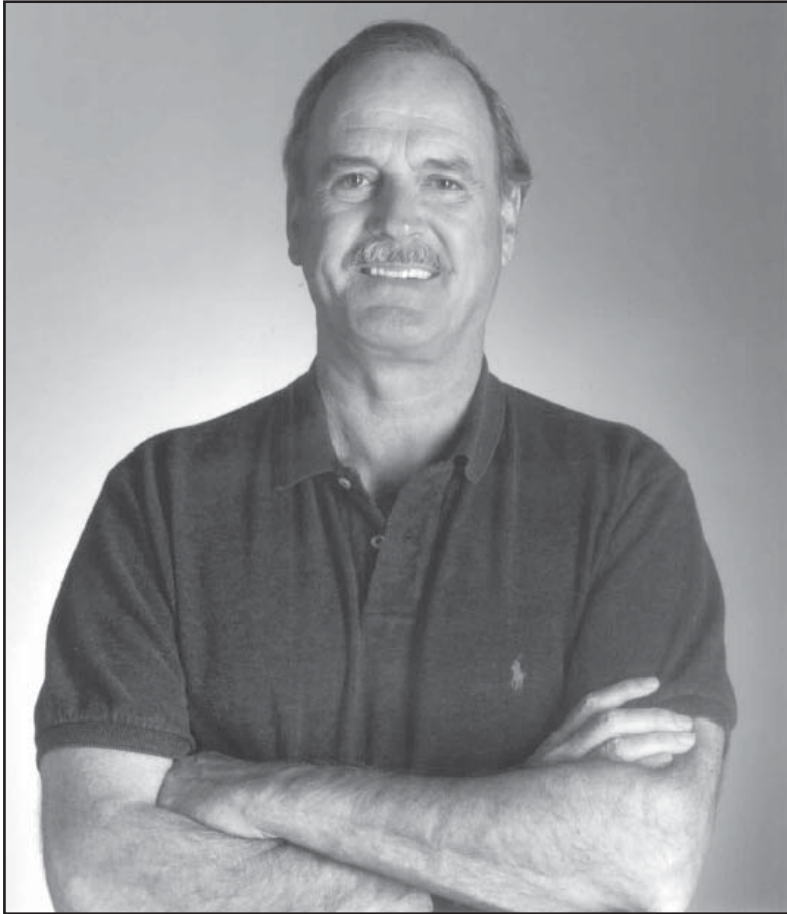


Wednesday, February 8, 2006, 8 pm  
Thursday, February 9, 2006, 8 pm  
Zellerbach Hall

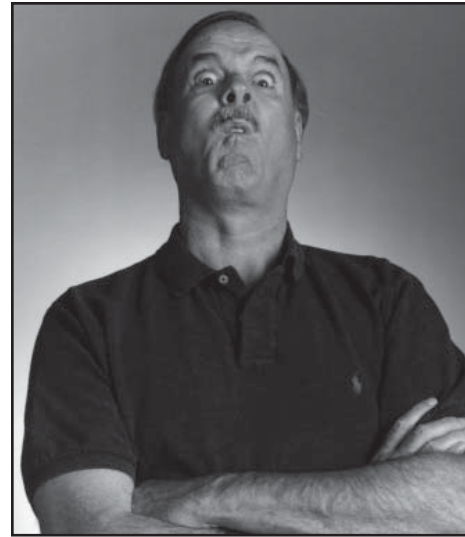
## John Cleese



### Seven Ways to Skin an Ocelot

*This performance is made possible, in part, by the generous support of the members of the Cal Performances Producers Circle and Friends of Cal Performances.*

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**John Cleese** was born on October 27, 1939, in Weston-Super-Mare, England. He was born into a family of modest means, his father being an insurance salesman, but he was nonetheless sent off to private schools to obtain a good education. Here he was often tormented for his height, having reached six feet by the age of 12, and eventually discovered that being humorous could deflect aggressive behavior in others. He loved humor in and of itself, collected jokes and, like many young Britons who would grow up to be comedians, was devoted to *The Goon Show*, the radio comedy starring the legendary Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan and Harry Secombe.

