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For Immediate Release:
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**The Salimpour School of Dance Presents:
Bal Anat performing *Bal Anat: 50th Anniversary Tour***

**Saturday, August 4, 2018 @ 8pm
El Cerrito High School Performing Arts Theater, El Cerrito**

Info: www.balanat50year.com

Tickets (\$18-\$30): www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3386434

Facebook event page: www.facebook.com/events/1587513507946875

El Cerrito, CA... The world's longest-running belly dance troupe, Bal Anat, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year with a tour of Stockholm, London, Brussels, Fort Lauderdale, Atlanta, Chicago, and El Cerrito. The Bay Area-based troupe's hometown performance, which will take place on Saturday August 4 at El Cerrito High School Performing Arts Theater, includes a dance tableaux from the Middle East, North Africa, the Anatolian Peninsula, and Persia, and feature 60 dancers from throughout the United States, Canada, East Asia, and Europe.

In 1968, belly dance innovator, Jamila Salimpour, created Bal Anat for the spectacle and wonder of the Renaissance Pleasure Faire in Northern California. She drew from her 2-year experience with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus as a performer in her teens in the 1940's. Jamila named her dance troupe *Bal Anat* (translation: *Dance of the Mother Goddess*); in French, *Bal* means dance gathering, and *Anat* is an ancient Mesopotamian mother goddess.

Jamila was the matriarch of belly dance and the mother of tribal belly dance in the United States. Inspired by the great dancers of Egypt's Golden Era, she was a cabaret dancer in the early West Coast clubs. She applied the same technique to her Bal Anat troupe, was the first to develop and codify a belly dance format, and created a finger cymbal method with over 44 patterns.

In 1999, Jamila's daughter, Suhaila Salimpour, a master choreographer and dancer, who began dancing at the age of 2 and teaching at age 14, took over the direction of the groundbreaking and international troupe. She launched the Suhaila Salimpour Belly Dance Certification Program, the most extensive and thorough belly dance curriculum available, and the Jamila Salimpour Belly Dance Certification Program in 2007. Her own format, first developed in 1978, revolutionized the way that belly dance is understood and taught today.

"Bal Anat was innovative from the very beginning," Suhaila notes. "My mother's groundbreaking presentation was the first to integrate dancing with and

balancing a sword. She also popularized dancing with a water pot, with snakes, and dancing on glass water goblets.”

Jamila, who was born in New York City in 1926, grew up hearing her father’s stories of the dancers he saw in North Africa when he was in the Sicilian Navy. After her 2-year stint with Ringling Brothers, at age 19 she moved to Los Angeles where she became connected to a diverse and close-knit group of Middle Eastern immigrants. With this new community, she became engrossed with Middle Eastern dance. Since there were no dance teachers, she researched and learned what she could by watching, listening, and reading. Few if any clubs on the West Coast had belly dancing at that time, so Jamila began by performing mostly for woman-only groups. She also taught dance to small groups of students. By her late 20s, when belly dancers were now allowed and featured in the clubs, Jamila performed regularly in restaurants and nightclubs.

The Martha Graham of belly dance won a prestigious Isadora Duncan Award, which honors San Francisco Bay Area dance artists for outstanding achievements. She passed away last December at the age of 91. This summer, the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival will give her a posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award.

DIRECTOR, SUHAILA SALIMPOUR:

Suhaila Salimpour is a highly-acclaimed belly dance performer, teacher, and choreographer. As a teenager, she began integrating the Middle Eastern dance passed on to her from her mother with her own extensive training in ballet, jazz, tap, and American street styles. After working as a professional belly dance performer in the Middle East for over 10 years, she established her school and certification program in the United States in the late 1990s. She has choreographed hundreds of dances, from the classic to the avant garde and was nominated for an Isadora Duncan award for solo performance in 2005. Her methods and approach to teaching belly dance are a true artistic breakthrough: a revolutionary technique that has elevated belly dance practice and performance. Her technique and methods are now used by dancers in all stylizations, and the Salimpour School is one of the most respected and influential belly dance schools in the world. Suhaila teaches at the Center for International Dance in Berkeley and runs an on-line belly dance course, taken by dancers worldwide.

- **THE SALIMPOUR LEGACY:** www.balanat50year.com/jamila-salimpour
- **ARTICLE ABOUT JAMILA:** *Shaping a Legacy: A New Generation in the Old Tradition* from *The Best of Habibi: A Journal for Lovers of Middle Eastern Dance & Arts*. www.thebestofhabibi.com/vol-13-no-4-fall-1994/jamila-salimpour
- **VIDEO:** www.vimeo.com/263562510
- **PHOTO GALLERY:** www.balanat50year.com/gallery

For Calendar Editors:

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WHEN: Saturday, August 4, 2018 at 8pm

WHERE: El Cerrito High School Performing Arts Theater
540 Ashbury Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530

INFO: www.balanat50year.com

TIX: \$18-\$30 • Discounts for Students and 50+
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