



BOOKFILTER'S ANNUAL HOLIDAY BOOK GUIDE FOR THEATER LOVERS

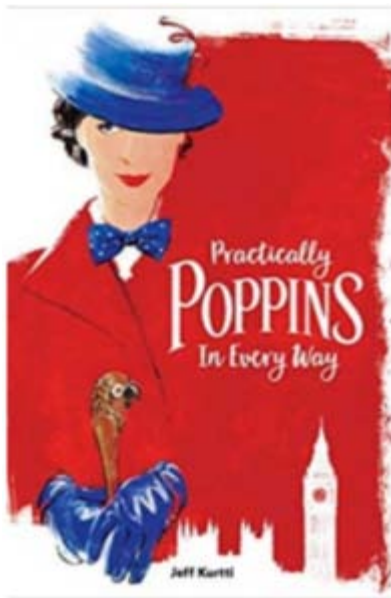
MICHAEL GILTZ | NOVEMBER 20, 2018

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The savvy reader's favorite website BookFilter.com chooses the best theater books ready for the spotlight, exclusively for Broadway Direct.

You know the drill: You love theater, we love theater, and if we're not actually sitting in a theatre watching a live performance, then we want to read about theater! Here's a roundup of the best new books coming out soon and a reminder about some of our favorite theater books we touted this year. They make great gifts because surely everyone you know enjoys theater as much as you do, right? If not, you need new friends!

Practically Poppins in Every Way

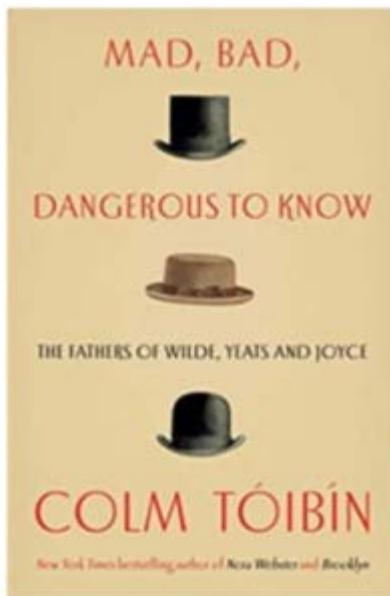


By Jeff Kurtti

\$50, Disney Editions

Disney's success on Broadway has been remarkable, from its sterling debut with *Beauty and the Beast* (one of the best scores of all time) to *The Lion King* and the current blockbuster *Aladdin*. A little lost amid all the hits (like *Aida*) and some misfires (like *The Little Mermaid* and *Tarzan*)? *Mary Poppins*. That sterling show is among the 25 longest-running hits in Broadway history! And now a new feature film continues the story. This coffee table-worthy book by Jeff Kurtti is much more than a visually appealing celebration of the franchise. It covers the history of Mary Poppins in all her incarnations, from the beloved books by the prickly P.L. Travers to the classic feature film that earned Julie Andrews an Oscar to its stage debut in London ... and now back again to the silver screen this December with *Mary Poppins Returns* (costarring Lin-Manuel Miranda)! Filled with essays and anecdotes by the likes of theater giants Cameron Macintosh and Thomas Schumacher, Disney historians, and many others, it's the perfect setup for those eagerly anticipating the new movie. And will anyone be surprised if *Mary Poppins Returns* actually returns the practically perfect nanny to Broadway some day? Hardly.

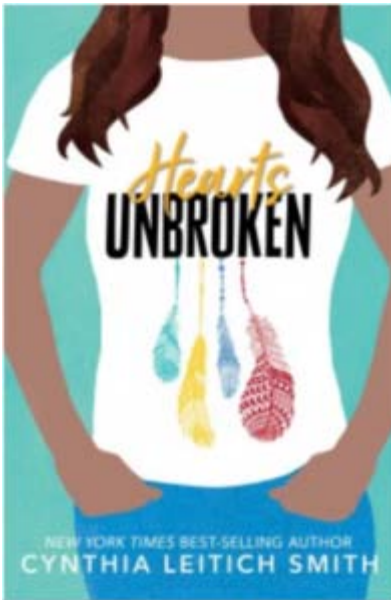
Mad, Bad, Dangerous to Know



By Colm Tóibín
\$26, Scribner

Colm Tóibín is a widely acclaimed writer who broke through with the bestseller *Brooklyn*, a novel turned into an Oscar-nominated film. Here, the journalist, essayist, and critic delivers a nonfiction book about three iconic figures who loom large in Irish history and the overwhelming influence of their fathers. Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, and James Joyce are the artists Tóibín tackles, showing how the love (and often lack thereof) from their fathers and the careers those patriarchs pursued shaped the talents we know so well. All three have varied links to theater. “The Dead,” Joyce’s final story from his collection *Dubliners*, is turning into a holiday perennial via a staged production in New York City. And Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* is the first among many popular plays by him that have taken a permanent place in the repertory. Anyone interested in these talents or simply fascinated by the push-and-pull of fathers and sons will find much to mull over here.

