

American MASTERS

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American Masters

GLASS: a portrait of Philip in twelve parts

Philip Glass biography by Tim Page

Through his operas, his symphonies, his compositions for his own ensemble, and his wide-ranging collaborations with artists ranging from Twyla Tharp to Allen Ginsberg, and Woody Allen to David Bowie, Philip Glass has had an extraordinary and unprecedented impact upon the musical and intellectual life of his time.

The operas – Einstein on the Beach, Satyagraha, Akhnaten, and The Voyage, among many others – play throughout the world’s leading houses, and rarely to an empty seat. Glass has written music for experimental theater and film. He received three Academy Award® nominations for Notes on a Scandal, The Hours and Martin Scorsese’s Kundun. Glass also won a Golden Globe for best original score for The Truman Show. KOYAANISQATSI, his initial filmic landscape with Godfrey Reggio and the Philip Glass Ensemble, may be the most radical and influential mating of sound and vision since Fantasia. His associations - personal and professional - with leading rock, pop and world music artists date back to the 1960s, including the beginning of his collaborative relationship with artist Robert Wilson. Indeed, Glass is the first composer to win a wide, multi-generational audience in the opera house, the concert hall, the dance world, in film and in popular music – simultaneously.

Born in 1937, Glass grew up in Baltimore and studied at The University of Chicago, The Juilliard School, and in Aspen, Colorado with Darius Milhaud. Finding himself dissatisfied with

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much of what then passed for modern music, he moved to Europe, where he studied with the legendary pedagogue Nadia Boulanger (who also taught Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson and Quincy Jones) and worked closely with the sitar virtuoso and composer Ravi Shankar. He returned to New York in 1967 and formed the Philip Glass Ensemble – seven musicians playing keyboards and a variety of woodwinds, amplified and fed through a mixer.

The new musical style that Glass was evolving was eventually dubbed “minimalism.” Glass never liked the term “minimalism” and preferred to speak of himself as a composer of “music with repetitive structures.” Much of his early work was based on the extended reiteration of brief, elegant melodic fragments that wove in and out of an aural tapestry.

There has been nothing “minimalist” about his output however. In the past twenty-five years, Glass composed more than twenty operas - large and small; eight symphonies (with two more currently in the works); two piano concertos and concertos for violin, piano, timpani, and saxophone quartet and orchestra; string quartets; a growing body of work for solo piano and organ. Among many others, he has collaborated with Paul Simon, Linda Ronstadt, Yo-Yo Ma, and Doris Lessing. Glass also has a film career composing soundtracks to films ranging from the stylized classics of Jean Cocteau to Errol Morris’ Academy Award® winning documentaries. He presents lectures, workshops, and solo keyboard performances around the world, and continues to appear regularly with the Philip Glass Ensemble.

Glass' *Book of Longing*, based on Leonard Cohen's poetry collection of the same name, premiered in Toronto in June 2007.

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Upcoming Philip Glass projects include:

May 22-31, 2009

A tour of *An Evening of Chamber Music* by Philip Glass featuring Philip Glass, Wendy Sutter and Mick Rossi, in Spain and the UK.

July 23, 2009

The Philip Glass Ensemble performs *Koyaanisqatsi* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl.

September 20, 2009

The premiere of Glass' new opera about the mathematician and astronomer, Johannes Kepler, in Linza, Austria.

More info at philipglass.com

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