



FEBRUARY

1

7:30 PM

BRUCKNER ORCHESTER LINZ PERFORMS PHILIP GLASS

Dennis Russell Davies, chief conductor
Robert McDuffie, violin

PRESENTING SPONSOR

The William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust

PERFORMANCE BENEFACTOR

John and Marree Townsend

□ **JAN 31, 1937**

Born in Baltimore,
Maryland.

□ **1952**

Enrolls in University of Chicago
after passing their entrance exam,
bypassing finishing high school.

□ **1956**

Applies for entrance
to Juilliard as a flautist;
is not granted entry.

Perhaps the most significant turning point in Philip Glass's music came around 1980. After the sold-out premiere of *Einstein on the Beach* in 1976, Philip Glass had emerged as a major voice. *Einstein* represented the culmination of Glass's early style, one shaped in dialogue with a community of SoHo artists including director Robert Wilson and choreographer Lucinda Childs. Written for the amplified Philip Glass Ensemble and spoken voices that intoned an abstract text, the work shattered the conventions of opera. His next opera represented an equally radical gesture, except one that gestured towards a much more traditional world. Written for the Netherlands Opera, the 1979 *Satyagraha* was composed for full orchestra and the conventional operatic voice.

As Glass turned from the reedy timbre of *Einstein* towards the lush symphonic sound of *Satyagraha*, one particular musician was paying close attention. Having recently relocated to Stuttgart, the American conductor Dennis Russell Davies first encountered Glass when he offered to conduct the German premiere of *Satyagraha*. He heard, in the new opera, the emergence of a major orchestral voice. "I'm not going to let you be one of those opera

composers that never writes a symphony," the conductor apparently told Glass. At the helm of the American Composers Orchestra and Brooklyn Philharmonic, Davies embarked on a commissioning spree. By the early 1990s, Glass had transformed from the leader of a rock band-like ensemble that performed in art galleries to a celebrated author of works for the opera house and concert hall. The maverick had become a veritable classical composer.

"I wrote the piece in 1987 thinking, let me write a piece that my father would have liked."

In this concert, Davies leads the Bruckner Orchester Linz—for which he has served as music director since 2002—in a survey of three major works. Though the orchestra is named for Anton Bruckner, it is more appropriate to Glass's music than one might think: the nineteenth-century →

□ 1957 →

Enrolls in Juilliard's one-year extension program in composition to study with Stanley Wolfe. Enrolls as a full-time composition student.

□ Meets Steve Reich, Arthur Murphy, Peter Schickele at Juilliard. Becomes enamored with new forms of jazz, particularly Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker.

Austrian composer and the twenty-first century New York minimalist share a fascination with building repetitive figures into large canvasses of symphonic sound. *Days and Nights in Rocinha*, a rugged and percussive tone poem, represents Philip Glass's tribute to a neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro that he frequently visited. The Violin Concerto No. 1 is arguably Glass's most famous work, written in a deliberately populist idiom as a tribute to the composer's late father. "I wrote the piece in 1987 thinking, let me write a piece that my father would have liked," the composer once said. "A very smart nice man who had no education in music whatsoever, but the kind of person who fills up concert halls."

The highlight of the program is Glass's Symphony No. 11. Having completed his Ninth Symphony in 2012—at the time, he shrugged off the so-called "Curse of the Ninth" that doomed Mahler and Beethoven to never complete a Tenth Symphony as a "silly jinx"—Glass has pressed forward with the storied genre. His approach to the form has always been eclectic; past symphonies have included homages to David Bowie and Brian Eno, abstract exercises in polytonality, multicultural celebrations of the millennium, and a rearrangement of music

originally written for a fireworks show. In a June 2016 interview, he said that work on the new symphony was proceeding according to plan. "It looks like I'm going to make the deadline," he said with a laugh.

For a composer steeped in the worlds of film and theater, the abstraction of the form always presents difficulties. "Symphonies are challenging," he added. "It's easier for me to work with librettos and filmmakers because you have a lot of structure and you have a lot of content that just comes automatically. When you write a symphony, you've gotta make it up—I make up pretty much all of it." ■

ESSAY by WILLIAM ROBIN

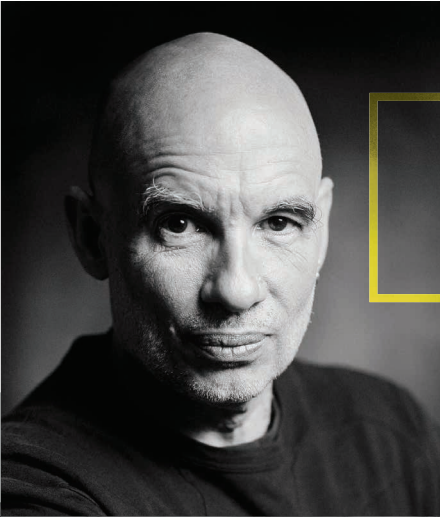
PROGRAM

PHILIP GLASS *Days and Nights in Rocinha*
Violin Concerto No. 1
Robert McDuffie, violin
Symphony No. 11

1964 →

Moves to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger, where he lives until 1967.

“At this stage, my commitment to being a composer was complete. The only risk I had was that I might die before I could become one.”



▣ Meets Chuck Close.

▣ 1965 →

Photographer David Laucher brings Glass in to work on the film *Chappaqua*, where he meets Ravi Shankar.

▣ **“I brought away...a new way of looking at possible rhythmic structures in music.”**