



Juggling Duo Toss Levity & Zip into Technically Impressive Show *Anchorage Daily News*

By Anne Herman – 02.2005

OK, we've all seen jugglers tossing rings, clubs and knives. Flaming torches may add a bit of danger, but it's still mainstream stuff. But juggling chain saws and people? This I had to see.

Saturday night, a packed Atwood Concert Hall audience and I did just that. Two crazy jugglers known as "The Passing Zone" threw sickles, torches, chain saws and, yes, even people back and forth and up and down in a concert easily subtitled "controlled bedlam."

Jon Wee and Owen Morse kept up a constant flow of clever one-liners through displays of how'd-they-do-that juggling that were always on the brink of chaos, keeping the audience laughing as they gasped in surprise.

The program's first half highlighted the technical skills that have won Morse and Wee 18 juggling gold medals. They started out simply working with juggling clubs and rings. Keeping six clubs in the air, the two settled into a steady rhythm of tossing the clubs between their legs, around their backs and over their heads.

Wee then dropped a club on the floor, and they started passing a "space" back and forth. The amazing thing was that you could clearly see that "space" being tossed in the air and caught. Wee and Morse kept the same physical rhythm with seven clubs that they had with six and made the invisible solid and weighted.

This was part of "The Passing Zone's" magic. At one point Morse worked the rings as Wee worked the audience with his funny observations. Here again, Morse changed rhythms and spatial patterns when he added rings in the air. Each seemed to slow as it reached the top of its arc while flashing from hand to hand at the bottom. As you continued to watch them, the rings seemed to blur so you could trace their speedy flight path.

The program's second half was more razzle-dazzle. "The Chainsaw Ballet," for instance, though not Baryshnikov, was clever, funny and tricky. The two set a zany mood, tiptoeing across center stage in purple tights and pink tutu. With a Strauss waltz as background accompaniment, they revved their engines in time with the music and tossed them overhead and back and forth while spinning like demented birds in some totally spacey "Swan Lake."

And speaking of spacey, the words "Houston, we have liftoff!" will never be the same to Saturday's audience after seeing "The Passing Zone's" "juggle-nauts." Morse and Wee dressed three audience members in space suits, clipped them to wires and then sent them spinning in the heavens. The "juggle-nauts" swayed and turned, waved and saluted off the stage floor.

"The Passing Zone" went beyond clever talent. The duo's mix of comedy and creativity, entertainment and artistry made a show that was absolutely magical.