

California Touring Project at Sherwood

Masterful dance theater presented by Culture's Edge and Museum of Contemporary Art

By [Kris Eitland](#) • Wed, May 21st, 2008

From beginning to end, words and movement flow seamlessly within the "California Touring Project." Witty and provocative, the project presents physical storytelling that leaves you with a sense of compassion and humanity.

It features three exceptional groups from three California cities: Liam Clancy's Hybrid Authorship Project (San Diego), Cid Pearlman. (Santa Cruz), and casebolt and smith (Los Angeles). You might expect their work to be miles apart aesthetically, but instead, each piece magically connects and fuels the other.

Dancers Joe Alter, Eric Geiger, and Liam Clancy in "Still Undecided." Photo: D.J. Hopkins

The program opens with "Still Undecided" by The Hybrid Authorship, a most clever collaboration between dancer/choreographers Liam Clancy, Joe Alter and Eric Geiger. Having these three dynamic men on one stage is a slice of dance heaven; each has a commanding presence and unique identity, yet they connect to create a fascinating microcosm.

Clancy clings to the edge of table as a towering Alter stands it on end. Seated at the table, the three men battle for alpha dog status in a battle of arms and fingers, all seen from multiple perspectives. Ashley Johnstone joins the dialogue and streams live video of the tabletop onto the wall from her laptop on stage. The result is an audio-visual time warp, a rhythmic swirl of clichés and bodies amidst a changing design of tables and risers. "You should thank your lucky stars...try to look like you have a brain in your head...how can I be heard?" It becomes a surreal yet stinging reminder that arguments are petty and self-serving.

Cid Pearlman's "Fire Sale" is a fly-on-the-wall view of tangled relationships. Pearlman has dancers Sarah Day, David King, Matthew Shyka, and Sara Wilbourne appear as average folks, but they quickly become a dysfunctional mess. The floor design suggests tight quarters, such as a small apartment or mobile home. They play a twisted game of musical chairs and change roles, and Pearlman's contrast between tenderness and distain is chilling.

One man acts as a father, but when he wobbles and becomes impaired, the son assumes his role and the entire hierarchy falls into chaos. The women morph from adults to young girls and teeter on kindness and craziness. Their whispers conjure thoughts of sweet girls but also ugly secrets. Jonathan Segel's eerie score of strings and clicks intensifies these juxtapositions. As weird as they are, the four people and all their flaws and tribulations are intensely familiar and we care for them.

Clancy and Pearlman have joined forces before. They wowed San Diego audiences with their collaborative tour "Triple Feature;" it offered some of the best performances of last year. Clancy cavorted on stilts and his childhood story was extraordinary. Pearlman presented a four-part dreamscape that played with abstraction and themes of sexuality. It's not easy to find a group that can keep up with their innovative approach. But consider casebolt and smith. Liz Casebolt and Joel Smith rocked the tiny

stage at "4X4" last year with only a sliver of their comic virtuosity. Their two works in this program allow viewers to fully appreciate the scope of their talents and vision.



Liz Casebolt and Joel Smith of the dance/theater company casebolt and smith. Photo: Dan Perrine

"In the Space Provided" is filled with funny banter and physicality, and you can't help but mutter, "How do they do it?" They fly through the space in lifts and frisky manipulations and prattle on with such ease, that you forget it's a dance. You don't want the physical conversation to end.

casebolt and smith have telepathic chemistry, and they step into serious territory in "After Words," a compelling political commentary performed while seated at a small table. It starts out innocently with the two fiddling with a table full of army men. They interact with split-second timing as two bratty kids, friends, co-workers, or narcissistic news anchors, but their comic portrayals are insidious.

Their silly sequences escalate. Playful sways, chops and flings become angry war strategies. When the dust settles, they are shocked and remorseful, but the damage is already done. Given the current political climate, this powerful dance theater is destined for Youtube play around the world. "California Touring Project" is destined to be an annual tradition, and San Diego audiences deserve more than one night to see it.

The California Touring Project will head to Los Angeles this fall.