Festival is not just the usual series of workshops, but an experience and a collaborative and participatory event. Everyone who attends is actively involved in the creation of explorative works, partnerships, and collaborations. It includes three days of workshops, panel discussions, theater shows, and Blossom Talks, designed to get people involved in the creative process while they are there.

Everyone is encouraged to be there as a dance artist, choreographer, and speaker. One of the more unique aspects is that participants work together across borders and belly dance genres and styles.

Ramzy was inspired to launch this dynamic approach, to go beyond workshoping, because she wanted to focus on, and promote, collaboration and artistry in belly dance. “Belly dance is an art form and a creative process. My main focus is to bring people together to collaborate with different groups and soloists,” she said. Bellydance Blossom Festival grew out of her growing concern that too much of an emphasis on commercialism and dance competitions in belly dance was depriving the art form of its significance and power. “I decided to create a different kind of dance festival,” she said.

In addition to being a highly engaging artistic event, this year the Blossom Talks are focused on addressing some of the dance form's most thought-provoking topics, including aging as a dancer, culture and appropriation, and engaging with a variety of communities. From Ramzy's perspective the Bellydance Blossom Festival offers a unique opportunity to "do something creative and meaningful." She advises that it's hard to say exactly what to expect, but that "it's intimate, everyone gets involved, and everyone is invested in the collaborative work."



This year, Cassandra will be a panelist for two sessions, and five members of Jawaahir Dance Company (Heidi, Kate, Laura, Megan, and Paula) will also be participants. Stay tuned for what's next after these exciting artists come back with new ideas and inspirations.

Join the Revelation  
Bellydance Blossom Festival  
May 5-7, 2017  
Harbourfront Centre  
Toronto, Canada  
<http://bellydanceblossom.com/>

## Upcoming Events

A promotional poster for an event. The background is dark with many small, glowing yellow and white stars. On the right side, there is a photograph of a woman in a colorful, patterned belly dance costume with her arms raised. The text is in a gold, serif font.

**Caravan Under the Stars**  
Jawaahir Dance Company  
Annual Gala & Fundraiser  
Thursday May 11, 2017 6:00PM  
MC Host Cathy Wurzer  
*A night sparkling with treasures and jewels*  
Jawaahir Studio  
3010 Minnehaha Avenue, Minneapolis  
Tickets: \$30 in advance, \$35 at the door  
*Silent and Live Auctions*  
Short performance by Cassandra and Jawaahir Dance Company  
Henna by Ancient Traditions Mehndi  
Delicious appetizers  
Reserve your tickets: [www.jawaahir.org](http://www.jawaahir.org)  
612-872-6050

[Jawaahir's Caravan Under the Stars](#), Annual Gala and Fundraiser, is coming up fast, on Thursday, May 11, from 6:00–10:00pm! Cassandra and Jawaahir invite you to join Cathy Wurzer, TPT2's Almanac co-host, and our mistress of ceremonies for the evening, and Gary Kruger, our live auctioneer, for an evening of celebration and gratitude for all of our beloved supporters....YOU! \$30 reservations in advance, \$35 at the door.

[Cassandra's Weeklong Oriental Dance Intensive](#) Join us for this six-day workshop taught by the fabulous Cassandra, June 5–10. It's our 16th anniversary! Here's the [flyer](#). Cassandra's Intensive welcomes everyone. She says, "I just want to keep exposing people to the music and how to dance to it, to see how the movements fit with the rhythms. We have a lot of levels of students at the Intensive. The material is there; it's up to you to open whatever door you're ready to walk through." Cost of the complete weeklong package: USD \$699. Space is limited to 25 participants. Registration available now!

[Cassandra's Enchanted Evening](#) Join Cassandra and Jawaahir on Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 8:00pm, at the Jawaahir Studio Theater for an intimate evening of performances by Cassandra, Jawaahir, and special guest performers. **\$20 Tickets available NOW.**

[Cassandra's Cabaret](#) Join Cassandra on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 8:00pm, as she transforms the Jawaahir Studio Theater into a Cabaret! Intimate tables, delicious *hors d'oeuvres*, and an evening of fabulous dance from Cassandra and special guest dancers. Seating starts at 7:45. Purchase your tickets early. This Cabaret will sell out as all participants in Cassandra's Weeklong Intensive will be attending. **\$30 Tickets available NOW.** Your seat is not reserved until we receive payment.

*For further information on any of our upcoming events, check out the [Jawaahir website](#). You may also call 612-872-6050, or email us at [admin@jawaahir.org](mailto:admin@jawaahir.org).*