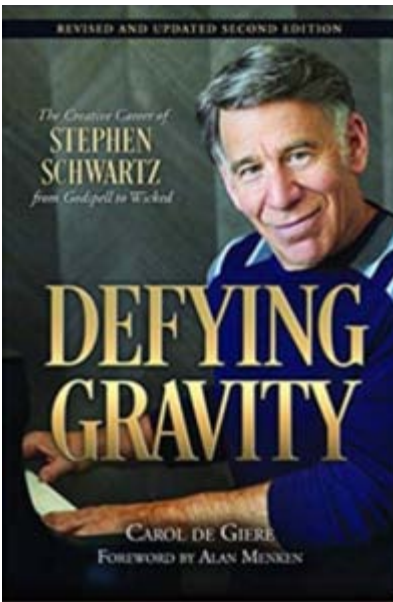
Hearts Unbroken



By Cynthia Leitich Smith
\$17.99, Candlewick

Maybe the premise of this young-adult novel will sound outrageous to you. In *Hearts Unbroken*, Louise Wolfe is a proud Native American teen living in a mostly white middle-class Kansas town. When her little brother is cast as the Tin Man in the school's production of *The Wizard of Oz*, well, that sounds great. But as a journalist on the school paper, Lou (as she's known) finds herself covering backlash to the director's inclusive casting. A protest group called Parents Against Revisionist Theatre is soon speaking up, anonymous threats are flying, and the kids in the cast are bearing the brunt of long-buried animosity and prejudice. Yikes! But don't worry: Lou finds the time to develop a romance with the school paper's photographer, even if it can be tricky to "date while Native." If you find yourself wondering how author Cynthia Leitich Smith came up with such a crazy idea, you might check out recent news stories from North Carolina. Parents in Mitchell County held a prayer vigil after a high school performance of the light comedy *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)* shocked them with its references to alcohol consumption, suicide, and a queer kiss. So, not so crazy! (And *Hamlet*, we're guessing, will not be mounted any time soon.)

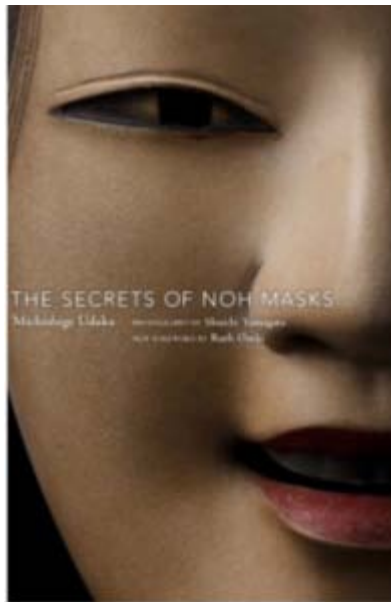
Defying Gravity, 2nd Edition



By Carol de Giere
\$29.99, Applause Books

Composer-lyricist Stephen Schwartz gets the full biography treatment he deserves in *Defying Gravity*. Now, this new paperback edition covers his entire career, along with added material about Schwartz's work on *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (which is proving very popular in high schools and regional productions, despite never making it to Broadway), the animated film *The Prince of Egypt*, and his ongoing work on new productions of *Wicked* all over the world. Author Carol de Giere expands on a section where Schwartz discusses practical issues in a self-help sort of way, such as how to overcome a creative block. It also delves deeper into his early collaboration with Leonard Bernstein. From *Godspell* to the ever-in-the-works feature film version of *Wicked* (it's coming! someday!), Schwartz is one of the most successful composers of all time, and this biography is the place for fans to start getting to know him in depth.

