

Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham: A Journey into the Avant-Garde



Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham is a captivating memoir that delves into the extraordinary artistic partnership between two avant-garde pioneers: composer John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham.

Spanning two decades, the book provides an intimate glimpse into their creative process, their groundbreaking performances, and the transformative impact they had on the world of art.



Chance and Circumstance: Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham by Carolyn Brown

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 4290 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 656 pages



Through the eyes of their long-time collaborator, writer and performer Sylvano Bussotti, we are transported to a time when the boundaries between music and dance blurred, and silence and indeterminacy became artistic tools.

The Early Years

Bussotti's journey with Cage and Cunningham began in the late 1950s, when he was a young composer attending the Darmstadt Summer Courses. There, he encountered Cage's revolutionary ideas about aleatory (chance-based) music and Cunningham's innovative choreography, which emphasized the dancer's independence from the music.

Inspired by their work, Bussotti became a close collaborator and friend to both artists. He participated in their legendary performances and composed

music specifically designed to complement their dance pieces.

The Merce Cunningham Dance Company

In 1953, Cunningham founded his own dance company, which became a breeding ground for some of the most influential choreographers and dancers of the 20th century. Bussotti was a regular member of the company, and his compositions became integral to their signature style.

The company's performances were characterized by their experimental nature, their use of silence and indeterminacy, and their focus on the visual and spatial elements of dance. Cunningham's choreography often relied on chance procedures, allowing dancers to respond spontaneously to the music and their surroundings.

John Cage's Influence

Cage's influence on Cunningham's work was profound. He introduced Cunningham to his ideas about indeterminacy and the importance of embracing silence as a musical element. Together, they explored the possibilities of combining music and dance in new and unconventional ways.

Cage's compositions often involved the use of chance operations, such as the I Ching and aleatoric maps. These elements introduced an element of unpredictability into the performances, creating a sense of spontaneity and open-endedness.

Collaborative Masterpieces

Over the years, Bussotti collaborated with Cage and Cunningham on numerous groundbreaking works. These included:

- **Variations V (1965):** A dance piece that combined improvisation, chance operations, and a musical score by Cage that consisted primarily of silence.
- **Winterbranch (1964):** A composition for piano and percussion that featured aleatoric elements and was performed live during Cunningham's dance performances.
- **Suite for Toy Piano (1948):** A solo piano piece by Cage that was often used in Cunningham's choreography.

The Legacy of Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham

Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham is not merely a memoir but a testament to the enduring legacy of these two artistic visionaries. Through Bussotti's detailed accounts, we gain a deeper understanding of their creative process and the impact they had on the art world.

The book serves as a reminder of the transformative power of collaboration and the importance of embracing experimentation and open-mindedness in art. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of modern dance, music, or the avant-garde movement.



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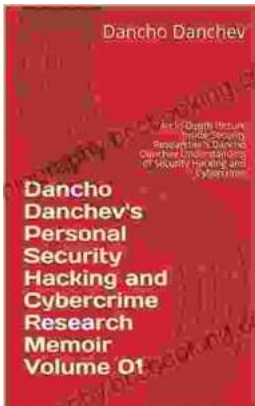
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