

On a cultural event assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Melissa DeLuca Blue Man Mania Picking a cultural event for my critique assignment wasn't easy for me. There were so many different types of events to consider that choosing only one was difficult because there are so many forms of art that I have an interest in, almost every type. I looked around and found an event which I chose to attend because it offered a variety of art forms. I would identify this event as a musical concert, a play, a comedy, and a visual art show all in one!

This spectacular event was the 6: 00 pm performance of The Blue Man Group at the Sharp Aquos Theatre in Orlando, at Universal Studios City Walk, which I attended on October 11, 2008. The performance lasted about one hour and forty-five minutes which featured three main characters which were the three Blue Men. There were also four other characters playing musical instruments which made up the Blue Man Band. A drummer, bass guitar, lead guitar and keyboard player. In total there were seven characters on stage, but the main focus of the show were the three Blue Men.

The visual arts were out-standing. There were colorful paintings done on stage during the performance, where the Blue Men actually painted them by spitting paint on spinning and moving canvases. There were circus-like acts that the Blue Men performed and a few skits of comedy as well. One of the most amazing things about the performance was the use of percussion instruments made from PVC pipes along with the visual effects of strobe lights, lasers, black lights, fluorescent paint and massive amounts of toilet tissue used as part of the theatrics. The visual effects were amazing!

I purchased a program at the show which had a lot of useful information in it. It gives the background of what the Blue Man thing is all about. The Blue Man Group came together Melissa DeLuca because of a shared desire to break free from a feeling that they were all experiencing, a feeling of a so called 'lonely heart of the modern city'. They got inspired by the infamous paintings of Edward Hopper, who made paintings of urban isolation and felt like they were living in a compartmentalized non-community, and that we are connected to others by nothing more than the hidden network of plumbing pipes that coursed through t. They feel that we would be in the proximity of other people, but with little or no connection. The Blue Man represents how man felt a little isolated, a little lost, and a bit like an outsider. They decided to make the Blue Man character bald. The baldness representing the character was exposed and stripped down and wanted to get below the "cultural mask." The producers of the Blue Man were also fans of Butoh dancers from Japan, especially Sankai Juku. These dancers were eerily bald and covered themselves in ash grey powder.

They felt that the baldness to these dancers added to their emotional nakedness and vulnerability, and also seemed to contribute to a sense of tribal unity and primal freedom. Another influence was the comic book character the "Silver Surfer" whose baldness equates to the opposite of nakedness and vulnerability. The Silver Surfer's baldness contributes to his persona as a superhero. The producers think of the Blue Man as having both the commitment of a hero and the emotional nakedness and curiosity of an innocent and like to think that the Blue Man's baldness helps to evoke each of these things simultaneously.

Another thing that I found interesting was the reason that there are “ 3” Blue Men. According to the program it wasn’t planned that way and there were more at the beginning but due to whatever circumstances they found themselves with only three remaining as time went by and something “ clicked”. They felt it had something to do with how three is a great number for Melissa DeLuca visual composition and how three people seemed like a minimum number to evoke a sense of a “ tribe”. Or maybe three performers seemed ideal for comedic triangulation and one-upmanship like the Marx Brothers or the Three Stooges had been so successful in their acts.

Despite their otherworldly appearance, the producers never liked the idea that the Blue Men be associated with aliens. So in the earliest pieces they tried to counter this by portraying the Blue Men as if they came from within a painting. The Blue Men would play some music behind a giant canvas (backlit as silhouettes) and then they would cut slits in the canvas large enough to pop their heads out and create a painting by spitting paint on the canvas, then they would enlarge the slits in the painting and walk through them into the performance space and curiously begin to explore.

The show has grown and changed since then but this is basically how the Blue Man Group idea was formed. I absolutely loved the entire performance. I thought the visual effects were absolutely unbelievable, with hundreds of lights. There were also so many different kinds of lights like strobes, black lights, lasers, colored spot lights and lights that looked like stars. They came from all angles and always seemed to change. The lighting was never boring and seemed to add so much to the production.

Another remarkable thing was how the lighting worked so well with the painting and percussion music. I thought this was a very well choreographed performance. I really liked the music as well. It was very exciting and upbeat which kept everyone in the audience interested and ready for more. Another thing that really stood out to me was the props on the stage and in the theatre that all came together at the appropriate times to give the whole essence of the place coming to life. The make up was amazing for all seven performers. The Melissa DeLuca

Blue Men of course were painted all blue with black jump suits and sometimes lighted jump suits that would flash with the beat of the music. The band was dressed in solid black jumpsuits with fluorescent painted "stick-man / skeleton patterns, so that under black lights gave a very eerie mystical appearance. We really had great seats and were only 8 rows from the stage and could see everything that was to be seen. I could see the band and the Blue Men at all times perfectly. There were a couple of skits that even involved some audience participation, but in my opinion this is where the show got a little boring for me.

Things seemed to really drag during these parts of the performance, but I realize now, after the fact, that the performers are human beings and these "slow" parts of the show were probably the times for the actors to catch their breath and get a rest, without interrupting the show for an intermission. Honestly I enjoyed the entire show except for the slow boring parts with the audience participation. During the final 10 or so minutes of the show thousands of rolls of toilet tissue was passed over the entire audience.

Literally hundreds of pounds of tissue were being unrolled and spread across the entire audience seating area that gave an awesome climatic feeling in the final minutes of the show. In conclusion, I would like to say that this was an excellent performance that had a variety of art forms within it. There was music, painting, theatrical acting, visual effects and “out of the box” lighting and props. My husband and I really enjoyed it and will probably go again someday. This is a show that can be enjoyed by all ages and I highly recommend it as a must do in anyone’s life time.