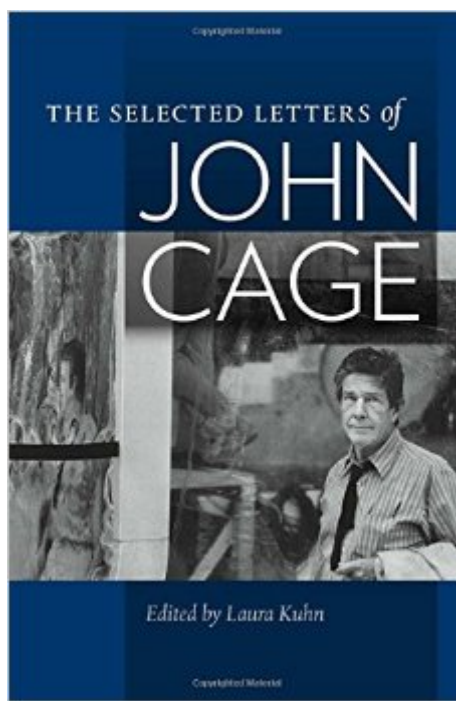


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The Selected Letters Of John Cage



Synopsis

This selection of over five hundred letters gives us the life of John Cage with all the intelligence, wit, and inventiveness that made him such an important and groundbreaking composer and performer. The missives range from lengthy reports of his early trips to Europe in the 1930s through his years with the dancer Merce Cunningham, and shed new light on his growing eminence as an iconic performance artist of the American avant-garde. Cage's joie de vivre resounds in these letters—fully annotated throughout—in every phase of his career, and includes correspondence with Peter Yates, David Tudor, and Pierre Boulez, among others. Above all, they reveal his passionate interest in people, ideas, and the arts. The voice is one we recognize from his writings: singular, profound, irreverent, and funny. Not only will readers take pleasure in Cage's correspondence with and commentary about the people and events of a momentous and transformative time in the arts, they will also share in his meditations on the very nature of art. A deep pleasure to read, this volume presents an extraordinary portrait of a complex, brilliant man who challenged and changed the artistic currents of the twentieth century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This selection from the voluminous correspondence of John Cage essentially acts as his autobiography. Especially when one considers that there is a great deal of personal and professional information about Cage that has never been known before. Some of these revelations were not surprising (that Cage was deeply in love with David Tudor) while others were (that he studied the orchestral horn for a short time). It was also very satisfying to read that Cage was no fool in money matters, and handled his finances as carefully as he could, asking for help from his

benefactors only when it was absolutely needed. And it is no surprise that he was a tireless worker; touring, rehearsing, performing without letup, to the end of his life. Even with all his commitments he still managed to engage with making prints and watercolors when he was well into his 70's. In short, this superb volume of letters is a real inspiration and stimulus to any artist or musician who tends to despair of "making it". Cage certainly "made it" (although he often regretted the intrusions into his life caused by fame) largely through dedication and endless hard work. The footnotes provided by editor Kuhn provide much-needed context and put much of these letters in perspective. This book is a must-have for any bookshelf devoted to 20th-century music and art, and to one devoted to Cage himself. As a personal note, I would like to mention that I myself was the recipient of a letter from Cage. I wrote to him in 1971 asking for an autograph as a 17th birthday present, and he generously responded with a brief note: "Thank you for your letter. And best wishes to you before, during, and after your birthday." I mention this to point out the exceeding politeness and consideration Cage showed to everyone who crossed his path, even when burdened with endless professional and personal commitments.

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