Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Einstein on the Beach: Impressions

Chiwan Choi · Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013

I'll forever remember this weekend as *the* weekend in which I got to see *Einstein on the Beach*, the legendary Robert Wilson/Philip Glass opera. It was a singular experience, one that I won't decompress from fully for a while.

I'm no music or theatre critic, so I won't try to break down the music, performance, staging, and all that. Yes, the music was incredible. Yes, I have no idea how those incredible performers could pull off this 4+ hour, no intermission performance. And yes, everything else in the world is NOT *Einstein on the Beach* and that's fucking sad.

What I am going to do is talk briefly about a couple of things: *being trapped in the moment* and *shift*.

MOMENT

The thing that I have loved most about Philip Glass, whose music I was first exposed to so many years ago when I watched Koyaanisqatsi, is the relentless repetition that repetition traps me in the intensity of the moment. As I listen, I know there won't be a second where I can escape it until the piece is done. It forces me to stay engaged in what is happening now, to accept the moment and give into it. When I do, the thing I am left with is me.

SHIFT

More than once, we found ourselves asking things like, *Hey, where did that clock come from?* or *Where did the column of light go?*

Even as we were staring at the stage with such intensity and focus (maybe because of it), we wouldn't notice the column of light in the middle of the stage being slowly pulled up and out of sight until it was gone. A curtain would drop to hide a layer of the stage and I wouldn't know where everything disappeared to.

The changes were so deliberately paced, so incremental, that we couldn't identify the world shifting in front of us.

I could mention now how this applies to the world of publishers and bookstores. But it goes beyond that. This morning we were talking about billion dollar corporations like Nokia or BlackBerry collapsing in the blink of an eye because they couldn't, *wouldn't*, see the world shifting, and about empires in history, all of which eventually fell (and how this one will too) because the ones in power wanted so desperately to hold on to power that they couldn't accept what was changing until it was too late.

I am trying to balance the need to focus on the moment, sometimes so intensely that I won't notice the light leaving the stage, and trying to keep track of all the shifting objects around me while sacrificing the moment that is fleeting.

This entry was posted on Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013 at 5:50 pm and is filed under Theatre, Music, Fiction, Lifestyle, Visual Art
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.