

# Carolinas Best Blog

A continuing update on events in the Carolinas: festivals, music, art, sports and more

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## H Art Chaos at the American Dance Festival: A Review



*photo by Rosalie O'Connor*

The first presentation of Stravinsky's ballet, "The Rite of Spring" (Le Sacre du Printemps) in 1913 caused a riot, its French audience hurling insults and harder objects at the stage. Its dissonant music, primitive rhythms, and violent portrayal of a pagan ritual in which a girl dances to her death disturbed viewers even in a setting distanced from modern life.

In the controversial H Art Chaos version presented at the American Dance Festival, the superb all female Japanese troupe brings the throbbing music and wildness of Stravinsky's score into a modern apartment with a porcelain bathtub full of water, living room

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furniture and swinging chairs. The change of setting creates a very different point of view, making it more disturbing and the thrashing violence of the music and dance more immediate.

Using the same sort of wire suspension that has become common in films such as "The Matrix," hanging chairs and dancers swing in carefully choreographed patterns that create gut-wrenching tension as the lead dancer soars between them. You feel a suspense like that of watching a rope fray while a hero hangs suspended over a yawning canyon.

The lead dancer writhes toward a finish in which she swings wildly toward the audience and back in an explosive cinematic climax.

The women dancing the male parts in modern dress evoke male energy so effectively you barely register that they are women.

We've seen other productions of "Rite of Spring," notably the Sal Aiello version choreographed for the North Carolina Dance Theatre, also a powerful and moving work. But the H Art Chaos presentation breathes new blood into this icon of modernism, restoring some of the shock and disturbing quality that caused that 1913 audience to riot.

At ADF, it resulted in a lengthy standing ovation.

The company preceded "Rite of Spring" with a world premiere commissioned by ADF, "Flowers of the Bones" offering equally creative dancing and staging if a much quieter ending.

Formed by Sakiko Oshima in 1989, H Art Chaos' stated purpose is to overturn traditional concepts of female bodies and their modes of expression in a traditionally patriarchic society. Since then they have tackled (or perhaps "attacked" is more descriptive), such classics as "Swan Lake" and "Romeo and Juliet." The company's "Rite of Spring" is the latest in this series, and perhaps the most apt for the artistic vision expressed on the group's website: "revolt against the comfort of status quo in search of an artistic heaven out of chaos."

The company name reflects this aim: H=Heaven, Art=art, Chaos=disorder.

Certainly, H Art Chaos represents a different Japanese cultural approach to dance from the super - slow, incredibly controlled movements of ADF regulars Eiko and Koma, proponents of the Butoh school.

***Review by Allan Maurer***

For more information on H Art Chaos, visit:

<http://h-art-chaos.com/>

For more on ADF: [American Dance Festival ADF News](#)