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Artist and Theater Director Robert Wilson on Why He Considers All of His Works 'Operas'

Wilson reflects on his career in a text that doubles as an artwork itself.



Robert Wilson. Photo: Lesley Spinks.

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The following is an excerpt by Robert Wilson from the forthcoming book *The Last Days of the Opera*, edited by Denise Wendel-Poray, Gert Korentschnig, and Christian Kircher, published by SKIRA Editore (released in the U.S. April 25).

OPERA

SINCE THE very BEGINNING OF MY career, I HAVE always called MY WORKS "OPERAS." at FIRST, people QUESTIONED why I called MY early STAGINGS "OPERAS," because THEY WERE ALL silent. I was thinking about opera in the Latin sense of the word. OPERA MEANING WORK, MEANING OPUS. In this sense, ALL OF THE ARTS COME TOGETHER. ARCHITECTURE, LIGHT, DANCE, MUSIC LITERATURE, DRAWING, PAINTING, DESIGN, AND SCULPTURE, all are included. SOMEHOW, IN THE LAST CENTURIES, WE HAVE LOST THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE LATIN WORD, AND OPERA IS THOUGHT TO MEAN SOME THING PRIMARILY MUSICAL.

MUSIC AFFECTS OUR EMOTIONAL sense. LITERATURE INSPIRES OUR INTELLECTUAL SENSE. IMAGES INSPIRE OUR IMAGINATION.

WHAT WE SEE IS as IMPORTANT as WHAT WE HEAR. I HAVE ALWAYS STRONGLY DISLIKED THE IDEA OF THEATRE DECORATION.



THEATER SHOULD BE ARCHITECTURAL. THE TWO PRIMARY WAYS WE COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER IS BY WHAT WE HEAR AND WHAT WE SEE. IN THIS FORUM, THAT WE CALL OPERA, IS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT POLITICAL, ECONOMICAL, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS COME TOGETHER FOR A BRIEF MOMENT AND SHARE SOMETHING. THIS FORUM SERVES AS A UNIQUE FUNCTION IN SOCIETY. THE NEED TO CONGREGATE IS A PART OF HUMAN NATURE. THIS NEED HAS ALWAYS BEEN AND WILL ALWAYS BE.

HISTORY HAS TAUGHT US THAT THE CLASSICS ARE THE ONLY THINGS THAT REMAIN THROUGHOUT TIME, NOT THE ROMANTICS. AS AN ARTIST I AM INTERESTED IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE ARTS, AND I HAVE DEDICATED MY LIFE TO THIS WORK.

ROBERT WILSON BERLIN 3.31.20



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