

ROBERT WILSON – Official biography (short version)

The New York Times described Robert Wilson as “a towering figure in the world of experimental theater.” Wilson’s works integrate a wide variety of artistic media, combining movement, dance, lighting, furniture design, sculpture, music and text into a unified whole. His images are aesthetically striking and emotionally charged, and his productions have earned the acclaim of audiences and critics worldwide. Wilson’s awards and honors include two *Guggenheim Fellowship* awards (’71 and ’80), the *Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship* award (’75), the nomination for the *Pulitzer Prize in Drama* (’86), the *Golden Lion* for sculpture from the Venice Biennale (’93), the *Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize* for lifetime achievement (’96), the *Premio Europa* award from Taormina Arte (’97), election to the *American Academy of Arts and Letters* (’00), the *National Design Award* for lifetime achievement (’01), and *Commandeur des arts et des lettres* (’02), the *Medal for Arts and Sciences* of the city of Hamburg (2009) and the *Hein Heckroth-Prize* for Set Design (2009).

A native of Waco, Texas, Wilson was educated at the University of Texas and arrived in New York in 1963 to attend Brooklyn’s Pratt Institute. Soon thereafter Wilson set to work with his Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds and together with this school developed his first signature works including *King of Spain* (’69), *Deafman Glance* (’70), *The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* (’73), and *A Letter for Queen Victoria* (’74). Regarded as a leader in Manhattan’s burgeoning avant-garde, Wilson turned his attention to large-scale opera and, with Philip Glass, created the monumental *Einstein on the Beach* (’76) which achieved world-wide acclaim and altered conventional notions of a moribund form.

After *Einstein* Wilson worked increasingly with European theaters and opera houses. In collaboration with internationally renowned writers and performers, Wilson created landmark original works that were featured regularly at the Festival d'Automne in Paris, the Schaubühne in Berlin, the Thalia Theater in Hamburg, and the Salzburg Festival. At the Schaubühne he created *Death Destruction & Detroit* (’79) and *Death Destruction & Detroit II* (’87); and at the Thalia he presented the groundbreaking musical works *The Black Rider* (’91) and *Alice* (’92). He has also applied his striking formal language to the operatic

ROBERT WILSON – Official biography (short version)

repertoire including *Parsifal* in Hamburg ('91) and Houston ('92), *The Magic Flute* ('91), *Madame Butterfly* ('93), *Lohengrin* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York ('98). Wilson recently completed an entirely new production, based on an epic poem from Indonesia, entitled *I La Galigo*, which toured extensively and appeared at the Lincoln Center Festival in the summer of 2005.

Wilson continues to direct revivals of his most celebrated productions, including *The Black Rider* in London, San Francisco, and Sydney, Australia, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* in New York and Barcelona, *Erwartung* in Berlin, *Madama Butterfly* at the Bolshoi Opera in Moscow, the LA Opera, Het Muziektheater in Amsterdam, and Wagner's *The Ring* at Le Chatelet in Paris. For the Berliner Ensemble he created two highly acclaimed recent productions: Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* and *Shakespeare's Sonnets* with music by Rufus Wainwright. Both productions received invitations to the Spoleto Festival and travel internationally. Wilson directs all Monteverdi Operas for the opera houses of La Scala in Milan and the Palais Garnier in Paris.

Wilson's practice is firmly rooted in the fine arts and his drawings, furniture designs, and installations have been shown in museums and galleries internationally. Extensive retrospectives have been presented at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. He has mounted installations at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, London's Clink Street Vaults and the Guggenheim Museums in New York and Bilbao. His extraordinary tribute to Isamu Noguchi has been exhibited most recently at the Seattle Art Museum and his installation of the Guggenheim's Giorgio Armani retrospective traveled to London, Rome and Tokyo. In 2007, Paula Cooper Gallery and Phillips de Pury & Co in New York held exhibitions of his most recent artistic venture, the VOOM Portraits, with subjects including Gao Xingjian, Winona Ryder, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Brad Pitt. The works have been shown at the Tribeca Film Festival (2006), the Montreal Film Festival (2008) and in galleries and museums in Los Angeles, Naples, Moscow, Singapore, Graz, Milan, Hamburg and will continue to tour internationally over the next years.. His drawings, prints, videos and sculpture are held in private collections and

ROBERT WILSON – Official biography (short version)

museums throughout the world. He is represented by the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York City.

Each summer Wilson hosts students and professional artists from around the world at the International Summer Arts Program at the Watermill Center in eastern Long Island – an interdisciplinary laboratory for the arts and humanities. In July of 2006, the Watermill Center dedicated a brand new building on its grounds, including rehearsal spaces, dormitories and residences, and inaugurated a year-round programming schedule.