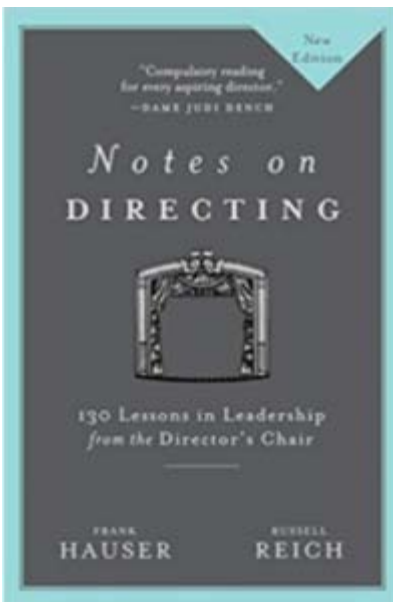
[***The Secrets of Noh Masks***](#)



By Michishige Udaka
\$25, Kodansha USA

For 600 years, Noh drama has been a radically simple mainstay of Japanese theater. It is acting pared down to its essence: Actors, minimal props, and Noh masks all work in concert to tell stories with nuance and a remarkable range of emotions. It's enjoying a new peak in popularity, and who better to discuss it than Michishige Udaka, the rare talent who both acts and crafts his own Noh masks? Most Noh masks are precious and antique works of art, handed down from artist to artist or kept as key resources by legendary theatrical companies. Udaka is the only person to teach, write, act, and craft his own Noh masks. This gorgeous book showcases some 30 masks in all their beauty and subtle range of character, along with his insights into both the craft of making them and acting with them. For fans of Japan and serious theater buffs alike.

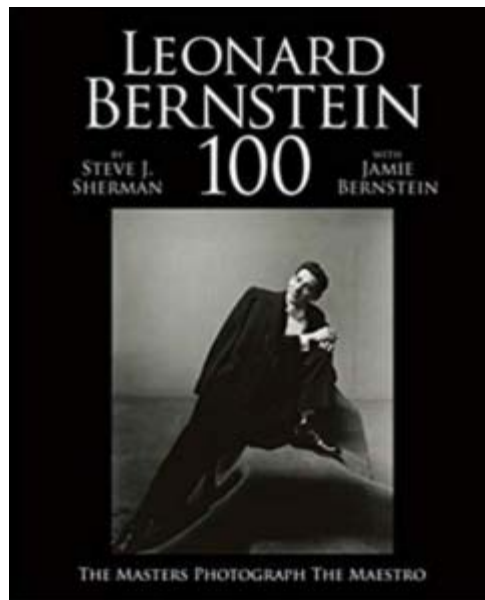
Notes on Directing



By Frank Hauser and Russell Reich
\$17.95, RCR Creative Press

An essential work for anyone interested in theater at any level, be it high school, community theater, academic, or professional. Longtime teacher and director Frank Hauser collaborated with former student Russell Reich to distill Hauser's insights about his craft into a series of notes. It's all here: notes on casting, handling a first read-through, rehearsals, notes on how to give notes, and so much more. You might be tempted to see his clear-eyed notes as useful advice in many settings. You'd be right, but this is more how-to than self-help. It's vital, however, for anyone who wants to collaborate on theater in any way and lets fans peek behind the curtain at all the work that goes into the shows they will eventually enjoy. Most everyone in theater says their favorite period is rehearsal — the period when they're getting a new show onto its feet — so why not find out exactly what's going on?

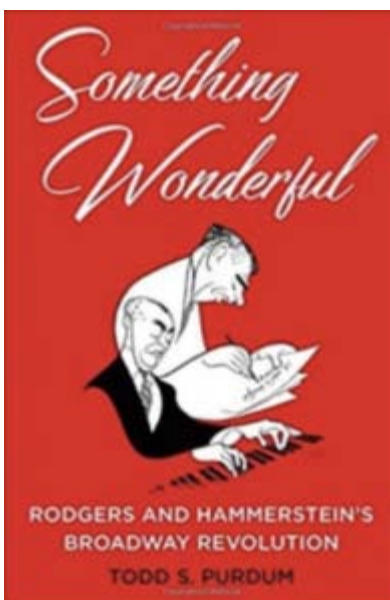
Leonard Bernstein 100: The Masters Photograph the Maestro



By Steve J. Sherman, with Jamie Bernstein
\$40, powerHouse Books

Leonard Bernstein was born in 1918, so this entire year has been dedicated to celebrating the famed conductor, composer, and popularizer in countless ways. For a man who made such a visual impact as the very embodiment of the conductor/teacher on TV, one particularly apt tribute is this coffee table book. It celebrates Bernstein as captured on camera by a range of brilliant photographers, and it is a visual treat for theater and classical-music buffs. Among the giants who shot Bernstein and are included here: Richard Avedon, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Gordon Parks, Ruth Orkin, and Stanley Kubrick (!).

