

= Belldandy =

Belldandy (??????? , Berudand?) is a character in the popular anime and manga series *Oh My Goddess* ! . She was created by K?suke Fujishima as one of three Goddesses who come to Earth to reside with Keiichi Morisato , and she serves as his love interest . She is depicted as a beautiful and powerful young woman , with strong nurturing tendencies , a trusting and innocent character , and an extremely kind heart . Belldandy is accidentally summoned from heaven by Keiichi in order to grant him a wish and stays when Keiichi wishes for " a goddess like you to be by my side forever " . The stories follow Belldandy as she builds a relationship with Keiichi , using her powers (which include teleportation , telekinesis , telepathy , and levitation) to help both Keiichi and his friends while keeping her true identity a secret .

Her first appearance was in *Afternoon* in August 1988 . Belldandy has also featured in a novel , two TV series , a movie , and three OVA series . The character has gained considerable respect throughout the various formats , as evidenced by her appearance as one of the most popular characters in the *Newtype* and *Animage* polls . The concept of Belldandy draws loosely from Norse mythology , with " Belldandy " being a transliteration of the Old Norse *Verðandi* , one of a trio of Norns . She is joined by characters representing the other two of the trio of Norns ? her sisters *Urd* and *Skuld* .

Belldandy is regarded by commentators as an example of the magical girlfriend character , and comparisons have been drawn with the characters of Samantha from *Bewitched* and Jeannie from *I Dream of Jeannie* . The character 's very conservative nature , however , which almost completely subordinates her to her fictional boyfriend , Keiichi , has led to some concerns from critics and has polarized the audience .

= = Creation and conception = =

Belldandy was created by K?suke Fujishima and features as one of the two principal protagonists in the manga *Ah ! My Goddess* ! (???????) (along with the character of Keiichi Morisato) . Her first appearance was in the comic *Afternoon* on August 25 , 1988 , but she has also been depicted in a novel (*Ah ! My Goddess : First End*) , three anime series ? *Oh My Goddess* ! (OVA) , *Ah ! My Goddess* and *The Adventures of Mini @-@ Goddess* ? and in *Ah ! My Goddess : The Movie* .

Belldandy 's original concept was loosely based on a depiction of Miyuki Kobayakawa , one of the main characters of *You 're Under Arrest* , which was also created by Kosuke Fujishima . Miyuki was featured as a goddess in an advertisement for a *You 're Under Arrest* T @-@ shirt giveaway and appeared as a goddess character in a " four panel gag strip " in the *You 're Under Arrest* manga , leading to claims that *Oh My Goddess* is a spin @-@ off series . The character Ken Nakajima from *You 're Under Arrest* appears in the first episode of the original OVA . He is driving the car that Keiichi almost hits with his motorcycle .

= = = Norse origins = = =

Fujishima was particularly interested in the concept of a goddess " as a job " , and turned to Norse mythology as he felt that it was relatively unknown in Japan . Thus Belldandy is based on *Verðandi* (or *Verthandi*) , the Norse Goddess of the present , (whose name is literally translated as " to become " or " becoming ") , and she is one of the three Norns or " fates " from Norse mythology . *Verdandi* , when translated into Japanese , becomes ??????? (*Berudand?*) . As the Japanese phonetic system does not distinguish between " b " and " v " or " r " and " l " (although ? can describe " v " .) , " Belldandy " can emerge as a product of consonant substitutions . Indeed , it was in the first chapter of the manga that her name was transliterated as Belldandy rather than Verdandi , and this romanization has stuck since . When the English translations were being prepared , Toren Smith considered returning the name to " Verthandi " , (which Smith had determined to be the correct translation of the Old Norse) , but chose to stick with Belldandy on the grounds that Fujishima was already " playing fast and loose with the mythos " and thus felt that no further harm

was likely to come from employing Fujishima 's transliteration . (Nevertheless , in the Swedish translation of the manga , released in 2007 , her name was returned to Verdandi) .

= = Character outline = =

= = = Background = = =

Belldandy is depicted as being a Goddess working with the fictional " Goddess Relief Agency " . Although the series never specifically mentions her age , there are hints that she is between 18 and 28 when the series begins : in the original manga her birthdate is shown as 196X / 09 / 25 ? the English translation offers no year , but simply says " September " ? while in the anime the more specific 1985 / 01 / 01 is employed . This should not be seen as conclusive as Eileen Stevens , who provides the voice of Belldandy in the English @-@ language version of the TV series , states that while Belldandy is " young in appearance , late teens to early 20s , she 's ageless , perhaps thousands of years old . "

Fujishima provided the character with two sisters ? Skuld and Urd ? each with notably different personalities from her own . These two sisters represent the other two Norns from Norse mythology , with Urd (the eldest of the three) representing the past while Skuld (the youngest) represents the future . In recent volumes , Fujishima revealed the identity of Skuld and Belldandy 's mother , a goddess named Ansuz (???? , Anzasu) , who seems to have a rivalry with Hild , Urd 's mother .

