

BOOKFILTER'S JANUARY PICK OF THE MONTH

MICHAEL GILTZ | JANUARY 14, 2020

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Every month, BookFilter picks the best new theater book, exclusively for Broadway Direct readers.

Soupy Twists!

By Jem Roberts

\$24.95, Unbound

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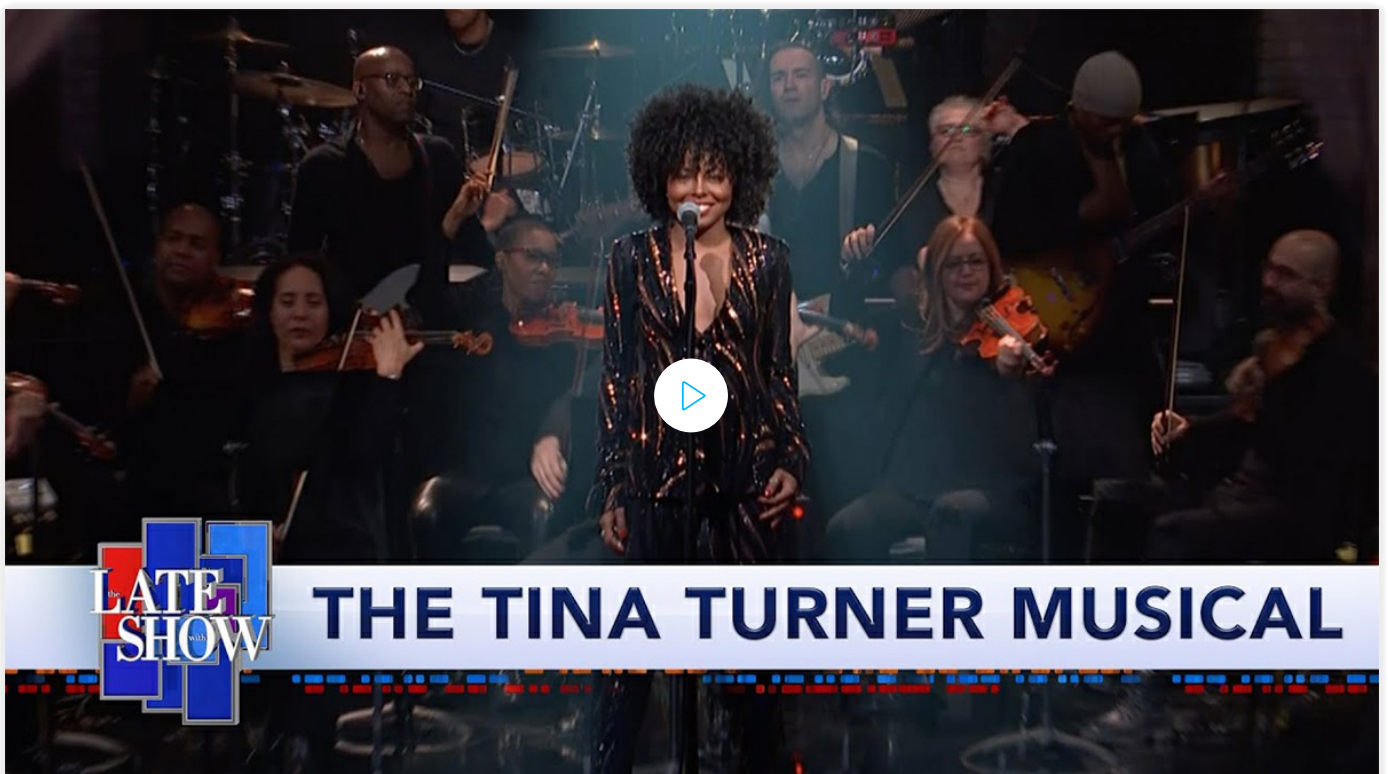
Name any entertainer you love, and chances are they had a start in the theater. Maybe it was a grade-school Christmas play, or *Our Town* as a teen. But it's more than likely that that movie star or talk-show host or pop singer or radio DJ caught the performance bug on stage. Case in point: the beloved duo Fry and Laurie. You surely know Hugh Laurie from his magnetic small-screen turn as the know-it-all doc in *House* and his second career as a blues artist; Stephen Fry is the voice of the U.K. audiobooks for the *Harry Potter* series, the host of the game show *QI*, the creator of intelligent podcasts, and the star of Shakespeare productions in London and New York, among other endeavors. And for both of them, it all began on the stage. In a new, very fannish and friendly dual biography of the team by Jem Roberts, the most interesting details appear when Fry and Laurie meet at Cambridge: Laurie is the head of Footlights, the amateur theatricals club that has spawned many a career, and Fry, despite suffering from stage fright, could not resist the allure of an audience. And so began a beautiful partnership. They launched a sketch show (bringing along chum Emma Thompson) that made them stars in the U.K., and then topped *that* with a pitch-perfect adaptation of the PG Wodehouse comic stories featuring classic characters Jeeves and Wooster. Watching Laurie pivot from the smarter-than-smart *House* to the dumber-than-dumb Bertie

Wooster is a head-spinning delight. Roberts dutifully documents their sprawling careers, but theater buffs who love Fry and Laurie (or just Fry, or just Laurie) will savor the revealing bits showing where it all began.

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