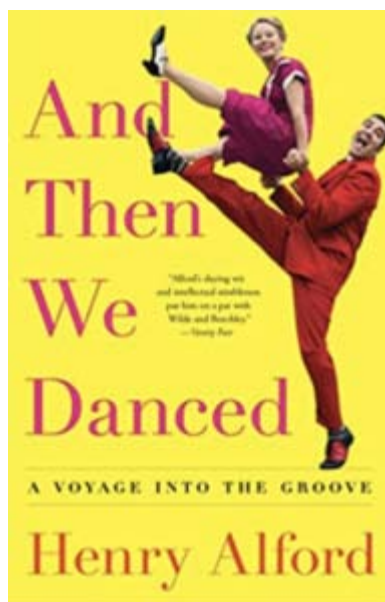
Something Wonderful: Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway Revolution



By Todd S. Purdum
\$32, Henry Holt & Co

This brisk and lively biography of the greatest team in musical-theater history happily remains focused on what matters most: the shows. Author Todd S. Purdum begins by covering their lives and careers up to that fateful partnership, reminding us that Oscar Hammerstein (*Show Boat*) and Richard Rodgers (Rodgers & Hart) had already accomplished enough to be remembered forever even before they met. Then Purdum devotes about a chapter to each major work and the increasing business activity that surrounds colossal success. Rodgers and Hammerstein were the boldest and most fascinating of talents, pushing boundaries on what stories a musical could tell, how they would tell them, and doing it all with songs that are so precise and deceptively simple that everyone can sing them — yet, in the right hands, they reveal passionate depths. Purdum doesn't shy away from the personal, including Hammerstein's insecurities, Rodgers chasing after showgirls, or battles with depression and alcoholism. But it's always in the context of how personal matters affected their relationship and their shows. *Something Wonderful* doesn't rock the boat with any unexpected claims for this show or damning of that work. It's a solid, affectionate description of artists who look more important today than at any time since, oh, 1945.

And Then We Danced



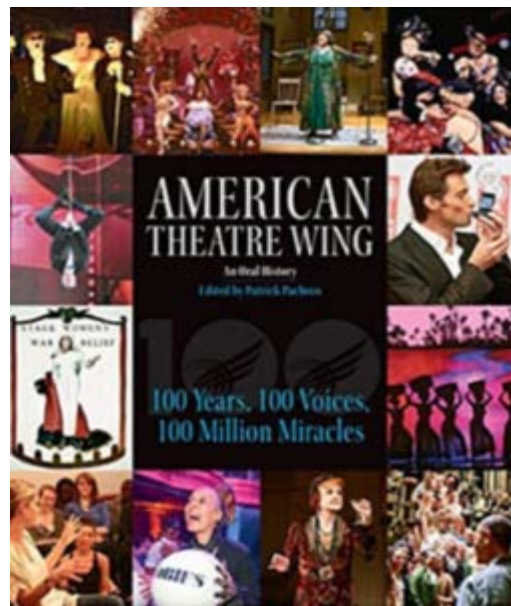
By Henry Alford

\$26, Simon & Schuster

Henry Alford is this generation's Bill Plimpton, a writer who dives into a topic by actually diving in. Here, Alford tells the story of the history of dance while sharing his own experience of using dance lessons to boost his confidence. Part popular history and part memoir, you get thumbnail sketches of artists such as Twyla Tharp and George Balanchine along with the origins of everything from tap to ballroom to swing and even Zumba. (Alford wrote a hugely popular article for *The New York Times* about taking Zumba lessons, which led to this book.) By the time he's dancing with Alzheimer's patients as part of their therapy, you'll be laughing and tearing up at the same time. Read it before the heart-tugging film version does a tango with Oscar.

Our July Pick Of The Month: read the full review [here](#).

American Theatre Wing: An Oral History



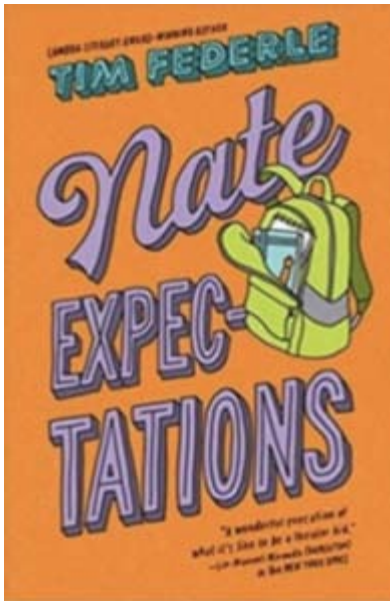
By Patrick Pacheco

\$45, Graphic Arts Books

Author Patrick Pacheco was tasked with the duty of sharing stories celebrating 100 years of the American Theatre Wing, and thus 100 years of American theater, from Broadway to Off-Broadway and regional scenes all over the country. Obviously, no single book — however thick — could do justice to it all. But with never-before-seen photos and anecdotes from a who's who that includes Angela Lansbury, Harvey Fierstein, Audra McDonald, Harold Prince, Patti LuPone,

Neil Patrick Harris, and so many others, well, you can hardly go far wrong, either.

