Pass Another Helping Of Porter, Please!

Cole Porter possessed to a singular degree the art of expressing depth through apparent frivolity. The effervescent wit and technical bravura of his songs are matched by their unguarded revelations of feeling. In the words of editor Robert Kimball, Porter wrote tellingly of the pain and evanescence of emotional relationships. He gentle mocked propriety and said that few things were simple or lasting or free from ambiguity. Of the masters of twentieth-century American songwriting, Porter was one of the few who wrote both music and lyrics, and, even in the absence of his melodies, his words distill an unmistakable mixture of poignancy and wit that marks him as a genius of light verse.

Selected from over eight hundred songs, here are Porters finest flights of invention, lyrics that are an indelible part of 20th-century culture: Lets Do It, Love for Sale, I Get a Kick Out of You, Anything Goes, In the Still of the Night, I Concentrate on You, and dozens more.

Robert Kimball is a historian of the American musical theater whose books include The Gershwins (with Alfred Simon), Reminiscing with Sissle and Blake (with William Bolcom), Reading Lyrics (with Robert Gottlieb), and volumes devoted to the complete lyrics of Lorenz Hart, Ira Gershwin, Irving Berlin, and Frank Loesser. He is the longtime advisor to the Cole Porter Musical and Literary Property Trust, is the editor of several books on Cole Porter, including Cole and The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter. He received a Drama Desk Award for his rediscovery of lost musical-theater manuscripts in a Secaucus, New Jersey warehouse.
Elegantly risqué, suffused with understated emotion, delightful in their bursts of comic invention, the witty and romantic lyrics of Cole Porter evoke a golden age of song. Here is the cream of half a century of songwriting, from the Jazz Age resonance of *Let's Misbehave* to such 50s classics as *Too Darn Hot* and *It's All Right With Me*—more than ninety of the most enduring works of America's master of bittersweet sophistication.

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My Personal Review:
Cole Porter was one of the few grand song writers who actually not only wrote the lyrics for his songs, but also the music. It is said that it is quite impossible to separate the two as they are so intricately interwoven. This well may be. I must say though, as an individual who has listen to his work being presented in various forms for years, I had never actually sat down and read his lyrics as stand alones. How interesting this was and how grateful I am that the American Poets Project was collectively wise enough to present Porter's work in this format.

Much has been written of the "Lost Generation," that band of writers who through self imposed exiles who haunted Paris after World War I. It has always rather amazed and bewildered me that in all the books; the biographies I have read covering this period, few mention Cole Porter as playing a prominent role in this movement...if you will. Yet Porter epitomized that group of men and women who changed the way we view literature, culture, music and dance forever. Porter can arguably be named as one of the most influential song writers of the 1900s. Over 800 songs are attributed to him and he had a tremendous influence on the Broadway scene as well as Hollywood. Cole's wit and I might add sophisticated life experiences shine through in his work for those who care to listen. Cole's rather jaded outlook on life was pragmatic to the extreme. His lyrics addressed love, sex, pain, anguish, joy, homosexuality, promiscuousness and so much more, while in his own dry way poked a bit of fun at the rich and famous. All this was done in an age of censorship to the extreme. His efforts, conscious or not, led the way and opened the doors for many songwriters who followed him.

This little book offers us over 90 selections and a fare representation of his total body of work. The reader will find here both the familiar and the not so familiar; dished out without the music so that the words can be savored on their own merit. It will surprise many readers, especially the young, at just how many of these songs have embedded themselves into our American; indeed, our Western Culture and psyche. After the loss of his right leg in 1958, Cole never wrote another song. He died in 1964 at the age of 73. Despite this we have artists such as U2, Deborah Harry, David Byrne and Annie Lenox along with those such as Robbie William, Sheryl
Crow and Diana Krall who still have recorded his music. To be honest, if you listen closely to the score of many contemporary films, you will find Cole's finger prints all over them.

Cole led a rather fascinating life and left us a wonderful legacy via his music. His range was tremendous and his knowledge of the world and the general human condition was deep. Do yourself a real favor and get a copy of this work and set back for a few evenings and just enjoy. Not only will you be fed a wonderful dose of your musical heritage, but you will most certainly see friends, acquaintances and probably yourself peeking at you from his words.

This is a wonderful series of books and I do recommend each and every one of them. Had I the money, I would love to own them all as each and every one of them deserves multiple readings.

Don Blankenship
The Ozarks

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