Martha “Marty” Dow Fehsenfeld will discuss the critically acclaimed collection she co-edited of Samuel Beckett’s letters. The letters written by Samuel Beckett between 1929 and 1940 provide a vivid and personal view of Western Europe in the 1930s, and mark the gradual emergence of Beckett’s unique voice and sensibility.

The only authorized publication of Beckett’s selected letters, this volume offers for the first time a comprehensive range of letters of one of the greatest literary figures of the twentieth century. Selected for their bearing on his work from over 15,000 extant letters, they include letters to friends, painters and musicians, as well as to students, publishers, translators, and colleagues in the world of literature and theatre. For anyone interested in twentieth-century literature and theatre this edition is essential reading.

Praise for The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Vol 1, 1929–1940:
'It would hardly seem possible were the evidence not right here: Samuel Beckett, that most taciturn and private of 20th-century writers - the man who said 'every word is like an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness' - was in fact one of the century's great correspondents. ... reading it is far from homework: the Beckett we meet in these piquant letters, most written when he was in his late 20s and early 30s, is rude, mordantly witty and scatological yet often (and this is perhaps the biggest surprise) affectionate and wholehearted. ... There are many moments in these letters when it seems Samuel Beckett can’t go on. But as we await Volumes 2, 3 and 4 of his busy correspondence, it’s exceedingly clear that, happily, he will go on.' The New York Times

'This is an extraordinary work of scholarship ... the taciturn youth who became an artist of studied silences turns out to have been an inveterate letter writer - and, what's more, a fine one, which can't be said for many authors ... The correspondent who so frequently signs himself 'Sam' emerges from these letters a fully fleshed human being, by turns arrogant and kindly, depressed and determined.' Los Angeles Times

'What this selection of letters reveals is not the great writer to come but an extraordinarily brilliant, tormentedly self-conscious and unhappy young man with a compelling urge to write. ... Beckett knew too much and felt too much about what he knew. ... This first of a promised four volumes (to include 2,500 out of a total 15,000 items of correspondence) represents already a heroic achievement by the editors who embarked on the project nearly a quarter of a century ago. ... The editorial team deserves all our thanks for their patience, their stamina and their scholarly rigour. Tom Stoppard is quoted on the back cover saying 'one must hope to stay alive until the fourth volume is safely delivered'. Agreed – we must wait on for the later, greater Beckett.' The Irish Times

'For Beckett enthusiasts, these letters are crammed with unexpected treasures.' The Sunday Times Culture

'... an edition more sumptuous than one ever imagined ...' The Washington Post

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