

# Magic Theater hosts *Bob*, a genius

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*Play by Play*  
Stage & Screen, Dance & Art



Theater Review by Robert Lee Hall

*Bob*, now at the Magic Theater in San Francisco's Fort Mason, is the SITI Company's one-man play about Robert Wilson. Robert who? If you recognize the name, you're more au courant than I. My memory sketched some sort of painter or sculptor, maybe a theater person, but anything further vanished in a fog of ignorance.

Now I know: Robert Wilson is a contemporary genius.

Like SITI's recent *Room*, which was an evocation of writer Virginia Woolf, *Bob* sets out to evoke another complex and challenging artist. The play itself is complex and challenging; it's also a striking piece of work.

Who is Robert Wilson? Born sixty years ago in Waco, Texas, Wilson studied art (his works have been shown in the Boston Fine Arts Museum and Paris's Pompidou Center), before moving on to theater, where he's become a world-renowned creator of avant-garde shows like *Einstein on the Beach* and *the CIVIL warS* (his spelling), that have pulled in just about every award in sight. His aim is to make us experience theater, and the moment, more di-

rectly. He wants to yank the blinders from our eyes. Of his creative process, he says, "Instead of saying 'This is it,' 'I say, 'What is it?'"

As depicted in the play Anne Bogart and Jocelyn Clarke assembled from his pronouncements, Wilson is a quirky motormouth, spouting ideas with childlike delight: "Promises are made to be broken," "It's necessary to get lost," "We don't have a sense of danger."

Actor Will Bond's careful yet explosive performance is a tour-de-force that does a rare and difficult

thing: convinces us we're in the presence of genius.

The production features brilliant lighting by Mimi Jordan Sherin and evocative sound by Darron L. West. It's assembled according to the precise, choreographic methods of director Anne Bogart, but whereas those methods seemed to me to suffocate Virginia Woolf in *Room*, they liberate Robert Wilson here, in a witty and provocative homage.

*Bob* plays at the Magic Theater until March 31. For tickets call 415-441-8822.

**PIEDMONT POST**

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