

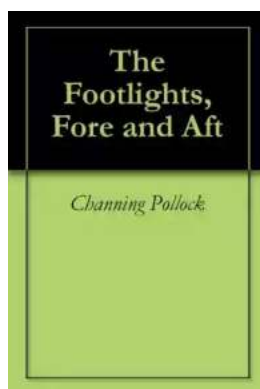
# The Footlights Fore And Aft: Discovering the Legacy of Cambridge's Comedy Troupe

Founded in 1880, The Footlights is a renowned comedy club and prestigious student drama society at the University of Cambridge, England. With a rich history that spans over a century, this legendary troupe has produced countless comedy icons and has left an indelible impact on the entertainment industry.

## Origins and Early Years

The Footlights Fore and Aft, often referred to as simply 'The Footlights', has its roots in amateur theatrical productions at Cambridge. Initially formed as part of the Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club (CUADC), the troupe evolved in the late 19th century, taking comedy to new heights and becoming a separate entity. Its early members included luminaries such as Sir Henry Arthur Jones, Sir William Schwenck Gilbert, and Lionel Monckton.

Throughout the years, The Footlights gained popularity for its ability to produce highly entertaining and intellectually stimulating shows. It became a breeding ground for some of the greatest comedic minds of our time, nurturing talents that would go on to redefine comedy and push the boundaries of the craft.



## The Footlights, Fore and Aft

by John Chapman (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 2316 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 149 pages



## The Footlights Alumni: Comedy Icons in the Making

The Footlights Fore And Aft has seen an extraordinary number of talented individuals pass through its ranks. Many of these individuals have gone on to achieve great success and shape the face of comedy worldwide. Here are just a few of the notable Footlights alumni:

### 1. John Cleese

John Cleese, a key member of the iconic comedy troupe Monty Python, is one of the most celebrated Footlights graduates. Cleese's sharp wit and impeccable comedic timing contributed to the success of Monty Python's Flying Circus and films like *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and *Life of Brian*.

### 2. Hugh Laurie and Stephen Fry

This dynamic duo, known for their brilliant comedy sketches and roles in the hit series *A Bit of Fry & Laurie* and *Jeeves and Wooster*, both honed their comedic skills at The Footlights. Hugh Laurie's portrayal of the cantankerous Dr. Gregory House in the TV series *House* further solidified his comedic and dramatic range.

### 3. Emily Mortimer

Emily Mortimer, recognized for her captivating performances in films like *Lars and the Real Girl* and *Match Point*, began her acting journey as a Footlights member. Mortimer's career highlights her versatility, as she effortlessly transitions between comedy and drama.

## **4. Emma Thompson**

Dame Emma Thompson, an accomplished actress and screenwriter, is another exemplary Footlights alumna. Known for her captivating performances in films such as *Sense and Sensibility*, *Nanny McPhee*, and *Love Actually*, Thompson's talent and dedication have earned her numerous accolades, including two Academy Awards.

### **Influence on Comedy and the Entertainment Industry**

The Footlights Fore And Aft has undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the comedy landscape. Its alumni have gone on to redefine the genre and inspire countless aspiring comedians. The troupe's unique blend of wit, intelligence, and satire continues to resonate with audiences worldwide. Their influence can be seen in various forms of media, including television, film, and theater.

Footlights' approach to comedy, characterized by its clever wordplay, irreverent humor, and social commentary, has set the stage for numerous generations of comedic talent. The troupe's members continue to shape and challenge the boundaries of comedy, pushing the artform forward.

### **The Legacy Lives On: Footlights Today**

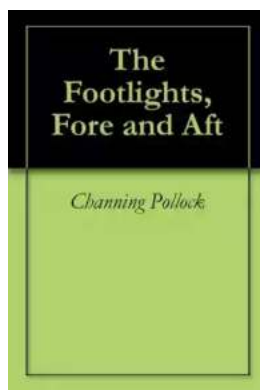
Today, The Footlights Fore And Aft continues to captivate audiences with their memorable shows and innovative comedic performances. Every year, the troupe produces new material showcasing the talent and creativity of its members.

While their journey begins at university, many Footlights performers continue to pursue successful careers in the entertainment industry. The Footlights legacy lives on as alumni contribute their skills to comedy series, films, and other comedic ventures.

Furthermore, The Footlights Fore And Aft showcases its talents not only on stage but also through YouTube sketches, online content, and social media presence. Embracing digital platforms, the troupe continues to evolve and entertain audiences across the globe.

The Footlights Fore And Aft remains a beacon of comedy excellence, shining a spotlight on the brilliance of Cambridge University's talented students. With a history that spans over a century, this renowned troupe has nurtured countless comedic legends and contributed immeasurably to the world of comedy and entertainment.

As we celebrate the legacy of The Footlights, we acknowledge its profound influence on comedy and its ongoing commitment to bringing laughter to audiences worldwide. From stage to screen, their impact endures, ensuring a brighter and funnier future for us all.



