



Conversations with Igor Stravinsky

Robert Craft

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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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