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## Arts Review

By Barry Pineo

### I Witness

**Blue Theatre, 916 Springdale, 522-4045, [www.tuttotheatre.org](http://www.tuttotheatre.org)**

**Through Sept. 4**

**Running time: 1 hr, 15 min.**

I once had the distinct privilege (the distinct pleasure) of standing in front of a painting of some water lilies rendered by Vincent Van Gogh. I had seen many photographs of Van Gogh's paintings and had always loved them. I felt as though,

somehow, he captured the essence of experience and distilled it into an embodiment of that essence while keeping it entirely itself. However, I had never seen one of his actual paintings until I stood in front of those watery flowers. I looked for a long time, allowing the painting to absorb me. This painting that distilled not just the essence of the flowers and the essence of the artist but the essence of what it means to be artful, to be artist, to be art.

As an arts writer, I must be of two minds. I must subjectively experience what I see while allowing room to objectively evaluate it for the reading public. The public wants my opinion – that's why they read the review. What purpose does a review serve if it doesn't, on some level, express the writer's opinion? But occasionally I see something about which I do not wish to be objective. Rather, I wish to experience it entirely subjectively. I want to enter into the art, as I entered into Van Gogh's painting, because I am who I am, at that moment in time, and the art invites me – me, specifically, the essence of me – to become a part of it. Tutto Theatre Company's *I Witness* is just such a piece.

*I Witness* is a collaborative dance/spoken-word production that succeeds in embodying the truth of a dream state. In this dream, words from disparate sources – Fernando Pessoa, St. Augustine, Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr – echo in and out of music from equally disparate sources, while seven dancers embody the words and the music and the feelings of the words and the music. The two actors that speak the words wisely understand that the words, in the context of the dream, carry tremendous weight and power, and they do not overembellish, as so many actors tend to do. They simply speak them clearly and directly and allow the words to work on us. The dances are choreographed by three different individuals, yet each dance takes elements from all the others, so all seem to come from one mind. The group mind. Rich and varied lights

and distorted, projected images blend in and out, reflecting the moods of the words and movements as thoroughly as the performers reflect and echo one another. And when they are not dancing or speaking, the actors and dancers sit and witness the dream, always a part of it, though they sit apart and alone. This dream of love, of pain, of loneliness, of togetherness. This dream of life. Of what it means to be human.

When it ended, I did not wish it to end, though I know all things end. Oh yes, all things, end they do. And then begin again, though we so often sleep through the beginnings – and the endings, too. We are asleep to ourselves, so we become most ourselves when we sleep. And when we wake, we wake to a dream. *I Witness* embodies our waking, sleeping dream, and you should not miss the opportunity to live it.

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