When the series begins , Belldandy is working on the " Goddess Technical Helpline , also known as " Goddess Relief Office / Agency " and is responsible for granting wishes to those who call . As such , her role is similar to the character Peorth 's work at the Earth Assistance Agency . In spite of working for Heaven , Belldandy , unlike her two sisters , does not appear to play a significant role in maintaining Yggdrasil .

= = = Personality = = =

The " magical girl " character , of which Belldandy is an example , typically combines powerful abilities with very feminine characteristics . For Western audiences , a comparison can be drawn with the characters of Samantha Stephens from Bewitched and Jeannie from I Dream of Jeannie . As such , Belldandy is depicted as being very sweet and exceptionally kind @-@ hearted , with very " old @-@ fashioned " sensibilities . Combined with domestic skills portrayed through the series and her loyalty to Keiichi , this makes her a classic example of the concept of Yamato Nadeshiko .

Belldandy is exceptionally kind @-@ hearted , even for a goddess . She can easily sense other people 's emotions and tries her best to be empathetic to all those around her , displaying a combination of " serene beauty and acceptance " . She rarely holds a grudge and is always willing to forgive anyone who does injury to her ... unless Keiichi is involved of course . Even though Belldandy tries her best to be as kind as possible , it is revealed that at times she can become very insecure and sad , especially when she is confronted with an implication that involves Keiichi in one way or another . This aspect of her character provides one of the biggest plot points in the Ah ! My Goddess movie : Belldandy 's possessiveness of Keiichi could make her an easy target for manipulation or even brainwashing , if the right buttons were pressed ; her jealousy of Morgan Le Fay was what allowed Celestin , her teacher , to lure Belldandy into his plans .

As noted by Perper and Cornog , Belldandy , as a depiction of what they term " kirei " , is comfortable " being loved and admired " and very much aware of her own beauty ? yet this does not equate to vanity .

= = = Abilities = = =

Belldandy is unflinchingly kind , patient , and warm , not only to Keiichi but to everyone , without exception . This , however , does not mean that she is to be taken lightly ; Belldandy is licensed as a

" goddess first @-@ class , unlimited " , and as such is depicted as being highly skilled . Her power is so great that she is required to wear a special earring on her left ear which constantly seals the full brunt of her magical strength . The only time at which she has ever revealed her true strength is during the " Lord of Terror " arc . At the end of this arc , Belldandy completely reconstructed their home from rubble , mentioning that doing so only took one ten @-@ millionth of her power .

Belldandy 's capacities and talents are diverse , whether magical or worldly . Not only can she change the appearance of her clothing and levitate (and , by extension , fly) , but she can also teleport through mirrors , speak to and understand animals , " see " people 's emotions as auras , heal minor wounds by speeding metabolism , and " speak " to machines . Furthermore , she is a superb cook , and her singing skills are held to be the best in the heavens . She is also incapable of becoming inebriated on alcoholic drinks , but instead becomes so with soda . (One can is enough to send her in a drunken rampage ? although given her personality , " rampage " takes an entirely different , but no less destructive , meaning) . During the manga 's publication , more of Belldandy 's capabilities are discovered , but she probably has many more : Urd notes that Belldandy loves accumulating capabilities but usually doesn 't mention them herself . Among those seen in the manga , she has a Valkyrie diploma - as demonstrated when she neutralizes Thrym the Invincible in hand @-@ to @-@ hand combat - and she 's a champion flying broom racer. the only thing she can 't do is hurt others - provided Keichi isn 't in harm 's way , otherwise she will " deal " with anything and anyone standing in her way (see Thrym above for the most out of character example) whatever the cost on herself .

= = = Holy Bell = = =

Each of the fully @-@ fledged goddesses in the series is teamed with an " angel " . Belldandy 's angel is called Holy Bell (Blesséd Bell in some versions of the English manga) ; her elemental attribute is wind . Like the other angels in the series , Holy Bell augments Belldandy 's magical powers when called upon , and like all angels , she also reflects her master 's current state . For example , when Belldandy falls unconscious after being infected with a virus , Holy Bell emerges comatose and covered with crystals that represent the virus .

