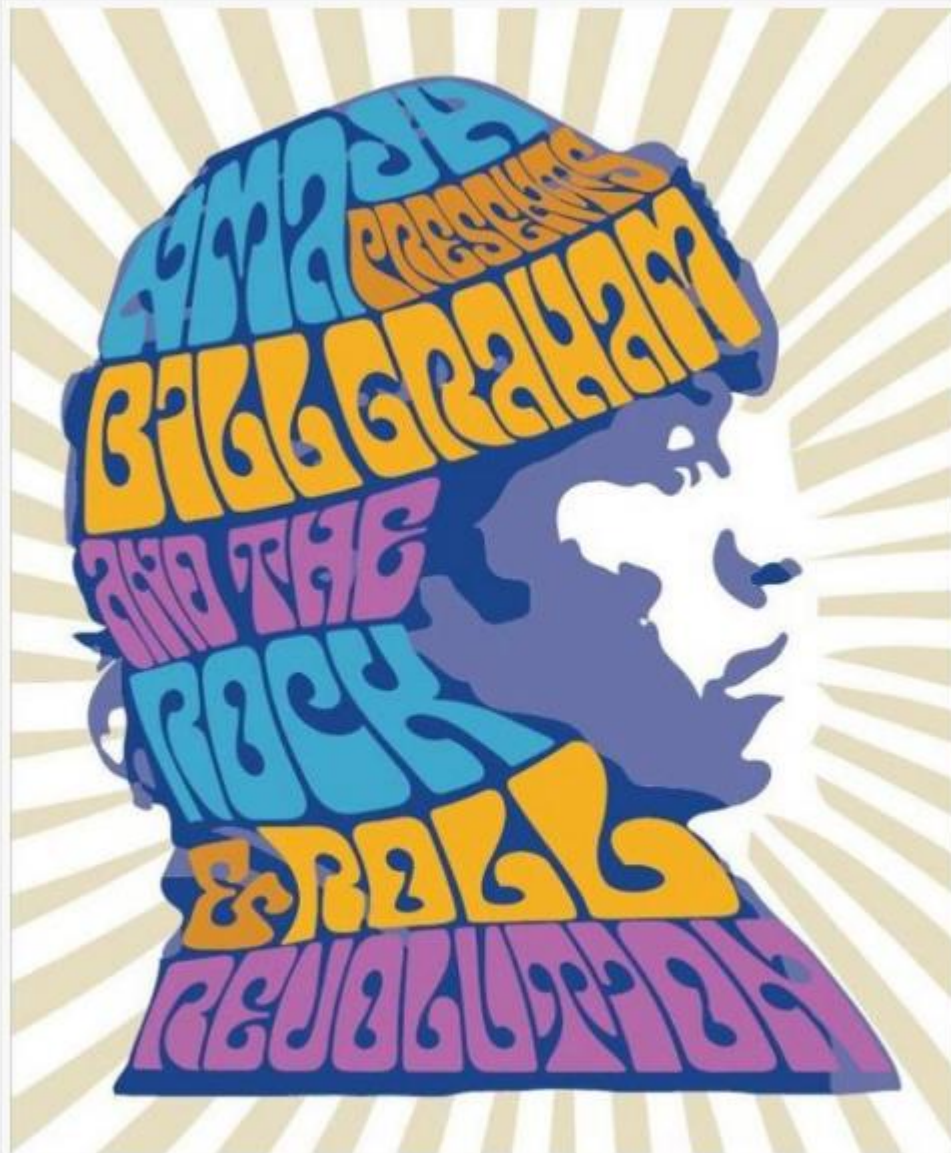


The History Of Rock

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Courtesy National Museum of American Jewish History

Most people know Bill Graham as the music promoter who made the Grateful Dead famous, but few are aware that he came to America in 1941 as an orphan, escaping from Nazi Germany to France, eventually making his way to New York.

“Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution” at the [National Museum of American Jewish History](#) in Philadelphia tells the full story of how Wolfgang Grajonca became Bill Graham. After being adopted by a family in the Bronx, the 15-year-old spent a

summer working hard at dropping his accent and changing his name to something people could pronounce. Through hard work building connections and refining his own tastes, he went on to become one of the most influential men in the music business who was never on stage.

Posters and photographs of the Grateful Dead, Aretha Franklin, Woodstock and The Allman Brothers and more line the walls of the exhibit along with memorabilia such as a piece of Jerry Garcia's guitar that he smashed at a concert at San Francisco's Fillmore West.

Graham had an ear for music and knew how to make it sell. He was known for his temper and at the same time was very generous. Every time you turn a corner in the exhibit, there are notices of other artists that he worked with, deeply influencing their careers.

But Graham was more than a producer and manager. The exhibit shows how he changed the rock and roll scene to make listening to music an experience. The concert model changed from an audience watching a performer into an interactive social experience, blending music with the social issues of the day. The bands he managed would start at New York's Fillmore East and then sell out Madison Square Garden. He then became known as the man who master produced major benefit concerts including Live Aid. In 1991, Graham died in a helicopter crash, at the age of 60, as he was returning from a musical show.

Standing at an iconic picture of Woodstock, a woman pointed out to her partner where she was standing at the show and proceeded to reminisce about her experience going to the historical concert. In the section dedicated to the 80s, a mother showed her son the photographs of Live Aid and put herself back in that time of her life. Another man expressed his feelings of not being worthy while looking at the ad Graham placed to ask President Ronald Reagan not to visit a military cemetery in Nazi Germany.

The story of Bill Graham doesn't tell just the story of his life but also how rock and roll evolved and changed the musical experience.

"Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution" is on view at the National Museum of American Jewish History, 101 South Independence Mall East, Philadelphia, through January 16, 2017.

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