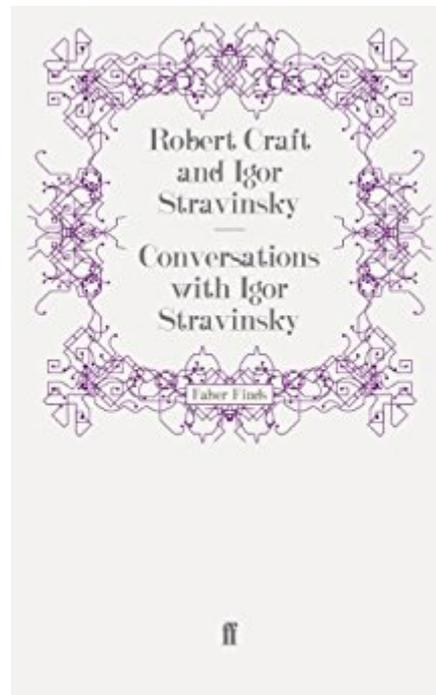


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Conversations With Igor Stravinsky



Synopsis

Conversations with Igor Stravinsky is the first of the celebrated series of conversation books in which Stravinsky, prompted by Robert Craft, reviewed his long and remarkable life. The composer brings the Imperial Russia of his childhood vividly into focus, at the same time scanning what were at the time the brave new horizons of Boulez and Stockhausen with extraordinary acuity. Stravinsky answers searching questions about his musical development and recalls his association with Diaghilev and the Russian Ballet. There are sympathetic and extraordinarily illuminating reminiscences of such composers as Debussy and Ravel ('the only musicians who immediately understood *Le Sacre du Printemps*'), while mischievous squibs are directed at others, most notably perhaps against Richard Strauss, all of whose operas Stravinsky wished 'to admit ... to whichever purgatory punishes triumphant banality'. The conversations are by no means confined to musical subjects, ranging uninhibitedly across all the arts: Stravinsky gives unforgettable sketches of Ibsen, Rodin, Proust, Giacometti, Dylan Thomas and T S Eliot. The conversations between Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft are unique in musical history. The penetration of Craft's questions and the patience and detail of Stravinsky's answers combine to produce an intimate picture of a man who has sometimes puzzled, often delighted, and always intrigued ...' *The Sunday Times*

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Customer Reviews

This was the first of what turned out to be six of the "conversation" books between Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky. They were quite popular for many reasons and deservedly so. When this book came out in 1958, Stravinsky was the great living master of Music. His "Canticum Sacrum" had been premiered at the St. Mark's cathedral in Venice with Stravinsky on the podium to both acclaim and opprobrium in 1956. Time magazine's review was entitled "Murder in the Cathedral" (a title borrowed from T.S. Eliot which caused the poet some embarrassment when he and Stravinsky met some time later). No one knew how much more the 76 year old composer had in him, but he was still considered a revolutionary. This book clarifies a great deal about his attitudes toward music and many of his compositions. Some of his more doctrinaire statements in the autobiography and the poetics about performance, performers (executants), and interpretation versus execution are given more nuance and a better context. Several fine pictures of the composer with his friends and other notables are also included. He also discusses his thoughts about Debussy, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Ravel, and others. Several letters from notable composers are provided, as well. While it is true these books were constructed conversations rather than transcripts of an interview between Craft and Stravinsky, they are most informative and most interesting. Think of the conversation as a compositional device and all will be well. Most strongly recommended for any lover of Stravinsky's music and / or interested in the music of the 20th century. There is also a great deal of information on the artistic culture of Europe before, during, and after the world wars.

This book is wonderful. It really allows one to get into the head of a musical genius, Igor Stravinsky. Through question and answer format between Robert Craft and Stravinsky, one learns how a man of Stravinsky's caliber survives all the pressure and attention. This book is perfect for anyone wanting to understand the mind of a musician.

An important book to know more about one of the great composers of music history.

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