

The Hartford Courant

Established 17

Saturday, October 23, 1993

F2 THE HARTFORD COURANT: Saturday, October 23, 1993

Dance drama focuses on feminism

By TONY ANGARANO
Courant Dance Critic

In "MA," which premiered at the Cathedral Theater Friday night, choreographer Judy Dworin has conceived a provocative dance drama that explores the primal, regenerative power of women. Presenting ancient ritual from a contemporary perspective, Dworin has created a timely commentary on the meaning of feminism.

Ironically, the work opened on a rubbish heap of discarded bottles, boxes and bags. As Jocelyn Chang cleans up the mess, Dworin enigmatically positions buckets of water at strategic places in the performance space. But "MA" really begins with the image of three raised arms emerging from an earthy mound.

Attired in Leslie Weinberg's totemistic masks and primeval costumes, three women seemed to be born, playful primates joyfully discovering the physical world and nurtured by an Earth Mother figure. Dworin's inventive choreography and sense of theater create an

imaginative, powerful effect strongly supported by the lithe, responsive dancing of Kathy Borteck Gersten, Angela Grano, Lisa Matias Serrambana and Nicole Sistare.

If Dworin depicts early existence as a harmonious world of women, "MA" also shows how women became physically subjugated to the phallic force of men. With musicians Michael Leese and Tony Steve acting as the brutal invaders, Dworin presents a feminist's point of view that is unchallengeable; but she does it with an artist's aesthetic so the idea is not just raw polemic.

In fact, Dworin's penetrating vision shows the research of a cultural anthropologist and the creative communication of a woman who can turn imagination into reality. Throughout the performance, the beautifully evocative score composed and performed by Chang, Leese and Steve added an aural dimension that finely enhanced the stage movements.

The Judy Dworin Performing Ensemble will present "MA" today at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. at Christ Church Cathedral's Cathedral Theater, 45 Church St., in Hartford. Information: 232-5525.