= = Plot overview = =

Belldandy is introduced to the series when Keiichi Morisato , portrayed as a typical college student with a notable lack of experience with women , accidentally dials the " Goddess Relief Agency " when attempting to order take @-@ away noodles (the reason is simply explained as fate in the manga and anime adaptations) . Belldandy appears before Keiichi and offers to grant him a wish . Convinced that the whole incident is a prank played on him by his seniors (Senpais) , Keiichi half @-@ jokingly wishes her to stay with him forever . (" I want a goddess like you to be by my side forever ") . The wish , of course , is granted ? thus providing one of the key premises of the series .

With Belldandy and Keiichi now portrayed as a couple , Fujishima introduces other factors : specifically the complications caused by family and friends . Forced to leave his dorm , as women are not permitted to stay on the premises , Keiichi and Belldandy end up living at the Tariki Hongan Temple in the city of Nekomi , Chiba Prefecture near Tokyo . Within both the manga and the anime , the temple was turned over to them by its former guardian , Koshian , a Buddhist monk who was overwhelmed by the purity of Belldandy 's spirit and her unparalleled skills in polishing the temple altar , in cooking , and in Zazen meditation . Koshian departs the series by leaving for a pilgrimage to find spiritual perfection , (although he does briefly return later in the series) , turning over the temple to Belldandy and Keiichi 's care without realizing Belldandy 's true nature as a Goddess . Later , Fujishima has Belldandy 's two sisters (Urd and Skuld) join Belldandy and Keiichi in the temple . The story then follows the numerous misadventures of the not @-@ so normal household , their growth over the course of the series and the budding romance between an ordinary young man and an angelic goddess .

== Relationship with Keiichi ==

Although Belldandy was sent to grant Keiichi a wish and nothing more , Belldandy expresses many times that she has enjoyed her time with Keiichi and that her purpose is to make him happy . The contract really is an excuse for her to stay since her rival Marller , a first class demon , has stated that " she can cancel a contract with a human anytime " . Belldandy had then stated that she did not want to , because Keiichi was a special person in her heart . This was reinforced at the conclusion of chapter 39 : with the " System " down , Belldandy 's contract with Keiichi is effectively suspended , yet she chooses to stay because , as Fujishima has her explain in the manga , " ... I 'm here now because I love you ? .

There have been a couple of noticeable twitches in this however , when Belldandy shows doubt as to her future with Keiichi . When he takes up his job at Whirlwind towards the end of his time at Nekomi Tech , Belldandy reflects on how he ? s beginning to follow his dream , before wondering just how far she can follow it with him . Then at the start of the current storyline in Volume 38 , in which the demon Hagall overthows Hild , Keiichi asks Belldandy if she will walk with him as his companion in life ; she hesitates , saying ? I ... Of course I will ? , without meeting his eyes .

In chapter 285 , " Kiss of Truth " , Hild reveals that Keiichi 's sexual desires for Belldandy have previously been sealed away in order to prevent humans and gods from mating , as would be the natural consequences of Keiichi 's wish for a goddess to be with him always . This explains why Keiichi has never been very forward in their relationship . Although Belldandy has never lied about this situation , she has also never told him . When the old contract was dissolved and a new one is formed , Belldandy and Keiichi are immediately confronted with an Interracial Romance Inquisitor (Ansuz , mother of Belldandy and Skuld) who immediately sets a trial to determine if they are really meant to be together , and should Keiichi fail , they shall be separated forever . Once passing the test , Belldandy and Keiichi are allowed by the heavens to live together as a proper couple , with their wedding ceremony being held in the final chapter .

== Depictions ==

The character is depicted as being extremely beautiful , but not voluptuous in the same sense as her sister , Urd , nor does she possess the youthfulness of her younger sister , Skuld . As described by Perper and Cornog :

She is often depicted in " angelic " poses , with " impossibly long " hair , sparkling eyes , and a perfectly proportioned body .

== Manga ==

When Fujishima first started drawing Oh My Goddess ! his style resembled that of his earlier series , You 're Under Arrest , and as such lacked the polish that became evident in his later work . However , as his style evolved it became more refined , as seen in works such as those collected in Childhood 's End . As part of this process the depictions of Belldandy within the manga have undergone change , with the later drawings displaying greater refinement than those in the earlier chapters . Nevertheless , it did not take long for Fujishima 's style to emerge : while still considered to be one of his earlier works , in the " Terrible Master Urd " story arc many of his trademarks are already apparent , including the " long flowing , well @-@ drawn hair " . In Chapter 293 of the manga , Belldandy 's original design was depicted in a flashback prior to coming to Earth using Fujishima 's current drawing style .

