

Forest Park alive with sound of music, movements of dance and works of art

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There were a thousand stories in Forest Park this past weekend. This is one of them.

You wake up late — 12:30. You're scheduled to review "Finding the Forest," a performance event in Forest Park that started at noon. You blast open your eyes with a quick cup of coffee and run toward the bus. The show only lasts until 4:00 and unless you hurry you'll miss it.

The bus driver lets you off near the park and points in the general direction of the entrance. After trudging several nearly vertical blocks you realize it's the wrong entrance. It's now 2:15, and you don't even know where the performance is. "Finding the Forest." Good title.

You resort to reading the directions printed on the program and at long last find the forest. It's 2:45.

The trail is 2½ miles long, with performers and works of art stationed throughout its length. It will take at least an hour just to walk that far. You laugh at the wry wit of

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Bill Boese's collection of conflicting street signs that mark the edge of the city, then sprint through the gate.

The first thing you see is a man wearing a suit and hiking boots who zooms past then shifts into slow motion with cinematic precision. You wonder, is he a performer?

Several hundred yards up the path you spot Linda Wysong's installation "Chairs." You stop, sit down and for the first time take a deep breath and look around. You notice the gorgeous fall sky, trees gently dancing in the breeze, the silence. People that pass whisper as if in church. You linger a moment, tasting the pine scented air, then move on, much more to see.

You know there are musicians roaming around but all you hear is the whistling wind nearby; a few birds singing above you; the percussive snap of twigs beneath your feet; the pounding of your heart. Strolling to a symphony of sounds, you forget the musicians. You gaze at spider

webs shining like exquisite jewels in narrow shafts of sunlight. Elaborately detailed patterns grace the leaves that brush past you. Your lungs fill with oxygen, your body relaxes.

Around the next corner Tim Warner's wooden frames float in the air, suspended like spiders between trees. All contain engaging vistas of the ravine in which they're hung. It's a stunning scene, at once surreal and perfectly natural. By the time you continue your watch says 4:00, but you don't care.

People coming from the opposite direction are raving about a fabulous performance they've just seen by dancers Linda K. Johnson and Mary Oslund. Others discuss hearing music floating off the hills. There are a thousand different perceptions of the event, all equally valid.

A woman breathing heavily huffs up and asks: "Is there something at the end of the trail? I sure hope it's worth it." You want to say that "like life, it's the voyage, not the destination that's important," but she's already passed.