

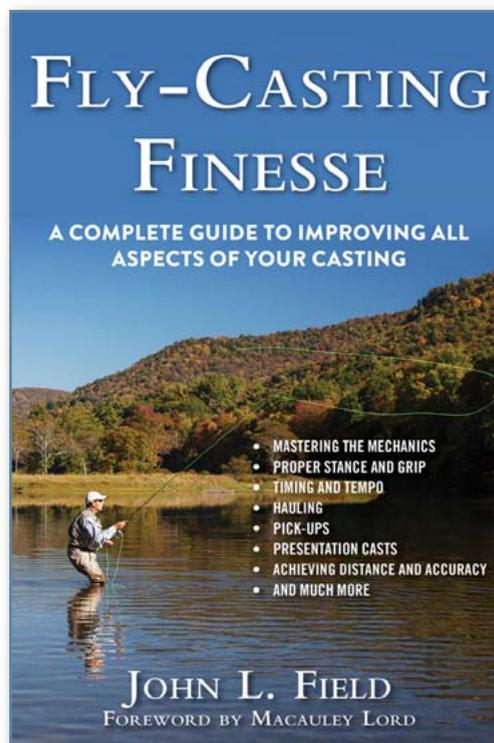
FLY-CASTING FINESSE – A Review

by Charles Jardine, MCI, Salisbury, England

I loathe books on fly-casting. . . usually. John Field's new book, *Fly Casting Finesse*, is different. Certainly it's about that irrational-rational madness that grips some of us – fly-casting – and the pursuit of that holiest of holy grails, casting competence. But it is more. Here we have a book that burns with passion, for not only what the writer believes, but the book actually makes sense. I confess, that the author endeared himself right from the “off” by marginalising Tenkara and other fly-fishing excuses for using a fly rod. That is precisely what shines through the pages of *Fly-Casting Finesse* - care for the reader, a deep understanding of logical progression, few frills, stark common sense and just a compelling love of the synergy between fisher, rod and line.

The book is dignified. Importantly it is a book that makes a case for why you should learn casts, sometimes quite complex ones like mends, positive and negative curves and their kin. The reader understands that it is not just for casting's sake, but for a clearly identified reason such as when casting across streams or trying to tame the ocean with her uncompromising moods and quarry.

OK, those are all reasons why you should pick the book up. But what will you find within the pages? *Wait a minute*. . . why not let us do this. Think of *Fly Casting Finesse* as a new play opening on Broadway.



The main character, *The Fly Cast*, being an old and much visited character, has been played in numerous ways down the years and interpreted slightly differently by many learned leads before Mr. Field.

So what has Field brought that is fresh to the time-honored role? Well for one thing, the pace of the *play* moves swiftly. The audience, you and me, is seldom left bored. We are taken through the *acts* in a wonderfully no-nonsense manner. Field leaves nothing out, be it the near banal unraveling of a tapered leader, or the idiosyncrasies of grip, stance, loop shape, presentation casts. It matters little whether you are fishing salt or freshwater, each *cameo part* is played with a deep understanding of the *play's* content, in an accessible manner.

What John Field has brought to a vastly complicated and subjective arena is clarity - the sort that only comes from someone utterly

conversant with every nuance of this particular *play*. Now there are areas that one could query and maybe question in the *delivery of the lines*. This reviewer would love to have seen more sequential illustration, perhaps a greater fullness of expression in some of the more “involved” areas such as Mends, Maximizing Casting Distance, Presentation Scenarios, and others. These complexities are a little *monochromatic*, compared with other areas of deep color, but that

Fly-Casting Finesse – A Review *continued...*

is quibbling. The element that has been brought to bear on this old and oft reworked theme is knowledgeable simplicity, without dumbing it down.

Don't we, as an audience, just hate being hectored, or worse, treated as imbeciles? Field ensures that it does not happen on his watch. The whole production is amplified by the virtue that you can "dip" into specific areas and extract the contents from the pages, rather like metaphorically picking a pocket; you can move from the pretty involved narrative of *Casting Mechanics and Adaption* to say, the *Loop and the Rod*, seamlessly. Also, Field is not frightened to lean on the support of his fellow gurus and punctuates many situations with his association with other leading players of the genre such as the Rajeff brothers, Lefty Kreh, Gordy Hill, the Borgers, Bruce Richards, and Joan Wulff.

So will the play have a long run on the fly fishers' "Broadway" production? *Fly-Casting Finesse* jolly well deserves it. Does it add anything to previous renditions? Absolutely. It has clarity of thought



and expression which makes the application of the techniques straightforward. Should you spend time and money visiting this production? Definitely. Does John Field have a hit? Without doubt. Take a bow, sir.



About the Author: Britain's Charles Jardine has been fly fishing for 56 years. During that time, he has cast and fished (and also written and painted) around a good bit of the globe. He has been at the start and the formation of the IFFF Casting certification program. He has written and illustrated a number of well-received fly fishing books and has received the Ambassador and President Pin awards from the IFFF. Jardine guided (and still does sometimes) on the Southern English Chalk streams. Currently he is the director of the England Youth Fly Fishing Team and works on his opus – Fishing 4 Schools. Contact him at charles@charlesjardine.co.uk