== Anime ==

Kosuke Fujishima was involved in the design for the OVA , (even working on some of the storyboards) , and the design of Belldandy is consistent with that of the manga of the period . While Fujishima wasn 't as involved in Ah ! My Goddess : The Movie , so that the character designs were

produced Hidenori Matsuhara , the finished result has since been described as " staying true to Kosuke Fujishima 's original designs " . The TV series saw slightly greater change , with the producers opting to update and redesign the characters in line with modern anime , especially when contrasted to the earlier manga . Nevertheless , while Belldandy has a more rounded face in the TV series than in the manga , the approach is still in keeping with Fujishima 's style . Adventures of Mini Goddess is quite different , being drawn in the super deformed style , and thus Belldandy 's appearance differs considerably from the manner in which she is depicted elsewhere .

In the OVA , TV series , movie and in The Adventures of Mini Goddess , the original voice of Belldandy was provided by voice actress Kikuko Inoue ; such was the success of Inoue that Fujishima was said to have been influenced by her when developing the manga character after the release of the first OVA . Akemi Okamura took on the role for the first 13 episodes of Adventures of a Mini Goddess due to Inoue 's pregnancy .

Three different voice actors have provided Belldandy 's voice in the English versions of the various anime series . For the English OVA , Belldandy 's voice was provided by Juliet Cesario , with her child voice being played by Juliet Cesario with the aid of helium . Bridget Hoffman , (performing as Ruby Marlowe) , provided the voice of Belldandy in both the movie and The Adventures of Mini Goddess , while Eileen Stevens voiced Belldandy for both seasons of the TV series .

= = Reception and critique = =

The character of Belldandy was generally well received and has a large number of fans , as evidenced when she was voted the second most popular female character in a 2001 poll in *Newtype* . In addition , Belldandy topped the *Animage* character polls for many months and was placed third on the all time Best Character list at the 17th Anime Grand Prix held in 1993 . Nevertheless , as reviewer Zac Bertschy described the situation : " People tend to go either way on the Belldandy character ; either she 's an obnoxious , archaic fantasy girl for men who prefer their women to act like indentured servants , or she 's the archetype of perfection , a flawless example of graceful femininity " .

The critique that Belldandy represents a negative stereotype of women , placing them in a subservient role to men , appears a number of times in the literature . Annalee Newitz states that the manner in which Belldandy is portrayed in the series would , in all likelihood , be impossible in the United States ? especially , as she goes on to say , since " the advent of feminism and the women 's rights movement " . While Newitz sees this as reflective of Japanese culture , arguing that characters such as Belldandy are possible because feminist issues do not have the same recognition within Japan as they do in many Western countries , Susan J. Napier takes a very different line . She argues that characters such as Belldandy may be a reaction to the increasing assertiveness of women in Japan , thus presenting Belldandy as an attempt to reinforce traditional cultural values , rather than a reflection of them . To demonstrate this , Napier points to Belldandy 's role in " Moonlight and Cherry Blossoms " , the first of the OVA episodes . The episode begins with disorder , as Keiichi is evicted from his dorm after Belldandy 's chaotic appearance into his life , but ends with a return to " traditional values " , signified through the restoration of the old temple . Similarly , Napier notes that Belldandy 's cooking is often commended by the other characters , and as such is another way in which the character of Belldandy can be seen to reinforce more traditional female roles . Carlos Ross of *THEM Anime Reviews* considers Belldandy 's characterization in the film much better than in the OVA series , where he describes her as a " doormat " .

Either way , commentators still notice strengths in Belldandy 's character . While acknowledging the conservative portrayal , Napier describes Belldandy as " almost a perfect dream of feminine nurturance " and identifying that she has a " soothing and escapist function " , while reviewer Megan Lavey states that Belldandy is no pushover , and that she can hold her own , noting that she is making " the best of difficult circumstances . "

Another line of criticism of Belldandy relates to the sexual nature of the character , with Belldandy being described by one commentator as a " soft porn goddess " . Nevertheless , other commentators have observed that Belldandy might be sexual , but writers such as Gilles Poitras

note that the series ? far from being soft porn ? is in fact a very tender and romantic comedy : the characters do no more than simply kiss (and that infrequently) over the course of the series . Newitz suggests that part of the appeal of Oh My Goddess ! is the romantic nature of the story : " In anime , romantic love is possible because overt sexuality is not " . According to Newitz the relationships in romantic anime , such as Oh My Goddess ! , are not about consummation but about " sexual innuendo and deferral " .