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What was it like to be on stage in the early 20th century?  
What was popular; who was popular?

What was considered "big" money in the early 1900's?

What did it take to put on a show... playwrights, producers, promoters, actors, lighting, grips, booking agents, directors, press agents, set designers, musicians, dancers...well you get the idea.

This humorous, illustrated volume about plays, actors and theaters was published in 1914 and is a gem of a book for any theater lover, no matter the year.

Chapters:

- The theater at a glance.
- Some people I've lied about.
- The writing and reading of plays.
- The personalities of our playwrights.
- Stage struck.
- On the great white way.
- What happens at rehearsals.
- The art of "getting it over."
- Something about first nights.--In vaudeville.
- With the people in stock.
- Sitting in judgment with the gods.
- The smart set on the stage

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Excerpts from the book:

"I wish every playgoer could know all the tricks and illusions of the stage from beginning to end. I wish that he could be as learned in all the devices and scenic effects of the stage as the master carpenter. . . . Compare the noisy, ill-judged, misplaced applause of provincial audiences with the eager, unerring enthusiasm and appreciation of the audience at a professional matinee, where, so far as the acting goes, everyone knows the precise means by which an effect is produced, and, therefore, knows the precise reward it should receive." That's warrant enough for me.

You know the recipe for cooking a rabbit "first catch your rabbit." The same recommendation applies in the matter of producing a play. Good plays are the one thing in the world, except money, the demand for which exceeds the supply.

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A press agent, as you may have gathered from the preceding article, is a person employed to obtain free newspaper advertising for any given thing, and the thing usually is a theatrical production. This advertising he is supposed to get as the Quaker was advised to get money honestly, if

possible. Since it isn't often possible, the press agent may be described in two words as a professional liar.

There is neither malice nor "muck rake " in this assertion. The press agent knows that his business is the dissemination of falsehood, and he is proud of it. Go up to any member of the craft you find on Broadway and say to him: "You are a liar!"; you will see a smile of satisfaction spread itself over his happy face, and his horny hand will grasp yours in earnest gratitude. Victor Hugo and Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray were liars, too, according to his way of thinking, and not overly ingenious or entertaining liars, at that. Their fiction was spread upon the pages of books, as his is spread upon the pages of the daily journals, and their mission, like his, was the enlivening of a terribly dull little planet.

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At my side lies an advertisement reading: "I will teach you to write plays for \$10!"

If the professor means that he can teach you to write plays that will bring you ten dollars, he may be speaking the truth. If he means

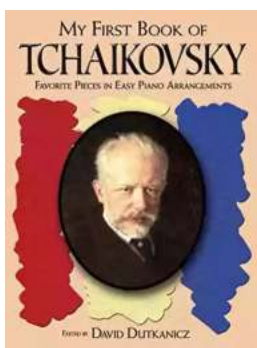
that for ten dollars, or a hundred dollars, or a hundred thousand, he can teach you to write plays, he is a liar!

Aunt Emma, who represents the palmy days of the stage, and "used to be with Booth and Barrett", once gave me her opinion of schools of acting. "One can learn to fence", she said, "and to walk and articulate properly. But one cannot learn to think or to feel, and without thinking and feeling there is no acting." Precisely the same thing may be said of playwriting.



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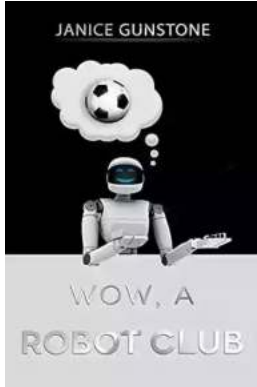
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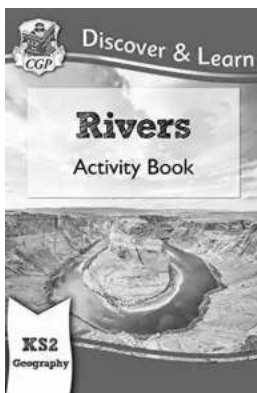
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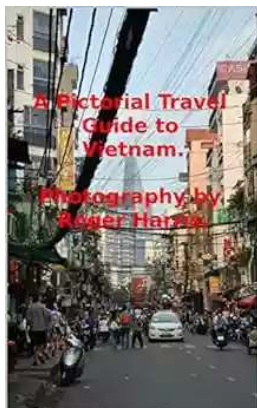
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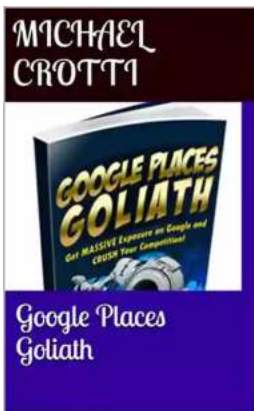
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