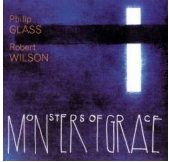


Philip Glass & Robert Wilson - Monsters Of Grace (2007)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 19 April 2016 14:06 -

Philip Glass & Robert Wilson - Monsters Of Grace (2007)



1. *Where Everything is Music* 2. *The Needle* 3. *Don't Go Back to Sleep* 4. *In the Arc of Your Mallet* 5. *My Worst Habit* 6. *Like This* 7. *Stereo Gram* 8. *Let the Letter Read You* 9. *Boy Beach and Ball* 10. *They Say Paradise Will Be Perfect* 11. *The New Rule* 12. *An Artist Comes to Paint You* 13. *Boy on Fire* Marie Mascari - Soprano Alexandra Montano - Mezzo-Soprano Gregory Purnhagen - Baritone Peter Stewart - Bass The Philip Glass Ensemble Michael Riesman – Conductor, Mixing Monsters of Grace - A digital opera in three dimensions for ensemble and soloists. Poems by Jalaluddin Rumi, translated and adapted from the original by Coleman Barks.

Over the last three years, Bob Wilson and I have been meeting to work on a new theater piece, Monsters of Grace. Since *Einstein on the Beach* in '76, we have come together on several occasions to make new work, but unlike those projects, with this present work, we have had a real opportunity to sit together and engage in a new world of ideas. Of course image, music and structure are at the root of what we are thinking. We are, moreover, addressing a challenge of a new technology and its impact of a developing artistic view. It is fair to say that as an on going process, it is still fluid, elusive, and for us, full of surprise.— Philip Glass, 1997, philipglass.com

Monsters of Grace, the 1997 Philip Glass/Robert Wilson collaboration, marked a new direction for Wilson; this opera consisted of an animated film accompanied by singers in the pit with the instrumentalists rather than on-stage. Difficulties in communicating Wilson's vision to the animators left both collaborators dissatisfied with the result, and the opera hasn't established itself as one of their most performed works, but regardless of the work's future as a theater piece, it's good to have a recording that preserves the music. The texts are based on Coleman Barks' translations of the poetry of Jeleluddin Rumi, the thirteenth century Sufi poet. There is no

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traditional narrative arc or any apparent relationship of the texts to the title of the piece, but each of Rumi's poems is a miracle of astonishing imagination. Glass' orchestration convincingly incorporates a Middle Eastern sound in its imitation of string and wind instruments of the region, giving the piece a regional specificity that's not present in the "character" operas of his trilogy. His text setting in English is uneven; the opening song, "Where Everything Is Music," is awkwardly set, but others are completely convincing. The songs in which he uses more than one voice, or which are conceived chorally, are generally more effective than the solo songs. His setting of "Like This," one of Rumi's most celebrated poems, is entirely graceful, transcendently lovely, and profound. It's the most conventionally "Glassian" music in the opera, and easily the musical high point; it's also proof that the expressive possibilities of the composer's trademark idiom are far from exhausted. Glass' stellar ensemble is joined by the excellent vocal quartet of Marie Mascari, Alexandra Montano, Gregory Purnhagen, and Peter Stewart. The release fills a major gap in the recorded account of Glass' work. The album should be of interest to any fans of minimalism, and the depth and subtlety of "Like This" are powerful enough to make the composer's most skeptical critics reevaluate their prejudices. --- Stephen Eddins, Rovi

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