

BAY AREA REPORTER



Joan Marcus

Will Bond is avant-gardist Robert Wilson in Anne Bogart's *Bob*.

Being Robert Wilson

'Bob' at the Magic Theatre

by Richard Dodds

The avant-garde director Robert Wilson lets himself and his brethren off easily. "Most artists don't understand what they are doing," he says. "I don't think they have to." It is the audience's job to sort it all out, he adds. Well, thanks a lot.

The above quote is heard in *Bob*, a one-man play described as "a dramatic portrait inspired by Robert Wilson." Anne Bogart, who conceived and directed the show, is also one to scramble traditional theatrical constructs, and so we have avant-garde squared in *Bob*. Audiences, start your engines.

Created by Bogart's SITI Company, *Bob* arrives via the Magic Theatre following performances in several other cities. All the words heard from the Cowell stage have been uttered by Wilson, but they have been pulled from the linear forms of language and turned into an accompaniment to Bogart's visual interpretations.

"My work is a mystery to me," says the Wilson character, a simple enough thought that appar-

ently becomes more meaningful if it is accompanied by a series of weird hand gestures. Will Bond, who plays Wilson, also pushes a table around the stage and occasionally climbs beneath it.

Bob probably works best if you just let the words, gestures, flashes of light, and crashing music wash over you. And even then, it's best if you're a performance-art kind of person. I guess you can tell I'm not, at least not as imagined by Bogart. Ninety minutes can seem kinda long when you're not buying into the director's style.

Obviously, there are those who do, and perhaps also those who think they should. But as Wilson said, it's up to the audience to define what the artist is attempting. For this theatergoer, *Bob* is a paean to another artist who thinks along the same lines. Are they your lines? All I can say is they weren't my lines. ▼

***Bob* will have final performances at the Cowell Theatre, Fort Mason, on March 28-31. Tickets are \$22-\$47, with \$10 for student/senior rush tickets. Call 441-8822.**