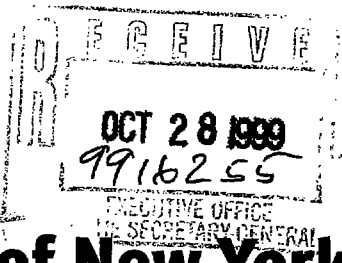




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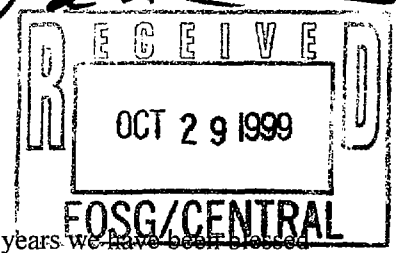


The Interfaith Center of New York

25 October 1999

My dear friends:

Kofi and Nana



Praise the Lord! We have a fabulous NEW SPACE!

Providence has indeed smiled upon the Interfaith Center! For nearly three years ~~we have been blessed~~ with free office space that allowed us to focus all our attention on honing our vision, creating programs and hiring the best possible staff.

Now, after a very careful four-month search, we have found the location I have dreamed of since the first whisper of an Interfaith Center brushed my mind five years ago – a marvelous **street-level storefront** with floor to ceiling plate-glass windows providing tremendous visibility – 8600 square feet on two levels, with 18 foot ceilings – enough room for an information center, gift shop, art gallery, lecture and performance space, as well as meeting areas and offices and a meditation center! Located at 38 East 30th Street, just off Park Avenue, the new Interfaith Center will be in a neighborhood that is on its way to becoming another arts, professional and religious hub of New York City. Last week I signed the ten-year lease and we will move in early December.

Of course, along with providence comes a new bedrock financial reality – we now have to pay rent, including a sizable three-month-rent security, plus the hefty moving and other unavoidable relocation costs of creating the Center we envision. Therefore I turn to you once again – to be as generous as you possibly can be.

Attached are drawings and floor plans of our new space with the budget for the move. Also included is a short summary of exciting program developments from the late summer and early fall.

Thank you for your faith in us in these beginning three years and for your generous support. Now as we take a truly major step ahead, please help us with a one-time gift to ensure our success for the future.

As I know from much past experience there is not only God, but there are *Great Good Friends*.

Thank you so much.

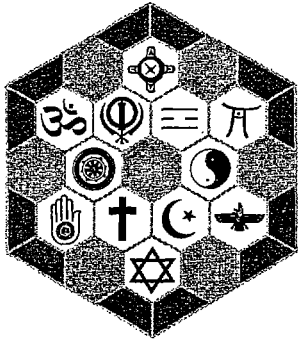
Jim

We value your leadership so much!

The Very Reverend James Parks Morton
President
Dean Emeritus, The Cathedral of St. John the Divine

P.S. At the turn of the millennium – no less – look for a special invitation to the formal opening of the new IFC in mid-January and the first art exhibition in our new gallery!

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The Interfaith Center of New York

Highlights of Interfaith Center Program Developments

Late Summer – Early Fall 1999

- Philip Glass, *Choral Symphony # 5*. As I had reported earlier, over the past few years I have worked with Philip to create the libretto of this 12-part work celebrating the human spirit from the sacred texts of many faiths. In August, I was at the World Premiere in Salzburg. It was astonishing! (See the enclosed LA Times review.) The New York premiere will be at BAM in the fall of 2000 – we will be there en masse for that event.
- I have alluded before to the *Spirit Channel* and the *Word Foundation*, Isaac Tigrett's (entrepreneur founder of the Hard Rock Café and The House of Blues) latest venture. Now, actual monies and go-ahead plans are in effect and the official launching will occur in conjunction with the 1999 Parliament of the World's Religions in Capetown, South Africa, December 1-8. The Center and the Word Foundation will be responsible for the religious/faith aspects of this major interactive, internet site – the association will mean additional staff, the most up-to-date cyber components of hard and soft ware, and a deep spiritual partnership with the evolving and inevitable technological world.
- The *World Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders*, organized by the Center, has now been set by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan for 28-31 August 2000 to coincide with the arrival of many of the world's political leaders, and the UN Foundation has written the first check for major support of this unprecedented event.
- The New York command post of the *Earth Charter* process, spearheaded by Steven Rockefeller and Maurice Strong, will also be located in our new offices. The Interfaith Center's ongoing involvement in this essential work to create a sustainable future for the Earth will flourish as well.
- Our *Rabbi Marshall Meyer Interfaith Clergy Retreats* (the fourth in November) have become a leading forum for the exchange of ideas and cooperative interfaith leadership in facing inner city problems. Each two-day retreat has had 70-80 participants
- Our Arts and Cultural program is the coordinating partner and major organizer of a two-month program on *Youth: Roots of Violence and Culture of Peace* to be held in March and April 2000 at the American Museum of Natural History.
- *Interfaith Center – Blanton-Peale Monthly Dialogues on Religion and Psychology* is a new lunchtime series between members of different religions and psychologists. The theme for 1999-2000, *Reclaiming the Psyche to Psychology*, examines the nature of being human through relating Western psychology to Eastern, Western and indigenous spiritual traditions. The October gathering offered an Islamic Perspective with Imam Feisal Abdul-Rauf and Claude Barbre, Ph.D., managing editor of the Journal of Religion and Health; in November, a Hindu view with M.G. Prasad, Ph.D., director of education, Sri Venkateswara Temple and a psychologist. Dialogues are at 11 am on the third Wednesday of the month at the Blanton-Peale Institute, 3 West 29th Street.
- *Museum Caravans* – Monthly explorations of spiritual expression through the lens of New York's museums include an organized tour of special exhibitions, informed talk and optional dinner gathering following. This fall's Caravans: the American Bible Society's "The Holy Art of Imperial Russia" (September 30); The "Resonance of the Qin in East Asian Art" (China Institute, October 22); "Puerto Rican Santos," "Altars" and "The Day of the Dead" (Museo del Barrio, November); and "The Children of War" at the Puffin Room Gallery (December).

TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 1999

Glass Gives Salzburg a Millennial Masterpiece

Rapt audience thunderously cheers the glorious 101-minute symphony.

Music Review

By MARK SWED
TIMES MUSIC CRITIC

SALZBURG, Austria—Philip Glass is surely the best-known composer of art music in America, if not the world, but he is not so surely the best-respected. Despite his successes in every genre of classical music, and in a number of crossover genres as well, Glass' repetitive style is still anathema to the majority of tradition-minded classical music lovers and players.

A few high-profile performers are champions—the violinist Gidon Kremer and the conductor Christoph von Dohnányi, among them—but the number is relatively small. Glass is not performed very often by our most prestigious musical institutions, and he does not win the most prestigious music prizes. Nor does he usually get the academic or

critical respect that, say, Steve Reich receives, let alone what is accorded these days to Elvis Presley or rap.

But now Glass has gotten one of the impressive accolades of all. He was anointed by the Salzburg Festival—the most distinguished and celebrated music festival for eight decades—to write a symphony that would be the festival's millennial celebration.

Salzburg wanted something on the grand scale of Beethoven's Ninth. But Saturday evening, Glass delivered something even grander—an epic 101-minute 800-page score for orchestra, chorus, children's choir and five vocal soloists. The premiere Saturday evening of Glass' "Symphony No. 5 (Choral): Requiem, Bardo and Nirmanakaya," was the last major event of the Salzburg summer (the five-week festival ended Sunday).

It is a glorious, inspiring work, and the rapt, dignified audience that filled the Large Festival Hall just about went crazy. It is hardly the first time Glass has received an enthusiastic ovation, but as he was called out on stage over and over and over again, as people tirelessly cheered and stamped their feet (ignoring a handful of meek boos), refusing to leave the stiflingly hot theater, the composer looked first stunned, then happy, then even

more stunned. The symphony's triumph begins with its text, a remarkable collection of sacred quotations compiled with the help of the Rev. James Parks Morton of the Interfaith Center of New York and Kusumita P. Pedersen.

Glass writes in the program note that he conceived of the 12-movement symphony as a bridge between past and future, moving from death (Requiem) to an in-between state (the Buddhist Bardo) to enlightened rebirth (Nirmanakaya). The diverse texts come from world "wisdom" traditions, from mainstream religions and the beliefs of native peoples

The revelation of these texts—which span some 2,500 years, dozens of languages and many cultures that in their own time never communicated with one another—is that although the imagery may vary wildly, the themes are often precisely the same. In the 11th movement, "Paradise," the 13th century Persian poet Rumi sees heaven as "the dawn of blessing." First Corinthians tells of death "swallowed up in victory," and an ancient Hindu text describes the aftermath of "the rhythmic beat of life and death" as rapturing welling forth and as space radiant with light.

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Three features of Glass' symphony realize this profound sense of a world sacred vision. The first is the overall scheme, which is based up the Buddhist concept of attaining the highest degree of compassion but at the same times does not discriminate among all the forms of divine expression. The second is that the texts, all translated into English, have enough in common to give the extraordinary impression that they could have been written by the same person. And the third is Glass' musical style itself, which functions less through the dialectic of contrasts, development and reconciliation (as is the standard Western symphonic form) than through a powerful accumulation of ideas. Never has his single-minded musical approach been more effective.

The symphony, which begins with pre-creation in a weighty prologue, does take a while to prove itself as it works through the creation of the cosmos, sentient beings

and human beings. The music is familiarly Glassian, with its moody arpeggios, imposing Morse Code-like brass tattoos and heavy harmonies. But gradually it warms and expands, through movements five ("Love and Joy," with beautiful texts from "the Song of Songs" and Rumi) and six ("Evil and Ignorance," with texts from the Mayan "Popul Vuh," the Pali "Maha-Vagga" and the Sanskrit Bhagavad Gita).

Gripping scales run through the orchestra in movement seven ("Suffering," with text from the psalms and the "Bhagavad Gita"). In the next movement, "Compassion," a wondrous, rounded melody sung to a Tibetan Buddhist text is so affecting that the men of the chorus began to sway spontaneously. From there the symphony grows ever more persuasive, with its huge Brucknerian climax in "Judgment and Apocalypse," its gorgeous soprano solo in "Paradise" and its glorious final "Dedication."

The performance, conducted by Dennis Russell Davies, who has premiered all of Glass' symphonies, was compelling. The Vienna Radio Symphony, of which Davies is music director, probably plays more Glass than any other orches-

tra, and it was both precise and alert.

The chorus was Spanish, the Orfeón Donstiarra of San Sebastián, and its heavily accented English was not ideal, but its enthusiasm was. The children's choir was from Hungarian Radio and was delightful. The excellent soloists included soprano Dawn Upshaw (exalted in her "Paradise" solo), mezzo-soprano Dagmar Peckova, tenor Michael Schade, baritone Eric Owens and bass Albert Dohmen.

All the hoopla, commercialism and excuse for partying that millennium celebrations are generating can easily make one skeptical about important projects as well. But Glass' Fifth Symphony, which opens what will be a year-and-a-half parade of millennium symphonies and other major classical works, sets a noble standard. And the Salzburg Festival, which lost its initial Japanese backing for the commission when Japan's economy faltered and ultimately paid the high bills itself, has set an important example.

The symphony has upcoming performances scheduled for Brussels, Tokyo, New York, and—if all goes well—a West Coast premiere by the Pacific Symphony in October 2000.