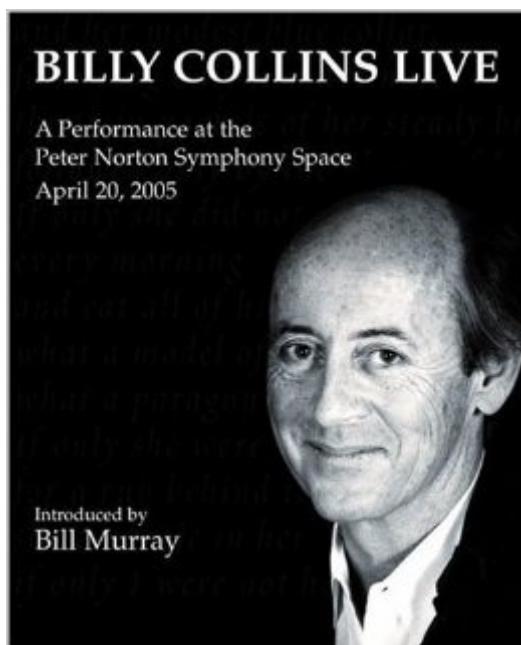


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Billy Collins Live: A Performance At The Peter Norton Symphony Space

April 20, 2005



Synopsis

In this exclusive audio publishing event, Billy Collins, former U.S. Poet Laureate, shares an evening of his poetry in a benefit reading for WNYC, New York Public Radio. Often compared to Robert Frost, his poetry has been embraced by people of all ages and backgrounds, and his readings are most often standing room only. Performed by the author at Peter Norton Symphony Space in New York City, Billy Collins reads 24 of his poems, including "Dharma" --a spiritual yet humbling ode to man's best friend, "The Lanyard--an amusing recollection about the popular, if not pointless, summer camp pastime, and "Consolation" --a tongue-in-cheek reflection of a cancelled European trip, and the benefits of staying home instead. In addition to the poetry readings, Collins also spends some time in a brief question and answer session where he reflects on what makes good poetry, his own process of reaching his audiences as a poet, the success of his Poetry 180 programs in schools nationwide, and an amusing sidebar on his memories growing up as an only child. At times pensive and sardonic, amusing and subtly sarcastic, Billy Collins Live celebrates both the simple and the complex in a language that appeals to all.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I hate poetry. Really, I just decided once and for all that I hate it. I had to go to a poetry reading the other night and I tried drinking beforehand, and I realized very quickly that all the beer in the world wasn't going to make me happy listening to what passes for poetry these days. It's like everyone got excited by Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot and decided to go for the random word generator school of poetry. Angsty teen poetry and adult contemporary poetry - there's not much difference. Which is

why I love this CD so much. In a little more than an hour, Billy Collins completely changes my mind about what poetry should be like. It's funny. It's witty. He's actually writing for an audience that isn't full of fellow poets who think that "deep" is a substitute for entertaining. And yes, it's entertaining. The poem about the dog that he put to sleep is sad and funny. The summer camp poem actually reminded me of that stupid craft that I also made at summer camp - only in the 80s instead of the 60s. The haiku poem was great and the poem about looking out the window was just too amazing. And the simile poem is a beautiful slap in the face to the simile and metaphor. I'm sure that Billy Collins has some detractors. I don't know why. But when I go to poetry readings and I listen to the droning of the metaphor and rhythm I'm sure that many of the professional poets envy him. Or declare him too simple. But he's not simple at all. He's just that funny and entertaining. Sure, I also like poems that have multiple themes from all societies and Catheryne Valente does those very well, but for now I'm going to let Billy Collins restore my faith in poetry. Just don't ask me to go to your professor's poetry reading.

"The Best Cigarette" is good. This is fantastic. Live reading by the author is how Collins' poems should all be heard. Bill Murray's introduction will have you in stitches. There is nothing like this and you should own this. Do not wait, order now. The only way this could be better is if it were longer and included more poems. Let's hope for more recorded performances by this modern genius poet.

I listened to this 3 times while driving around this past week. For a casual poetry fan like me, the cd is tremendously entertaining. As much as I like reading Billy Collin's poetry, hearing it spoken was a real treat. In particular, the humorous aspect was intensified. Some of his poems are downright hilarious. The cadence of his language is wonderful. The poems manage to be simple but thoughtful. I strongly recommend the cd.

First, it was e. e. cummings then Pablo Neruda and now Billy Collins. I'm so glad that I heard this first before I read anything else by him---what a fantastic treat: to hear the poet give actual voice to his own tender, illuminating musings---so that then I could hear him in my head as I enjoyed his other writings.

Billy Collins is as satisfying as a Mozart concerto. This CD of a presentation in NYC in the spring of 2005 is a wonderful collection of his work that is at once accessible and magical. It is a gift to be able to hear him read his poems. I have had this CD in my car player for weeks now, and never tire

of hearing his poems again and again; like the Mozart concerto, I discover new innuendos at each refrain. It is therapeutic. Bill Murray's introduction was the only disappointment on the CD

My wife and I were unfamiliar with Billy Collins until we recently heard him on "A Prairie Home Companion." We were delighted to find this album, which includes most of the poems he read on the air. The poems are great in print, but there's no substitute for the poet's laconic delivery, and this album has the added feature of his explaining the origin of each poem. An unexpected bonus for me, a somewhat senior citizen, was finding that my 28-year-old daughter enjoyed the album as much as I did. A word of warning, though: Do not drive or operate machinery while listening to this album. Lines that crack you up beyond control can sneak up on you! (One downside: Bill Murray's introduction is pretty lame unless you're a really big fan of his.)

Billy Collins is a lot of fun. He loves to play with words and I love to let my mind play along with him. Someone called him the "Garrison Keillor" of poetry. It is true that Billy tells a lot of stories in his poems and he often does so in a kind of folksy way. He doesn't sing like Garrison and Garrison doesn't craft words with the artistry of Billy. This recording of his live performance before a very appreciative audience is wonderful. **BUY BILLY.** He will make you happy and thoughtful and even melancholy sometimes.

If you have never heard Billy Collins read his poetry, you are in for a treat. I have been entranced with his work ever since I read the first poem in *Sailing Alone Around the Room*, the first collection I purchased. But nothing can compare with hearing his poetry rendered in his own voice. The experience is further enhanced by the audience reactions to his poems. Collins has a non-declamatory, almost deadpan style, but his timing is impeccable and the audience is quite entertained. It is also interesting to hear his commentaries on the origins of some of the poems. Bill Murray gives a brief introduction and brings down the house. Gather your family around and listen to this together. You will feel as if you are part of those who were privileged enough to be at Symphony Space that night hearing the performance live. What a delightful evening of poetry.

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