Cleese did well in both sports and academics, but his real love was comedy. He attended Cambridge to read (study) law, but devoted a great deal of time to the university's legendary Footlights group, writing and performing in comedy reviews, often in collaboration with future fellow Python Graham Chapman. Several of these comedy reviews met with great success, including one in particular which toured under the name Cambridge Circus. When Cleese graduated, he went on to

write for the BBC, then rejoined Cambridge Circus in 1964, which toured New Zealand and America. He remained in America after leaving Cambridge Circus, performing and doing a little journalism, and here met Terry Gilliam, another future Python.

Returning to England, Cleese appeared in a BBC radio series, *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again*, based on Cambridge Circus. It ran for several years and also starred future "Goodies" Tim Brooke-Taylor, Bill Oddie and Graeme Garden. He also appeared, briefly, with Brooke-Taylor, Chapman and Marty Feldman in *At Last The 1948 Show* (1967), for television, and a series of collaborations with some of the finest comedy-writing talent in England at the time, some of whom—Eric Idle, Gilliam, Terry Jones, Michael Palin and Chapman—eventually joined him in Monty Python. These programs included *The Frost Report* (1966) and Feldman's show, *It's Marty* (1968). Eventually, however, the writers were themselves collected to be the talent for their own program, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1969), which was originally to be a vehicle for Cleese but soon showed itself to be an ensemble program. *Monty Python* displayed a strange and completely absorbing blend of low farce and high-concept absurdist humor, and remains influential to this day.

After three seasons of the intensity of *Monty Python*, Cleese left the show, though he collaborated with one or more of the other Pythons for decades to come, including the Python movies released in the mid-1970s to early 1980s: *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), *Life of Brian* (1979), *Monty Python Live at the Hollywood Bowl* (1982) and *The Meaning of Life* (1983). Cleese and then-wife Connie Booth collaborated on the legendary television series *Fawlty Towers* (1975), starring Cleese as the sharp-tongued, rude, bumbling yet somehow lovable proprietor of a rundown

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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English seaside hotel. Cleese based this character on a proprietor he had met while staying with the other Pythons at a hotel in England. Only a dozen episodes were made, but each was truly hilarious, and he is still closely associated with this program today.

Meanwhile, Cleese had established a production company, Video Arts, for clever business training videos in which he generally starred, and which were and continue to be enormously successful in the English-speaking world. He continues to act prolifically in movies, including in the hit comedy *A Fish Called Wanda* (1988), in the Harry Potter series and in the James Bond series as the new Q, starting with *The World Is Not Enough* (1999), in which he began as R before graduating to Q. Cleese also supplies his voice to numerous animated and video projects, and frequently does commercials.

Besides the infamous Basil Fawlty character, Cleese's other well-known trademark is his rendition of an English upper-class toff. Education and learning are important elements of his life: He was Rector of the University of Saint Andrews from 1973 until 1976, and continues to be a professor-at-large at Cornell University in New York. Cleese lives in Santa Barbara, California, with his wife, Alyce Faye.

John has two daughters from two previous marriages. His oldest daughter, Cynthia Soloman, is shared with his first wife, Connie Booth. His second daughter, Camilla Cleese, is shared with his second wife, Barbara Trentham. Cynthia resides in Los Angeles with her husband, screenwriter Ed Soloman, and their two children. Camilla lives in Santa Barbara and is currently starring opposite her father on his New Zealand tour. John is also the stepfather of Alyce Faye's two children, Martin and Clinton Eichelberger. Martin resides on the East Coast with his wife Annemieke and their two children, while Clinton resides close

to John and Alyce Faye in Ventura and also has a daughter.

**Camilla Chloe Cleese** (*co-writer and member of the supporting cast*) was purchased from Harrods department store in London by John Cleese on January 24, 1984. Happy because he saved 10% off the sale price, John felt it his duty to pass along his comedic genius by raising Camilla in a sick and twisted household. Moving to America in her early teens, Camilla began to show her talents by being active in theater, music, dance, horse riding, athletics and prison. After successfully being kicked out of various schools across the country for questionable behavior, Camilla now resides in Montecito, where she was just recently nominated for an Emmy for her groundbreaking work in *Girls Gone Wild—The Spring Break Edition*.

**Garry Scott-Irvine** (*a producer and member of the supporting cast*) was born in Kent, England, to a large and loving family. He was sold into slavery at an early age. Garry has worked for John Cleese and his wife, Alyce Faye, for the last 15 years. John has included Garry on the tour "because he's cheap." Garry was last seen on stage, aged five, in his school nativity play, where he was the third sheep from the right.

### *Management:*

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