



## Working Author

### O(h) @ The Actors Company Theatre

By [Ernest Kearney](#) | January 18, 2012

The title of Liz Casebolt and Joel Smith's wildly entertaining and superbly engaging show now running at the Actors Company Theatre thru February 19<sup>th</sup> is "O(h)". Now how are we to approach that heading? Well for one thing they meet all the definitions set out by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary:



1) Used to express an emotion (as surprise or desire) or in response to physical stimuli.

(This is definitely the audience's response to this surprising cross mix of dance and theater.)

2) Used in direct address.

(As in "Oh will you look at this" which the audience certainly does.)

3) Used to express acknowledgment or understanding of a statement.

(If the statement is the "nature of dance" Casebolt and Smith, who are both professors, unequivocally present this.)

4) Used to introduce an example or approximation.

(Which is what the show's overall premise is.)

Also as I recall, "OH" is the medical abbreviation for "omni hora," or "hourly" which is just about the running time of this show, which, other than the lack of a program footnote explaining its title, I found flawlessly delightful as well as refreshingly provocative.

Describing this show is somewhat challenging, but let's for now just call it a "satirical stream of consciousness, modern stand-up theatrical dance." More or less. Casebolt and Smith cavort about the stage, both physically and linguistically as they impishly deconstruct with humor and insight the language of "modern dance" via the pragmatics of "performing", "performer", "speech", "movement", "company" and "theatre".

The focus of the evening is finally on the limitation that these terms embody; the finite steps for a dancer, the boundaries of time, of expression, of venue (excellently evoked by Predock Frane's minimal set), even of themselves. (Can "two" be a company?)

But Casebolt and Smith embrace and invert those "limitations" using the implicit confines instead to define and delineate themselves. This is obvious from the evening's first number "*What you won't see in this show*" a satirical Mulligan Stew of overused dance movements with overlapping commentary by both ("I'm representing the working class – which is really in right now!").

The *LA Times*, in reviewing this same production, labeled Casebolt and Smith "...the Nichols and May of dance." Other than fearing the reference may be lost on most outside the "Baby

Boomer" generation, (and being more of a "Colvin and Wilder" fan personally) I feel that designation. For my money, by their use of simple language ensconced in humor to treat complex ideas, Casebolt and Smith are, if anything, the "Beckett and Beckett of dance." And they're far more graceful than either Gogo or Didi.

"O(h)" explores and toys with our notions of what constitutes the relationships of performer to choreography, audience to performance, dancer to dancer, managing not merely to blur the line between "dance" and "theater" but nuking it.

Throughout, the show probes and challenges how our "conventions" can constrict concepts. With the finale, "*This way I fumble to the exit*", they flip the narrative sequence on its paradigmatic axis exposing the difference in relationships of "ending" to "finishing" as well as proving how originality can topple all forms of conceptual containment.

The appeal of this show is utterly across all the boards. Lovers of dance, as well as dancers, theater aficionados, comedy club patrons, and anyone who appreciates their funny bone being tickled without the necessity of first having to put their gray matter into "park" would find an evening amid the grace and giggles "O(h)" offers to be time very well spent.

According to playwright Robert Bolt, Thomas Moore was "A Man For All Seasons." Well according to me, Casebolt and Smith are a duo for all audiences.

## **O(h)**

The Actors Company Theatre  
916a N Formosa Ave  
West Hollywood, CA 90046  
800-838-3006  
[www.caseboltandsmith.com](http://www.caseboltandsmith.com)

Performances: January 13 through February 19:

**Fridays @ 8 pm:** Jan. 13 (Opening), 20; 27; Feb. 3, 10, 17

**Saturdays @ 8 pm:** Jan. 14, 21, 28; Feb. 4, 11, 18

**Sundays @ 5 pm:** Jan. 15, 22, 29; Feb. 5, 12, 19

## **TICKETS:**

General admission: **\$30**

Students and Seniors: **\$22**