



**Remarks by HIM Shahbanou Farah Pahlavi at Robert Wilson's Steiger
Award Ceremony, Bochum Germany**

March 13, 2010,

The Honorable Federal President Horst Köhler, and Mrs. Köhler

His Excellency President Boris Tadic

Her Royal Highness Princess Haya of Jordan

His Excellency Mr. Norbert Lammert The President of German Parliament

His Excellency Prime Minister Jürgen Rüttgers

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

It gives me great pleasure to present Mr. Robert Wilson with the 2010 Der Steiger award in arts.

I met Robert Wilson at the festival of arts in Shiraz.

This festival, established in 1967, had well-defined ambitions from the very start, and was to serve as a meeting ground for east and west. It was conceived to provide a new direct cultural intercourse between the Old World of the Orient and the not yet widely accepted and popularized expressions of Western cultures.

Robert Wilson had the opportunity to work on his longest play ever presented: *KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDENIA TERRACE*, a 168 hour uninterrupted collective performance that stretched the meaning of theatre. Life became a performance and the performance became life. It was a story about a family and some people changing. The 'performance' that had started with an Overture at a nineteenth century house in Shiraz ran for a whole week on a mountain next to a sacred Sufi shrine, *HAFT TAN*, where seven dervishes rest. *KA MOUNTAIN* started at zero hours midnight and ended 7 days later at twelve midnight. *Overture*, a 24-hour prelude to the *Seven Day Plays* took place at the Comedie Francaise in Paris.

KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDENIA TERRACE, this collective work, remained a unique performance and is remembered as an event in the history of world theatre.

I met Robert Wilson again when he returned to Iran in 1974 for the Eighth Festival to present a 70 minute spectacle, '*MAD MAN, A MAD GIANT, A MAD*

URGE, A MAD FACE, written in collaboration with a 14 year old autistic boy, Christopher Knowles.

Robert Wilson's next work in collaboration with him was called *A LETTER FOR QUEEN VICTORIA*. This was another defining moment in the history of theatre. It toured incessantly throughout Europe for two years, and went to Broadway, definitely making it as one of the most unusual productions that Broadway has ever seen.

The French government commissioned Robert Wilson's most celebrated opera, *EINSTEIN ON THE BEACH*, which was based on the personal experience of the late Mr. Farrokh Gaffari, the deputy director of Shiraz Festival who had seen Mr. Albert Einstein on the beach in the 1930's in Belgium. Susan Sontag said that if Bob had ONLY done Einstein, his place in history would be secured but he did so much more. And he is so much more. He has revolutionized theatre, is dedicated to young people and has the longest and most global career in theatre. Before coming here to Bochum, he visited Taipei, Athens, Zurich, and Milan and will be off to Bogota, Iowa, Berlin, Paris and Milan. Bob's creativity comes from a very special period and place, the 60's and 70's downtown Manhattan movement that produced Warhol, Mapplethorpe, Patty Smith, Cunningham, Philip Glass and Rauschenberg. His dedication to the future generation of new artists led him to establish the Watermill Center where an international community of like-minded artists can work and live together and create new works. It is a model for a global society in which art bridges the national differences and helps us understand each other and work as a team rather than adversaries.

As a Citizen of the World, he does not belong to one country alone. His art is his home.

Robert Wilson's *Death, Destruction and Detroit* premiered at Schaubuhne, Berlin on February 12th, 1979, the day after Iran was declared an Islamic Republic.

We met again in Paris, this time ten years after I had left my country. I was, and still am, very touched by his kindness and friendship, especially after having experienced, like many others who lost their position, the behavior of some people.

As one of the most versatile and influential artists of our times, Bob is a truly rare cross cultural artist who has maintained his childlike curiosity, one who has a deep love and understanding of all cultures. He never seems to give answers, his work remains mysterious but it touches on the deepest meaning of culture and humanity. He keeps on asking questions. That is what good art is all about. With his art, Bob manages to arouse the spectator's awareness again and again.

Thank you, Bob, for your art, your talent, your multicultural vision, for your help to the younger generation, for your never-ending efforts, your humility and thank you for your continued and everlasting friendship.