



Belly Dance

New England

From Tassels to Sequins

by Cecilia Villero

If you are completely new to the world of belly dance, then hopefully you made it to the "From Tassels to Sequins" event at Moody Street Circus in Waltham, MA, on Friday, April 1st. Showcasing dancers from all facets of belly dance, Baseema Moirae and Melina of Daughters of Rhea organized an entertaining and exciting show that could have acted as a great introduction for all that is belly dance.

If you have yet to visit Moody Street Circus, drop what you are doing and make your way there immediately. The studio is beautifully laid out for both dance and circus classes, and it turns into a wonderful show venue for the many events hosted there. The posters of past events that cover the walls are only a sampling of the excellent events that have yet to be produced at this wonderful venue.

This event, preceding a weekend of workshops, featured Oregon-based dancer Sabine. She is known for her tribal-style moves and double-sword wielding abilities, the focus of the workshops. Considering that she and her two scimitars were the finale of the evening, the entire show was extremely strong from beginning to end. Every performer and troupe that walked onto the dance floor was high-caliber, the top performers of the New England area and then some.

Shimza, a new American Tribal Style (ATS) collaboration between Baseema and Sara Ford, opened the show by staying true to their name (Gypsy word for joy or happiness) and set the example for the joy that one should feel when dancing.



Shimza: Sara Ford and Rachel Gabriel. Photo by Jennie Harriman.

Bellybeat once again impressed the audience with their visually appealing formations. Their fusion-

style choreography and movements were akin to sirens calling out to the audience to join them.

When **Aurel** walked onto the stage, she commanded everyone's attention as she balanced a tea tray on her head while descending to the floor. There is humor and a down-to-earth quality to her cabaret style that is refreshing, and there is no doubt that she has abs of steel under all that beading.

Ombellyco then brought us back to the ATS part of the belly dance world. It honestly blows my mind that ATS is mainly improvisational, but that all the dancers in a troupe understand the cues well enough to follow along. Ombellyco's formations not only exemplified ATS, but it also reminded me of a fractal, where each part is a copy of the whole.

Najmat is basically glamour personified. Her Egyptian-style dance is ever-captivating, and even though the wrong tracks played for the second part of her performance she never fails to impress.

We then had the pleasure of a sneak peak of **Sabine**'s talent when her troupe, **Tribalation**, performed. It was clear in their dance that Sabine and Kathryn truly love the dance and have found true sisters in each other.



Tribalation: Kathryn and Sabine. Photo by Najmat.

Denise, a member of the Boston-based Vadalna Tribal Dance Company, seemed to slither onto the dance floor. There was something about her dancing that almost made me want to rub my eyes in disbelief – her movements were so graceful yet sharp that I was almost convinced that I was watching a CGI instead of a real person.

When **Kaylin** stepped out in her beledy dress and whipped her veil around her effortlessly, I was absolutely mesmerized. There were so many instances during her performance when I took mental videos to bookmark for later practice.

Jaylee impressed the audience with her precise moves. She hit every break and every accent without

fail. You could see the audience trying to keep up with her, but her pops and locks were much too quick for the human eye.

Sara Rodrigues Cabral graced us with the beautiful artistry of her piece entitled "Jewelry Box". There is so much imagination in her pieces, it is clear that she has been dancing and creating as long as she has been on this earth.

Before Sara could leave the stage, **Melina's** husband Sasha walked onto the stage. As they pretended to flirt with each other, Melina, the Mistress of Moody Street Circus herself, floated onto the stage and "caught them in the act". As she pulled out her dagger and her sword, you knew that she was not one to mess with. I personally could never tire of watching Melina balance the sword on the dagger she's holding in her mouth. Her Greco-Turkish style of belly dance is just so full of energy and surprises; you can't help but bow down to her.



Melina. Photo by Jennie Harriman.

The **Magnolia Devi Dance Company** from Maine then showcased their ATS skills. They were

exciting to watch, especially when they slinked down to the floor. However, perhaps because of the seating arrangement, it was somewhat difficult to see what was happening when they were doing floor work.

Di'ahna Restry is a dancer who knows how to entertain. It was fun to watch her interact with the audience while combining a slow song with a fast song, her movements echoing the emotions and sensations of love, the subject of both songs.

Finally, **Sabine's** scimitars were placed on the stage. Truly, I could have watched her maneuver around and over the swords for much longer than she did. She moved effortlessly on the stage, while balancing not one sword but two. I could imagine a "Do not attempt this at home" disclaimer underneath her. She is truly a master at the *raks al sayf*, and the swords are merely an extension of her arms.



Sabine. Photo by Jennie Harriman.

As someone who is more accustomed to the sequins aspect of belly dance, it seemed that there was a bit of a skew towards the tassels in this show. However, considering that the headliner represented ATS, and represented it gloriously, the tassel skew was appropriate and not unwelcome. The variety in performances left me feeling inspired to try some new things in my own dance practice.

Congratulations to Melina and Baseema for a wonderful show and thanks for helping to enhance the belly dance landscape of New England!

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