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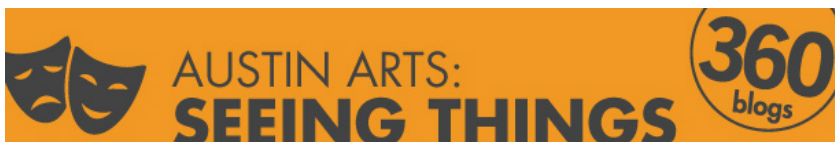
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**Jeanne Claire van Ryzin** is the arts critic for the Austin American-Statesman where she has worked since 1999. She moved to Austin from New York City in 1986. Her work has appeared in Architecture, Art Papers, Dwell and The Review of Contemporary Fiction, among other publications. When she is not busy seeing things in Austin, she travels to see even more things.

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# 37 Review: 'I Witness'

By [Cate Blouke](#) | Monday, August 30, 2010, 10:57 AM

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Postmodern is one of those lovely ambiguous labels that tends to get bandied about by critics and academics when we don't exactly know what to say. It often seems to mean whatever its speaker wants it to mean. So in this instance, I'll be sure to clarify.

"I Witness," Tutto Theatre Company's current production, running now through Sept. 4 at the Blue Theatre, is definitely postmodern. What makes it postmodern? The intentional juxtaposition of "high" and "low" culture, and a disorienting use of fragments, pastiche, montage — to me, these are fundamental aspects of postmodern art. While a collage sort of performance can make it difficult to focus on any given thing, it also allows you options about where to look or listen, which can be nice.

Billed as "an evening of dance (and spoken-word) with choreography by Amanda Oakley, Shawn Nasralla, and Jennifer Micallef," the show is neither a play, nor a poetry reading, nor a dance recital... it's all three — sort of.

It's a play only in the sense that there does seem to be some sort of narrative through line that deals with love, identity and physics. There are performers who speak lines to an audience. And it happens in a theater.

The lines are a mish-mash of poetry, literary excerpts, quotations and explanations of physics by Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr, verging dangerously on the edge of pretentious. These "spoken-words" can be difficult to follow despite the actors efforts. Lizzi Biggers infuses her lines with captivating ardor, but Alex Cogburn would have done well to find some emotions to put behind his.

The dancing is certainly not traditional though classical elements appear, and it occasionally reminded me more of pilates than of pirouettes — which actually made it much more enjoyable than that might sound. Seeing legs in the air and not on the ground was disorienting in a delightful way and at times produced a whimsical sort of beauty that can be lacking in more stoic forms of dancing.

The play of shadows orchestrated by Natalie George's breathtaking light design is worth the trip in itself, but the talented array of dancers really make the magic happen. Unlike a traditional chorus line, each woman stands out with her own shape, size, and costume.

You may have to pick a favorite to focus on with so much happening at once, but it's not like that's a new dilemma for anyone living in the age of the world wide web.



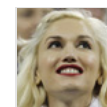
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8 p.m. Thursday - Saturday. \$15 (Thursdays pay-what-you-can). [www.tuttotheatre.org](http://www.tuttotheatre.org)

Cate Blouke is an American-Statesman freelance arts critic.

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