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Night Music, 2014
Oil on Canvas 39 x 50 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

RCA O'NEAL

Really Meeting Philip Glass: Musings upon a Days and Nights Concert

When I was fifteen I was given an assignment in my ninth grade English class to select three individuals from all of history and society with whom I would like to meet. I believe I selected Socrates, Democritus, and, as I remember stating at the time, “the minimalist composer Philip Glass.” Some years before I had discovered my mother’s copy of *Satyagraha* (Glass’s second opera) and felt utterly swept away by it. I suppose there was a bit of nostalgia mixed in, since I had beautiful and mysterious memories from my early childhood—when we still lived in San Francisco—of my mother listening to *Einstein on the Beach* and *Satyagraha* as we drove down the Embarcadero. At the age of twelve or so I found these cassette tapes—antiquated even then—and took to listening to them on our stereo system, turned up to full volume, whenever I was forced to vacuum the living room or partake in other housework. Looking back at it now I am not entirely certain as to why I added Glass to that list. The first two, being philosophers, were, I believe, natural choices for a meeting, given that when one meets one is supposed to talk, and talking is the ideal purview of the philosopher. At the time, my reason for choosing Glass was less clear to me, though of this fact I was unaware. Recently I was given cause to reassess this choice.

The occasion was one of the annual performances in which Glass takes part at the Days and Nights Festival at the Henry Miller Library in Big Sur. Due to the difficulty of the roads and the lack of parking, the festival offers a wine reception in Carmel prior to a shuttle ride to the library. In order to encourage people to arrive punctually, so that the shuttles are not delayed, it was announced that everyone would be entered into a raffle as they arrived, the prize being a signed copy of Glass’s autobiography. Due to traffic and general ineptitude, my mother and I arrived at the reception at the exact moment that the organizer arrived at the ticket booth to collect the little square wooden tray which contained the stubs for the raffle. The attendant ripped out two tickets and placed them at the top of the pile; a stroke of luck, given that we had arrived five minutes after the raffle was supposed to have ended. Therefore the situation was such that we had two tickets in a small raffle which was to be drawn from this very same small and flat tray, which, furthermore, had the effect of ensuring that the tickets were not sufficiently mixed together.