



DIEDRA LAIRD/Staff

Fluid theater: Members of Kaitaisha Theatre perform "The Dog," a performance that combines modern dance and drama in fluid or "mobile" theater, Sunday at Park Elevator.

Go to Japanese 'Dog' expecting to be amazed

There are some things you just have to be prepared to not be prepared for.

One such thing is "The Dog," which was performed Sunday night, and will be repeated tonight, by the avant-garde Theatre Kaitaisha of Tokyo in Charlotte's Park Elevator club.

A woman in a nightie and heels violently shovels dirt from a wheelbarrow with a flat tire onto the concrete floor while a man sits in a doorway and watches. She lies down in the dirt as he recites, in Japanese, a list of countries.

He gets up and drags her along the floor, leaving a trail of dirt. Another woman

enters, kneels at the empty wheelbarrow and prays. Yet another woman walks in with a bucket of water, puts the bucket on the floor, bends down and puts her head in the bucket. Suddenly, she stands upright, spraying the floor with water from her hair.

In run half a dozen men and women in uniform with an industrial strength vacuum cleaner, brooms and dustpans. They chaotically but methodically clean up the water and dirt.

That was just one episode in a 105-minute performance art piece by 14-member Kaitaisha company Sunday night.

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TONY BROWN

Japanese throw away tradition

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Go and see the show tonight, and the whole thing could be different. In the best tradition of improvisational theater, the company adapts its performances to its space and the time, in this case the bunker-like nightclub, at night.

This program, sponsored by Charlotte's Innovative Theatre and the Charlotte Japan Center, will be balanced Friday by performance by a classical Japanese dance company, Hana-No-Kai, in the North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

Kaitaisha's movements are grounded in the traditional noh theater and contemporary butoh dance forms, with hints of German Expressionism and American modern dance thrown in. Much of the music is Western, including Samuel Barber's "Adagio for Strings."

"The Dog," part of a larger piece titled "The Drifting View," appears to be an angry reaction to oppression. The oppressed are represented by a woman wearing a leather dog collar; hence, "The Dog."

For all its rage, it is also quite poignant. The image of performer Miyuki Nakajima with tears rolling down her face and mucous running out her nose after she picked up and stuffed into a handbag hundreds of little squares of paper strewn on the floor is one that will not be soon forgotten by the 100 or so who saw it Sunday night.

Charlotte and Atlanta are the only two places this extremely original and obviously dedicated company will perform in the United States.

If you go, don't prepare. It won't help. Just let it flow over you.

If you're going

• Kaitaisha: "The Dog," 8 p.m. today, Park Elevator club, 601 S. Cedar St. \$15 and \$10. 372-7469 or (800) 922-6431, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. today.