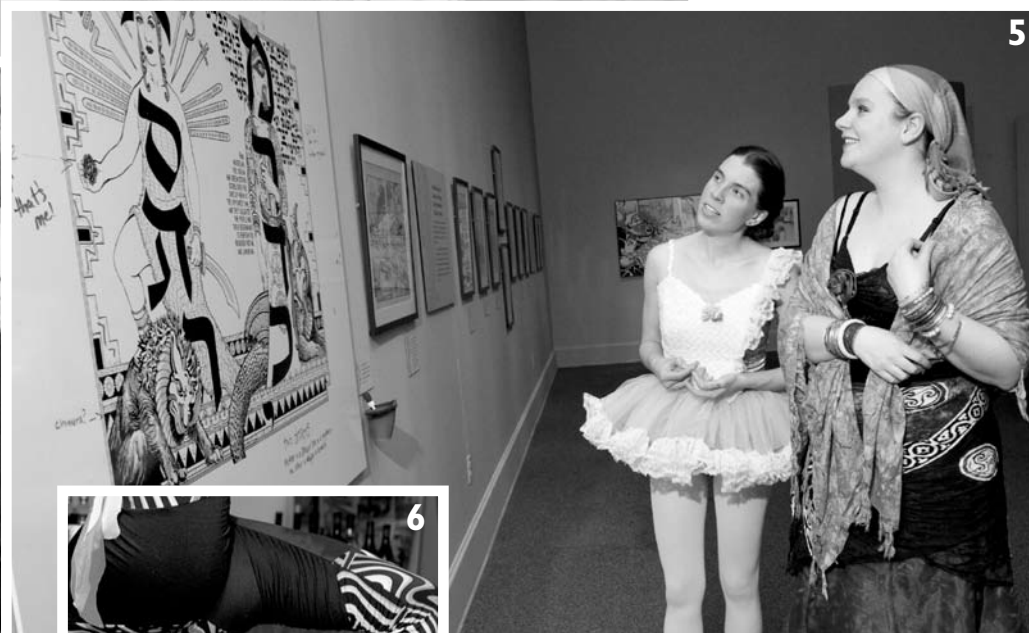
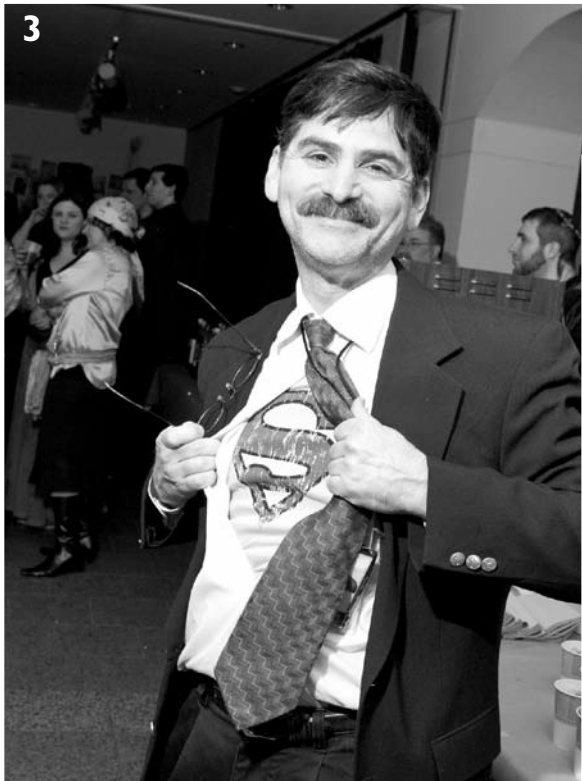


# Shushan's Big Top



**P**urim is a lot like the circus. It's zany, raucous, a bit scary at times, filled with interesting characters and never boring, while constantly blurring reality with the fantastic.

That's why the staff at the Jewish Museum of Maryland, when brainstorming for their third annual "Purim Pandemonium" event, chose the Victorian-era circus as its theme.

The staff also felt that the "Greatest Show On Earth" concept went along with the opening of the East Baltimore museum's new exhibition, "Drawing On Tradition: The Book Of Esther," featuring the works of graphic novelist JT Waldman.

"It was a lot of fun, really cool," said Ilene Dackman-Alon, the museum's program director and coordinator of this year's "Pandemonium," held March 5 and attracting more than 100 young adults. "It was a great Jewish cultural program. People had fun and it was interactive."

The three-hour soiree was co-sponsored by BEYOM (Beth El Young Members), BIYA (B'nai Israel Young Adults) and BAYITT (Beth Am's Young Adult Initiative for 20s & 30s), as well as DiWine Spirits in Pikesville, WTMD-FM and the BALTIMORE JEWISH TIMES.

In addition to offering a sneak preview of "Drawing On Tradition" and a tour of fellow exhibition "Voices Of Lombard Street," the party presented contortionist Lisa Appel and retro/contemporary music by DJ Booth (aka Matt Moran). In keeping with the circus theme, snacks included peanuts and popcorn (as well as wine, beer and soda).

Meanwhile, JMM staffers dressed up as sideshow entertainers and dazzled the crowds. The staffers included Lacy LeBlanc as "The Tattooed Lady," Rachel Kassman as "The Fortune Teller," Simone Ellin as "The Jester," Deborah Cardin as "The Sword Swallower," Lauren Silberman as "The Belly Dancer," Jobi Zink as "The Lion Tamer," Jennifer Vess as "The Ballet Dancer," Dr. Barry Lever as "The Bearded Lady" and Ms. Dackman-Alon as "The Lady With The Hoops."

"Everyone was there. Our whole staff participated in some way," said Ms. Dackman-Alon, noting that volunteers from the co-sponsoring congregations also helped out.

Ms. LeBlanc, the museum's manager for the Lloyd Street Synagogue project, said a splendid time was enjoyed by all.

"I played 'The Tattooed Lady' because, well, I am one," she said with a laugh. "Everyone there enjoyed themselves — guests, staff, performers. This is first time we've tried to have a party around an [exhibition] opening and we felt it was great to bring in young adults." □

— Alan H. Feiler  
— Justin Tsucalas, Photographer

- 1) Let's Dish: Justin Abbott Chalen (left) impresses Talia Abbott Chalen with his plate-spinning technique.
- 2) Taking A Chance: Lee Hendelman, in his finest bowler and suspenders, gives the Wheel of Fortune a spin.
- 3) Fly Boy: Fred B. Shoken demonstrates why he's the Man Of Steel.
- 4) All Fluff: A boa-adorned Eddie Lewy noshes on cotton candy. In back is Leia Rosenberg.
- 5) Getting Graphic: The JMM's Rachel Kassman (right) and Jennifer Vess check out JD Waldman's exhibition.
- 6) Pretzel Logic: Contortionist Lisa Appel wows the crowd and gets a leg up on the competition.