

Glass Keeps Festival Afloat With Edgy Artists, Foundation Money

By Patrick Cole



April 1 (Bloomberg) -- About a decade ago, **Philip Glass** had to pass around a collection plate during dinner parties to jump start a festival for people like him -- emerging composers with an edge.

Though his **Music at the Anthology** (MATA) almost died on the vine, the 10-year-old fete now showcases 19 composers and has an annual budget of more than \$100,000. It's even able to commission original works. MATA's survival has earned Glass stripes in the alternative music world as a scrappy fundraiser.

"I wanted to get young composers working with other composers presenting music, raising money -- all the things that are necessary and crucial for a festival," said the pensive and curly-haired Glass, 71, during a recent interview at Bloomberg's Manhattan offices. "Now, MATA has become important."

The festival, which runs through April 6 at the Brooklyn Lyceum in Park Slope, features an eclectic, genre-defying lineup including a double violin concerto; throat-singing, a technique by which a vocalist produces two distinct tones simultaneously; and a museum-like installation called the **Diapason Gallery for Sound**.

Newspeak Ensemble, an eight-musician troupe whose repertoire includes a love ballad to oil called "Sweet, Light, Crude," is also on the agenda. Its founder, David T. Little, said the MATA festival embraced his music instead of dismissing it as being too fringe.

"We don't fit into most festivals and the more traditional ones," said Little, 29, who lives in Weehawken, New Jersey. "MATA is great because they're very open to everything that's going on."

A Different Voice

From early in his career, Glass, one of the most influential minimalist composers in contemporary music, found conventional forms unsatisfying. He sought a different voice.

After completing math and philosophy studies at the University of Chicago and composition at the Juilliard School in New York, Glass wanted to learn classical arrangement. So he turned to Nadia Boulanger, the legendary Parisian orchestration teacher who mentored **Aaron Copland** and **Quincy Jones**.

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He also embarked on a backpacking tour of Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and India to shake up his musical vocabulary.

Besides composing signature works such as "Music With Changing Parts," a series of pulsating arpeggios that took his work in a new direction, Glass collaborated with other artists such as choreographer **Twyla Tharp**, poet **Allen Ginsberg** and musicians ranging from **David Bowie** to **Woody Allen**.

Glass's opera, "Satyagraha," based on Mahatma Gandhi's early years in South Africa and the evolution of nonviolent protest as a political tactic, makes its Metropolitan Opera debut on April 11.

Iconoclasts

The origins of MATA go back to 1996, when Glass thought iconoclasts like him needed their own festival. So he started one with the help of two collaborators, Lisa Bielawa, a singer and composer, and pianist Eleonor Sandresky.

Glass's early fundraisers for MATA at his East Village home in Manhattan brought in \$10,000 to \$20,000 in one night, he said. Later on, he added silent auctions that included massages at a neighborhood spa, a **Chuck Close** painting and autographed leather jackets once owned by **Lou Reed**.

"**Paul Simon** came to one of them," Glass said. "Lots of musicians came. I mean, I've got friends."

Glass has passed along some of those fundraising tips to the festival's staff, which runs the organization today. Missy Mazzoli, 27, a pianist and composer who will perform with Newspeak, also serves as MATA's executive director.

"Philip is there for us whenever we need him," Mazzoli said in an interview. "He has taught me how to ask for money and not to be scared about asking people for it."

Survival

Bielawa helped Glass put together a board whose members make four- and five-figure donations to MATA's annual budget. Its trustees include Glass, performance artist Laurie Anderson; Ralph Jackson, president of the BMI Foundation Inc. and Aaron Jay Kernis, a Yale University composition professor who won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for music.

MATA's board has also helped generate support from the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the MetLife Foundation and the Aaron Copland Fund for Music Inc.

"Surviving is my goal in this business," Glass said. "When you've gotten to the point when you can hand the whole thing over to the next generation, then you've succeeded."