

The New York Times

Arts&LEISURE

THE NEW SEASON

September 18, 2011

ALLAN KOZINN

Philip Glass, A Minimalist Maximized

WHEN the notion of the Park Avenue Armory's becoming a temporary home for the New York Philharmonic during a proposed refurbishing of Avery Fisher Hall (still waiting) was raised, listeners were understandably skeptical: could the hangarlike Wade Thompson Drill Hall possibly be configured as an acoustically appropriate space for concert performances? Those doubts began to vanish in 2008, when the Lincoln Center Festival presented Bernd Alois Zimmermann's opera "Die Soldaten" at the armory. And in February, the armory itself brought in Eighth Blackbird, the adventurous new-music ensemble, to assemble its first Tune-In Festival, which was judged a hit.

Tune-In returns (Feb. 23 to 26) in an installment that is essentially a four-day celebration of Philip Glass's 75th birthday, a milestone he reaches on Jan. 31. Mr. Glass programmed everything but the opening concert. But that event — a work based on Allen Ginsberg's epic poem "Kaddish," commissioned for the occasion from the jazz guitarist Bill Frisell — has at least a tangential connection with Mr. Glass, whose "Hydrogen Jukebox" (1990) and Sixth Symphony ("Plutonium Ode," 2002) are settings of Ginsberg poetry.

More of Ginsberg's work will be heard in the second armory concert. The rock poet Patti Smith will read Ginsberg poetry, and Mr. Glass will play some of his piano works as an accompaniment.

On the third night the Philip Glass Ensemble will give a complete performance of Music in 12 Parts (1971-74) a seminal, nearly four-hour immersion in the techniques and processes that Mr. Glass developed early in his career (just before he

composed his epochal first opera, "Einstein on the Beach"). And the series ends with another crucial but rarely heard early work, "Another Look at Harmony," Part 4 (1975), a fascinating hourlong piece for organ and large chorus in which Mr. Glass mulled over gradually shifting relationships among harmony, melody and

rhythm. The organist will be Michael Riesman, Mr. Glass's longtime music director; the Brooklyn Youth Chorus and the Collegiate Chorale will sing the involved, bright-hued vocal music.

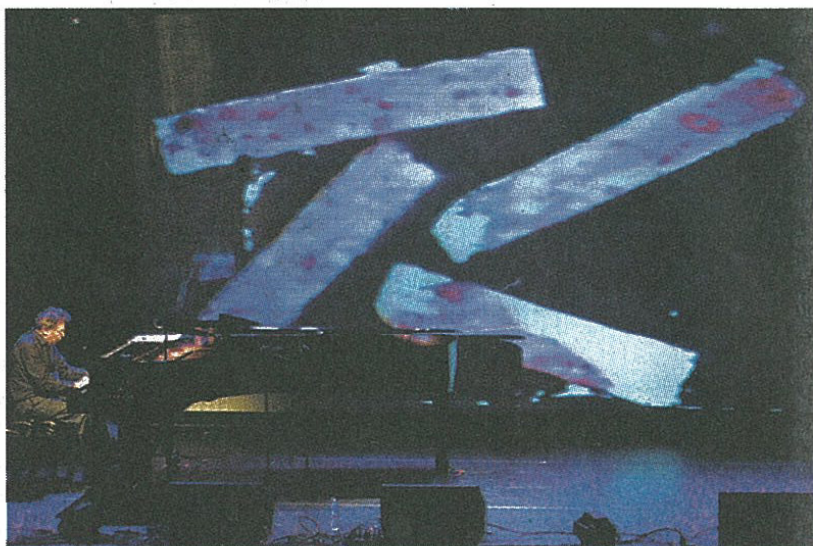
Fans of Mr. Glass's energetic music will have plenty more opportunities to revel in his work. The New York Philharmonic,



STEVE PYKE

having ignored Mr. Glass's work all these years — none of his music has been performed at a Philharmonic subscription concert — will join forces with the Philip Glass Ensemble for the stunning 1982 film score "Koyaanisqatsi," in which Mr. Glass began to trade in repetition for an almost neo-Romantic sense of harmony and color. This was the soundtrack to Geoffrey Reggio's meditation about mankind's negative influence on the planet, and Mr. Riesman will conduct two performances to accompany screenings of the film at Avery Fisher Hall (Nov. 2 and 3).

Just as the final basso profundo chants of "Koyaanisqatsi" are fading away, the Metropolitan Opera will revive its Phelim McDermott production of Mr. Glass's second opera, "Satyagraha" (1980), a metaphorical telling of Gandhi's early life and



KARSTEN MORAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

the development of his nonviolent approach to political protest with a libretto drawn from the Bhagavad Gita (opens Nov. 4). And for listeners who want to hear what Mr. Glass has been up to more recently, Dennis Russell Davies leads the American Composers Orchestra in the American premiere of the Ninth Symphony at Carnegie Hall (Jan. 31). Mr. Davies and the Bruckner Orchestra Linz give the work's premiere in Linz, Austria, on Jan. 1, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic takes it up in the spring at Walt Disney Concert Hall (April 5 to 7).

Actually the Ninth Symphony is not quite Mr. Glass's last word on symphonic form: as a way of avoiding the "curse of the Ninth" — a superstitious fear shared by many post-Beethovenian composers that their ninth symphonies will be their last — Mr. Glass wrote a 10th at the same time. Its premiere has not yet been scheduled.

The composer Philip Glass, left, and in performance at the "Concert for Japan" benefit in April. Mr. Glass's work will be featured in coming months at leading stages including Avery Fisher Hall, the Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall.