

# Cabrillo Festival concert makes hands red

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The second week of the Cabrillo Music Festival started off Thursday night with a surefire audience builder, "An Evening with Philip Glass" at the newly built Temple Beth El in Aptos.

Friday night's orchestral program, led by guest conductor Carl St. Clair, at First Congregational

## Review

Church was wonderful. With the consummate mastery of violinist Andres Cardenes performing Brahms' "Violin Concerto in D major," Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes," Silverstre Revueltas' "Sensemaya" and Glass' "The Canyon," you couldn't go wrong. The audience seemed to think so; they just wouldn't leave. People stood clapping their hands red long into the night.

"An Evening with Philip Glass" revealed varied perspectives in the chamber medium by the world's reigning opera composer. Those who came expecting one of Glass' notorious electric jams of yore had to settle for fewer decibels and only intermittent motor rhythms — on acoustic piano, no less. On the other hand, those accustomed to straight-laced chamber recitals had to endure rock 'n roll chord progressions and a foot stompin' piano style by Music Director, Dennis Russell Davies as he accompanied his

wife, soprano Renate Gola, in Glass' "Open the Kingdom," a song which he co-wrote with David Byrne of the Talking Heads. It was a crossover concert, a species of stylistic hybrid which Cabrillo Music Festival audiences are not only familiar with, but prone towards.

The evening's repertoire aptly reflected the scope and focuses of Glass' theatrical endeavors. Two excerpts from his 1976 opera "Einstein on the Beach" were performed, along with prelude music to Samuel Beckett's "Endgame" (1988). "Facade" (1981) for soprano saxophone and piano was originally composed for the film "Koyaanisqatsi" and "Metamorphoses Nos. 2, 3 & 4" (1988) were extracted from Glass' film score for "The Thin Blue Line" and his music for a staged version of Kafka's play of the same name. While Glass' "String Quartet No. 4" (1989) wasn't written for theatrical purposes, it was composed *in memoriam* for the composer's friend, artist Brian Boczack. As Glass explained in an interview last week, he considers the piece programmatic, in that it is based on a specific subject. Glass/Byrne's "Open the Kingdom" was neither theatre music nor chamber music in the usual sense. It is plain and simple, a rock song; albeit with sophisticated piano embellishments.

The selections from "Einstein on the Beach" called special virtuositities to the fore, as well as the most arresting musi-

cal ideas. Festival Concertmaster Romuald Tecco's supple and precise performance of the unaccompanied violin solo from the opera's "Knee Play No. 2" endowed Glass' commonstock materials—scales and arpeggios—with fluidity, warmth and drama. The violinist's fine, tapered lines radiated like gossamer at dawn, and his unerring bead on tempo aided the work's rhythmic play between sections of triplets and even-tuos.

Many in the audience probably recognized soprano saxophonist William Trimble from his innumerable local appearances, including many with the Festival. On Thursday Trimble performed "Facades" and "The Bed" from "Einstein on the Beach." In both instances, he contributed lyricism of extraordinary delicacy—like Tecco—infusing a level of nuance that is not usually afforded Glass' oft-performed electric ensemble works.

The String Quartet was quiescent in its most involving moments, plain in others, and overall informed by a kind of innocence one rarely encounters from composers in their 50s. Snap judgments I'll reserve, however, because Glass' reorientation of such relegated means as triads and scales warrants a different perspective from listeners. Glass' music requires that we listen for what the music is rather than what it is not. Among other things, he has tampered much with our expectations of what music should do. If

certain pieces seemed less than effective in recital, it's likely because they were presented outside of their intended theatrical contexts.

Glass' orchestral work "The Canyon," performed Friday night, included about as much variety as all of Thursday's repertoire put together. In "The Canyon," Glass braved levels of harmonic and timbral complexities unlike witnessed before by the renowned minimalist. The music rode on a scintillating groove of snare crush rolls and shakers that slipped in and out 5 and 6 beat patterns. A rather typical Glass-style chord progression ran throughout much of the piece, but tedium was averted with the introduction of an intense, erratic theme—in a new key—announced by the percussion (bells, wood and drums). The tonality of the new melody created a strident, uplifting, discord with the already established chordal material, clashing wonderfully like some Balinese gamelan from out of the blue.

Revueltas' "Sensemaya" had rhythmic allures of a primal sort. The music arose from a low, throbbing pattern on drums and contrabassoon that held strong throughout the piece. New timbres and rhythms one by one crept in, gradually leading into a tropical forest of musical activity. Revueltas' orchestration had many striking ideas, and although his

manner of development and mood were not too unlike Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," the music had a strong personality of its own.

Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes" was a wholly enthralling workout that showcased a number of the orchestra's principles to great effect. The piece featured ten variations, each focusing on a different instrument or group, and the composer's seamless fashioning from one variation to the next made cohesive form of the whole.

Friday's second half was given to Brahms' "Violin Concerto." It filled up the slot handsomely, offering a wealth of melodic riches far beyond that of other concertos. Cardenes proved perfect for such a job, with peerless virtuosity and great subtlety of tone. Technique never seemed an issue, he glided through the work's swift and intricate passagework like a bird in flight. With neither affect or histrionics, he embraced the music's varied expressive countenances, maintaining a demeanor of utmost calm throughout. Conductor St. Clair was something of another matter. Although he elicited excellent results from the Orchestra in all four works, his indulgence in podium mannerisms were so distracting that I kept my eyes closed for the better part of the evening.