

'Bob' is mesmerizing celebration of Robert Wilson

By Mike Steele
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Anne Bogart's "Bob," a one-man meditation on the thoughts and theater of Robert Wilson, a visionary visual artist and stage director, is a work that manages in 90 minutes to capture not only the essential Wilson, but also Bogart herself and any other *auteur* whose work runs ahead of the pack.

Acted with wit, precision and power by Will Bond, it's a mesmerizing celebration of contemporary, nonrealistic, imagistic theater in which lights, sound, movement and gesture form the texts far more than words.

Wilson is an intuitive artist who has held audiences spell-bound for productions that have run seven hours, 24 hours, even seven days. He energizes space and plays with time, stretching it elastically to the point where mundane actions take on explosive proportions.

Bond, who has worked with Wilson, captures Wilson's soft Texas accent, the goony grin, the tempestuousness beneath the "aw, shucks" surfaces. He can be capti-

Theater review

Bob

- **Who:** Will Bond stars in the one-man show, created and directed by Anne Bogart, presented as part of the "Out There" series by Walker Art Center and Southern Theater.
- **Where:** Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Av. S., Minneapolis.
- **When:** 8 p.m. today; 7 p.m. Sunday.
- **Tickets:** \$15; call 612-375-7622.
- **Review:** Bogart and Bond have created an immensely imaginative work about the theatrical imagination.

vatingly charming, goofily endearing and roaringly tyrannical.

Bogart's play doesn't try to create anything like a linear biography. Like Wilson, she has pulled a collage of images from his past and his works to get at the essence of the man.

The text of the show was assembled by Irish critic Jocelyn Clarke from Wilson's writings and



Will Bond captures visual artist-stage director Robert Wilson's tempestuousness beneath the "aw, shucks" surfaces in a powerful performance of Anne Bogart's "Bob."

Photo by
Joan Marcus

interviews. Every word is his, artfully rearranged by Bogart and Bond. He ruminates on the adventure and mystery of creation — "If you know why you're doing something, don't do it" — and the responsibility of artists — "I draw pictures, not meanings; the audience draws the meanings."

Wilson's complex, high-tech productions are evoked here through Mimi Jordan Sherin's dynamic painterly lighting, which cuts through and controls the space; by Darron L. West's evocative sound score, which matches the range of the lighting, and by

Bogart's deft use of minimal means, in which even a bottle of milk can take on huge iconic force to show the power Wilson can project onto simple objects.

All the while, Bond, in his cool way, lets you in on a personal life, especially a boyhood with a stern mother, a noncommunicative father and a desire to rise above Waco that touchingly reflects on the aesthetic that would grow out of it. It's an uncanny *tour de force* performance of amazing range, an imaginative characterization that confronts a bold theatrical imagination.

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M. McLaughlin