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Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities, Volume 2,
Number 1, Winter 2014, pp. 113-114 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5250/resilience.2.1.009>



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Introduction to *The Great Immensity*

REVIEWS COMPILED BY ANTHONY LIOI

The following reviews take on *The Great Immensity*, which was performed in its current form at the Public Theater in New York during April 2014. *The Great Immensity* was written by Steven Cosson and Michael Friedman, key figures in the Civilians, a Brooklyn-based company that engages in “investigative theater,” wedding scientific and historical research with live performance. Though some of the critics call it a “climate change musical,” the Civilians call it a “theatrical play” and “media project” on its home page (thegreatimmensity.org). The question of form arises in these reviews because the ubiquity of social media and the severity of the climate crisis put pressure on traditional theater in a manner *The Great Immensity* seeks to engage.

It may be useful to view *The Great Immensity* as an incunabulum, a work that stands at the beginning of ecotheater’s attempts to dramatize climate change. The Civilians themselves recognize this play as the start of a longer commitment. Cosson and Friedman have founded the Next Forever Initiative to bring together scientists and artists to communicate biospheric realities to a popular audience through new works of art. As they describe it, “The Initiative cultivates new plays, films, video and audio series, and more that deepen our understanding of vital environmental topics. The Initiative will bring our country’s most ingenious artists together with the world’s brightest scientific minds to create thought-provoking and entertaining new work that focuses on conservation, energy, climate, land use, agriculture, the environmental

sciences, and other vital subjects. The pieces will inspire people across the country to become more engaged with these environmental issues and act in ways that protect our natural resources. The power of the arts to inspire change cannot be underestimated. Information alone is not enough to inspire the large changes that must be made in the coming years to protect our future on this planet” (http://www.thecivilians.org/programs/the_next_forever.html).

The editors of *Resilience* would like to thank Steve Cosson, Michael Friedman, and Ian David for their support of the review process and their generosity in making available private recordings of a preview performance.