

InfiniteBody

A blog on arts, culture and the creative mind by Eva Yaa Asantewaa

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casebolt and smith are INBOUND at Joyce SoHo Saturday, February 6, 2010

casebolt and smith, an emerging dance duo out of LA, launched their first full-fledged New York season last night at **Joyce SoHo**, offering something that has become a rarity here in contemporary dance--an assemblage of several short works, old and new, with an actual 15-minute intermission!

Liz Casebolt and **Joel Smith** are awfully skilled and cute, and they seem to have carved out a highly personal niche: vest-pocket dance theater filled with quick-on-the draw gestural movement, self-revealing talk and quirky humor with a sense of urgency. Relative to LA, NYC might be perceived as "a serious city"--per Smith's remark in the team's video self-interview here--but The Big Apple, historically and demonstrably, can more than hold its own in the humor, especially transgressive humor, department. So, much as I enjoyed the pair's talents and versatility--particularly Smith's substantial technique, investment, sauciness and heart--I'm a little underwhelmed by c&s's claim to riskiness. "...a risky undressing of the politics of performing race," reads one of their promo materials. The company bio refers to a goal of using their collaborative process to "complicate, question and illuminate gender and sexuality dynamics and the cultural politics embedded in the ways bodies are traditionally represented in dance." But maybe the issue is with rhetoric. If so, these two should consider getting out from under.

In their show, Casebolt identifies herself as married to a man; Smith, as gay and it's complicated. I guess the most offbeat thing about watching them work together is not all the slapsticky grabbing and referencing of private parts that goes on, not the joking around about farts nor the image of Casebolt struggling to keep fruit from toppling out of her Carmen Miranda turban as she sings "I Feel Pretty" in a Spanish accent. Rather it's their acknowledgement that the intimacy and chemistry between hardworking creative partners who adore each other as much as they clearly do could be read by outsiders as sexual.

Happily, most of their material does not strain for significance, and perhaps significance arrives. They are fine when they allow subtlety and feeling and original ideas to surface. In the brand-new *O(h)*, there's a section that tickles me, where the pair physically demonstrate how hard it is to overcome the creative limitations of a two-person company and how hard it would be even to adopt works by other companies. (Charles Weidman? Two people cannot form a mob. A typical Ailey wedge of dancers? Not enough arms. A corps de ballet with just two swans? Pitiful.) This passage offers a fresh look and one well-rooted in dance.

Presented as part of Joyce SoHo's international **INBOUND Festival**, casebolt and smith continue their series tonight and Sunday. For more information and ticketing for this and other INBOUND programs, click [here](#).