

Basic Zils (Finger Cymbals), Patterns and Instructions **TribalTique Belly Dance Company – Denver**

In belly dance, zils are an essential component. One may find them tricky to master, but once you learn them, they will be easy to put on “auto-pilot”. The best way to learn to zil and dance at the same time is to simply do that, zil and dance.

Worn on the middle and thumb fingers of both hands, zils come four to a set. You will want to place the elastic on the finger, just below the nail cuticle and just above the first knuckle. The top of the cymbal should be on the pads of your fingertips, the open bell side towards the palm. Make sure your elastic is tight as you do not want your zils to fly off while you are playing them.

When playing your zils, use your entire hand instead of just your fingers. This will ensure that you do not strain your hand. Hands and fingers should be loose and relaxed in order to get the best sound. Keep your hands uplifted and do not let them sag. Maintain position while drilling so when you put the zilling to dancing, your hands will be comfortable and not strained.

There are several basic sounds that can be achieved with your zils:

- Ring – this sound is made by striking and then releasing the middle and thumb fingers quickly.
- Clap – this sound is produced by the same method of the ring, but making the zils flat against each other so the sound is stopped.
- Tap – is created when you mute the zils by curving the thumb and middle finger around the zil while striking the zils together.

When beginning to zil, put on a piece of 4/4 music that you are familiar with and start zilling along to it. Next, start walking to the beat, stepping in place and eventually forward and back. Eventually, you will add your dance movements, and voila! You will be dancing and zilling together in no time!

Some basic musicality things for reference:

- Beat – a unit of counting
- Measure – a structure which units of counting are arranged
- Rhythm – the pattern or arrangement of these units of counting within a measure
- Tempo – the speed in which the arrangement of beats is played
- Accent – an emphasized beat. It takes up the same length of time as an unaccented beat

(Zil Guide: R is a stroke played on the right hand; L is a stroke played on the left hand; underlined strokes are an accented beat. UP (AND) is the upbeat, DOWN (NUMBER) is the downbeat.)

