

**(MA) Moody St. Circus 1st Anniversary Party, Waltham - January 15, 2011**

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The mood was definitely up on the evening of January 15th at [Moody Street Circus](#) in Waltham, MA. Friends, family, and students of Melina and Sacha Pavlata gathered to celebrate the first anniversary of the opening of their spacious, colorful, and *roomy* studio, which opened its doors a year ago to (among other things) offer classes and events in belly dance and circus arts.

The Pavlatas certainly know how to throw a party. There was live music, courtesy of [Okbari Middle-Eastern Dance Ensemble](#), who came down from Portland (ME) for this event; belly dance art on display and for sale by [Elisabeth Clark](#); and lots of yummy savory and sweet snacks for nibbling, lovingly prepared at home by friends of Moody Street Circus, Julia and Nicolas Paraschos. There were even risers for audience seating (which was full by the time the show began!). The evening's events were captured on film by the lovely Najmat of Boston.



*Elisabeth Clark and her beautiful art at Moody Street Circus (l) and Happy Anniversary Balloon at MSC with Elisabeth Clark's art R). Photos by Najmat of Boston, courtesy of Melina.*

Of course, there was a show! Featuring solo and group performances by Daughters of Rhea dancers and students.

- Celia opened the program, all aglow in peach and gold, dancing to “Soode Soode” the way it should be danced - with great joie de vivre, and zills!
- Kebi, of the silken hair, wielded her silken veil with grace and aplomb to “Misirlou”.
- Daughters of Rhea Level 2 dancers performed Rhea’s Tambourine Routine to the percussive accompaniment of Okbari’s Eric LaPerna. Attired in coordinating gelabayas, they created a lovely vision both visually and acoustically.

- The elegant Jamila, in stunning teal and forest green, raqqed the classic “Aziza”, hitting all the accents like a pro (even the ending, when the band didn’t).
- Your editor danced to a juicy rendition of “Siseler”, gypsy-style.
- We saw the flowy cabaret side of the lovely Kaylin to another classic, “Zeina”.
- Sara Cabral smouldered to a smoky version of “Uskadar”. Dreamy and evocative, she has the rare talent of being able to turn inward when she performs, yet remaining fully present to her audience.



*Daughters of Rhea Tambourine Team (pictured l -r: Ann, Yelena, Melina, Arlene, Lena). Photo by Najmat of Boston.*

Our hostess, Melina, wearing a stunning glittery teal and chocolate costume, concluded the program with a lively 4-part set. Melina exemplifies the Daughters of Rhea philosophy of creativity and joy in the dance...and circus! She had some tricks under her hip belt. As Okbari played some pretty violin and oud taqsims, we were treated to some lovely floor work and then... the ever-heartstopping (for this writer, at least) balancing on water glasses! Melina brought out three *real* glasses, proceeded to step up on them, balance, and then move around the floor on them! I always trust that Melina will do this perfectly each time I see it, yet it’s still a bit nerve-wracking!



*Melina on water glasses. Photo by Najmat of Boston.*

Then, just when you thought there wasn't any more seat edge for you to perch on, Melina picked up her sword...and dagger. Melina has been balancing things on her head since childhood - trays, swords, and so on. I do believe, however, that she is the first dancer to balance a sword *on* a dagger held in her *teeth*! If you have never seen this, put it on your "must see" list.

Okbari outdid themselves that evening. The music was terrific - bright, lively, and a joy to dance to. Keep an eye on this ensemble - as I've said before in this column, they are on their way to "legend" status.

Lastly - but certainly not least the evening also included the grand opening of Koukla Dance Boutique. Located conveniently across the hall from Moody St. Circus, this is Boston's only belly dance store. While the band played folk music for open dancing, belly dancers and other hard-core shoppers browsed happily amongst Koukla's racks and shelves. Owned and operated by Greek folk and belly dancer Panayiota Bakis, the store carries a full line of Sharifwear, as well as other treasures that Panayiota picks up in her travels. No Web site yet - watch BDNE and Moody Street Circus for further details.



*Okbari at Moody Street Circus. Photo by Najmat of Boston.*

To learn more about Moody Street Circus and its classes and events, be sure to visit their [Web site](#). You can also listen to an interview with Melina on [Belly Dance New England podcast #2](#), in which she talks about her vision for Moody Street Circus. - *submitted by Amy Smith*