

It Is She Who I See by Interference Arts at the Ritz Theater

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By [Janet Preus](#)



This is not exactly a review, but then “It Is She Who I See” is not exactly a play. I would like, however, to try to describe it to you because if you’re the sort of person whose interest is piqued by a show billed as an “immersive multimedia performance,” this is something you don’t want to miss.

In its inaugural production, Interference Arts, a new company of creative artists led by artistic director and composer Craig Harris, has set out to blend genres and disciplines in its exploration of gender imbalance. I would say it is necessary to do a little advance research, or at least read the program, to be clear on that point. You may figure out that it has something to do with gender and inequity, but you’re better than I if you can spot Sleeping Beauty and Alice in Wonderland among the characters without being tipped off.

This company is not out to preach or pander. It creates an evocative milieu, puts you in it, and lets you respond as you will. It’s really a completely different approach to issue-grounded performance, and it’s both engaging and inclusive. I thought it was wonderful, even if I didn’t always follow the course mapped by the original intent.

It doesn’t matter. This a very beautiful piece – a rich kaleidoscope of colors, patterns, still images and video blended with a highly evocative soundscape of acoustic instruments and electronic sound: piano, percussion, English horn and cello, primarily, as well as spoken and singing voices that often serve as another instrument rather than a solo “on top” of accompaniment.

Visually it is stunning. The projections on scrim hung on different planes serve to obscure what we see, on one hand, but bring it all together on the other, even creating a hologram-like effect that really is immersive. The integration of projections and live performance is virtually seamless.

A single dancer, Paul Herwig, is the dramatic foil for the wash of visual and aural elements, a place to focus, something to hang on to, a guide through the environment of color, light, patterns and music. Herwig’s interpretation felt so open and generous to me, although almost the entire performance is contained in a three-level “box,” much too

small for his powerful frame, requiring measured care to make a move at all. It's amazing to watch him transform into a bird attempting escape, with a projected winged counterpart sailing across the scrim behind him.

A hefty list of impressive and varied collaborators were necessary to bring this before an audience; the experience works because those artists are very good at what they do. The instrumentalists are topnotch, the singers are glorious, and the dancer is mesmerizing. This is not "playing around with an idea," this is a fully realized interpretation, a carefully integrated work where all the elements coalesce to become one element – just as any good piece of theater should do. Check the Interference Arts or Ritz Theater websites to learn more about the artists and the process.

My only frustration was with not understanding the words – at all – particularly in "The Hill Has Something to Say," the first piece, which was otherwise sung magnificently by Norah Long.

"It Is She Who I See" runs only through Sunday (Nov. 18), but if you miss this one, do look for future productions. This company has something new to say in the arts community and I think we should pay attention.