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JOHN CAGE & MERCE CUNNINGHAM

THREE NEW BOOKS

RELEASE PARTY AND OPEN HOUSE

ON THE OCCASION OF JOHN CAGE'S BIRTHDAY

SEPTEMBER 5, 2019 | 5-8 PM | FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC | REFRESHMENTS SERVED

JOHN CAGE TRUST, BARD COLLEGE, 1309 ANNANDALE ROAD, RED HOOK, NY 12571

EVENT INFO CONTACT: [Emily Martin, emartin@johncage.org](mailto:emartin@johncage.org)

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On the occasion of John Cage's birthday, four organizations—the John Cage Trust, the Merce Cunningham Trust, and publishers The Song Cave and Siglio—are celebrating three new books that provide rich, prismatic views into both the works and shared lives of two of the 20th century's most influential and radically creative figures: John Cage and Merce Cunningham.

Both **Changes: Notes on Choreography** by Merce Cunningham and **Diary: How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse)** delve into the ideas and creative processes that drive Cunningham's and Cage's respective works while **Love, Icebox: Letters from John Cage to Merce Cunningham** illuminates something of the emotional and domestic space the two men forged as they began their life together. Taken together, these three books expand our understanding of their extraordinary universe.

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About the three books

1

These early letters from John Cage to Merce Cunningham will be revelatory, for while the two are widely known as a dynamic, collaborative duo, the story of how and when they came together has never been fully revealed. In the 39 letters of this collection, spanning 1942–1946, Cage shows himself to be a man falling deeply in love. **LOVE, ICEBOX: LETTERS FROM JOHN CAGE TO MERCE CUNNINGHAM** takes its shape from these letters transcribed, chronologically ordered, and in some instances reproduced in facsimile, the volume includes a foreword, commentary, and afterword by its editor Laura Kuhn. Photographic illustrations of their final 18th Street loft in New York City, as well as personal and household objects left behind, remind us of the substance and rituals of their long-shared life. **September / JOHN CAGE TRUST.** Contact: [Laura Kuhn, lkuhn@johncage.org](mailto:lkuhn@johncage.org).

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2

A chance-operation determined masterpiece, **DIARY: HOW TO IMPROVE THE WORLD (YOU WILL ONLY MAKE MATTERS WORSE)** is a repository of observations, anecdotes, proclivities, obsessions, jokes and koan-like stories that registers John Cage's assessment of the times in which he lived as well as his often uncanny portents about the world we live in now. A complex reflection of Cage's own particular sensibilities as a thinker and citizen of the world, illuminating his social and political awareness, as well as his idealism and sense of humor, *Diary* also becomes an oblique but indelible portrait of one of the most influential figures of the 20th century American avant-garde. Edited by Richard Kraft and Joe Biel, the book appears in a new, expanded paperback edition with previously unpublished material and a new essay by mycologist David W. Rose. **October / SIGLIO.** Contact: Lisa Pearson, publisher@sigliopress.com.

3

Originally published in 1968 by the iconoclastic Something Else Press, **CHANGES: NOTES ON CHOREOGRAPHY** can be viewed as a 170-page print version of an art performance piece. Just as Cunningham spent most of his career approaching choreography and movement in time and space from an original point of view, this book offers notes, images, and drawings of his work in a non-linear, non-traditional way. Taken together, they form a rich panorama of his ideas, work, and impulses, shown through a lens particular to the time and place of its initial publication. This new edition, co-published with the Merce Cunningham Trust, will introduce a new generation to one of the most original choreographers and artists of the 20th century. **June / THE SONG CAVE.** Contact: Alan Felsenthal, info@the-song-cave.com.

About the John Cage Trust

The **John Cage Trust** was established in 1993 as a not-for-profit institution whose mission is to gather together, organize, preserve, disseminate, and generally further the work of the late American composer, John Cage. In 2007, the Trust went into residential placement at Bard College, where its founding director, Laura Kuhn, was appointed the first John Cage Professor of Performance Arts. In 2013, the Trust became a permanent member of the Bard community, and in 2018 moved into a new building on campus, known familiarly as The Wilson House, significantly expanding its on-site archives and working space. The Trust is open year-round by appointment to visitors to assist ongoing work involving the legacy of John Cage.

About John Cage and Merce Cunningham

John Cage (1912-1992) was a composer, philosopher, writer, and artist who blurred the boundaries between art and life, reframing the world so that it could be listened to and seen anew. Often composing works through chance operations, Cage had—and continues to have—an extraordinary impact as well on dance, poetry, performance, and visual art. More info at <https://johncage.org/about.html>

Merce Cunningham (1919-2009) is widely considered to be one of the most important choreographers of all time. His approach to performance was groundbreaking in its ideological simplicity and physical complexity: he applied the idea that “a thing is just that thing” to choreography, embracing the notion that “if the dancer dances, everything is there.” More info at <https://www.mercecunningham.org/about/merce-cunningham>

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