

# The Sounds Of Silence

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**The cast of “Small Mouth Sounds.” Front row: Nael Nacer, Gigi Watson, Sam Simahk. Back row: Kerry A. Dowling, Celeste Oliva, Barlow Adamson. (Photo, Nile Scott Studios)**

You might say that playwright Bess Wohl has a way with words except that there aren't very many in “Small Mouth Sounds,” a play that features six characters in search of nirvana at a yoga retreat that bans speaking. But you would certainly say that the six actors portraying those characters and their director, M. Bevin O’Gara, have a way with Bess Wohl.

At the very least, the SpeakEasy Stage Company production of “Small Mouth Sounds” (at the Boston Center for the Arts’ Calderwood Pavilion) is a testament to the depth of acting talent in Boston theater as O’Gara and company master the premise of drawing out a character by gestures, expressions and other forms of body language.

It’s no surprise that veterans Celeste Oliva, Nael Nacer, Barlow Adamson and Kerry A. Dowling are so funny – and touching – but Sam Simahk, previously known for his singing, shows that he’s more than just a pretty voice and Gigi Watson is a revelation as a confused and sexy twentysomething.

If the execution of Wohl's very cute writing is near-flawless, I'm not sure how much beyond cuteness that Wohl goes. Marianna Bassham's offstage yoga instructor is a stick-figure satire, reaching for a cell phone she claims she doesn't own at every opportunity, losing her inner peace at the least provocation, etc.

"Small Mouth Sounds" reminds me of Annie Baker's "Circle Mirror Transformation" in which a group of socially diverse Vermonters come together in a psychodramatic acting class and are actually transformed by the experience. I don't sense anything close to that kind of transformation here, though it does end on a smart note about the joys and terrors of the world at large.

Since Wohl has spoken about the need for audience members to fill in the blanks themselves you could say that the fault, dear Brutus, is not in Wohl's writing but in myself. Well, maybe. But the day after seeing "Small Mouth Sounds" it's pretty much gone from memory and eight or nine years later I'm still thinking about "Circle Mirror Transformation."

Still, Wohl's writing is sharp as far as it goes and it's a superb showcase of the talents of everyone involved in the production. Sometimes the individual riffs seem like acting exercises, but if you were a producer looking in on them, you'd sign this sextet up immediately.

["Small Mouth Sounds" continues at SpeakEasy Stage Company through Feb. 2.](#)