

Charlie Chaplin: Footlights with The World of Limelight

By David Robinson

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Charlie Chaplin: Footlights with The World of Limelight By David Robinson

Long before becoming one of the masterpieces of Charlie Chaplin's artistic maturity, and even before existing as a screenplay, *Limelight* was conceived by its author as a 34,000-word novella. After remaining virtually unknown for more than 60 years after its completion, *Footlights* is now published by Cineteca di Bologna in this volume for the very first time. Chaplin's vivid, idiosyncratic style, unadulterated by editors, moves freely from the baldly colloquial to moments of rich imagery and Dickensian description. For a setting, he looked back to London and the music halls of his first professional years, an enchanted period in which he had broken out of the deprivations of his childhood to discover, progressively, his unique gifts as entertainer and communicator. But this retrospect also recalled the painful insecurity of an uneducated, uncultured boy launched into the world of success. David Robinson, Chaplin's most eminent biographer, traces the long yet logical evolution of the story, from its unlikely origin in Chaplin's 1916 meeting with Nijinsky. The succeeding commentary recounts the making of the film, and traces the real-life sources of Chaplin's memories: the people and theaters of London's Soho, and the unique ballet tradition of the two great theaters of Leicester Square, the Empire and the Alhambra, commemorated in *Limelight* for the first and only time on film. The book is illustrated with a great wealth of previously unpublished documents and photographs from the Chaplin archives, historic pictures of the theatrical world of Chaplin's youth and images from the author's private collection.

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