Nate Expectations

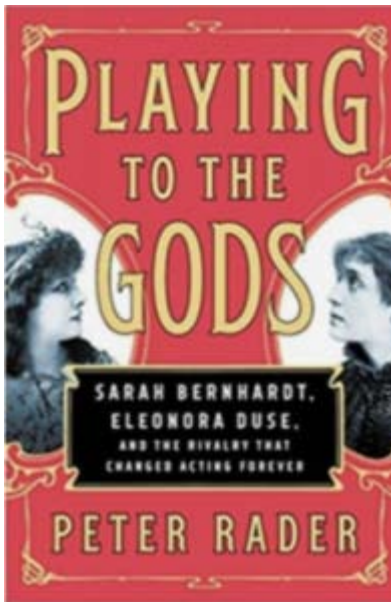


By Tim Federle

\$17.99, Simon & Schuster

Tim Federle's best-selling and beloved series about a middle-grade kid besotted with theater comes to an end with the third and final volume of the trilogy. Nate didn't find fame and fortune when the show *E.T.: The Musical* bombed on Broadway, so he's back in his hometown in Pennsylvania... and his freshman year of high school. He'd rather be rehearsing his Tony speech (who wouldn't?_, but the out-and-proud Nate instead decides to oversee a musical adaptation of *Great Expectations*. Sweet and open to all orientations (as long as you love Broadway), the Nate series shows that everyone loves a dreamer.

Playing to the Gods



By Peter Rader

\$26, Simon & Schuster

This dual biography tells the stories of two of the greatest stage actresses in history: Sarah Bernhardt (the Divine One, as good at self-promotion as she was at acting) and Eleonora Duse (a self-effacing artist who pioneered modern acting). It's juicy and delightful, so anyone who loves theater, acting in general, and strong women from history in particular will enjoy *Playing to the Gods* very much.

Our September Pick Of The Month: read the full review [here](#).

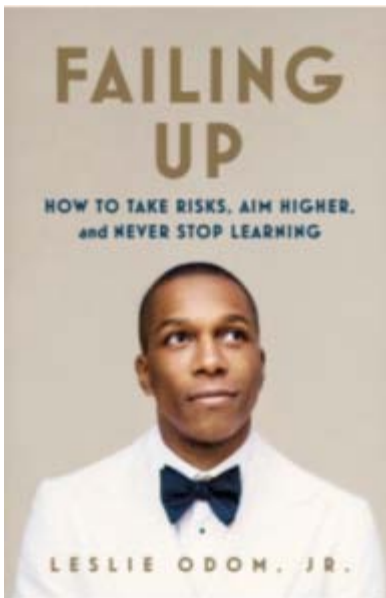
Dear Evan Hansen: The Novel



By Val Emmich, with Steven Levenson, Benj Pasek, and Justin Paul
\$18.99, Poppy

This has to be the most anticipated theater book of the year, a young adult adaptation of the show with writer Val Emmich building on the book, music, and lyrics of Steven Levenson and the team of Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. Has a Broadway show ever been turned into a YA novel before? I don't think so. It stands on its own, so those who can't get to Broadway or wait for the national tour to come to their town will be able to dive into this story and this world right away. Though if they play the cast album while reading it, well, who could blame them?

Failing Up



By Leslie Odom Jr.
\$19.99, Feiwel & Friends

The remarkable original cast of *Hamilton* has spread out to conquer everything from TV to music to film and, of course, theater. Tony winner Leslie Odom Jr. might just do all of that, and now he's tossed in publishing for good measure. In this memoir/self-help guide, Odom uses the commencement address speech as a way to share how he struggled, fought, and "failed up" on his way to *Hamilton* and the role of a lifetime. He debuted on Broadway at the age of 17 in *Rent* (another show with a historic original cast) and hasn't looked back since.

Fraver by Design: Five Decades of Theatre Poster Art From Broadway, Off-Broadway, and Beyond

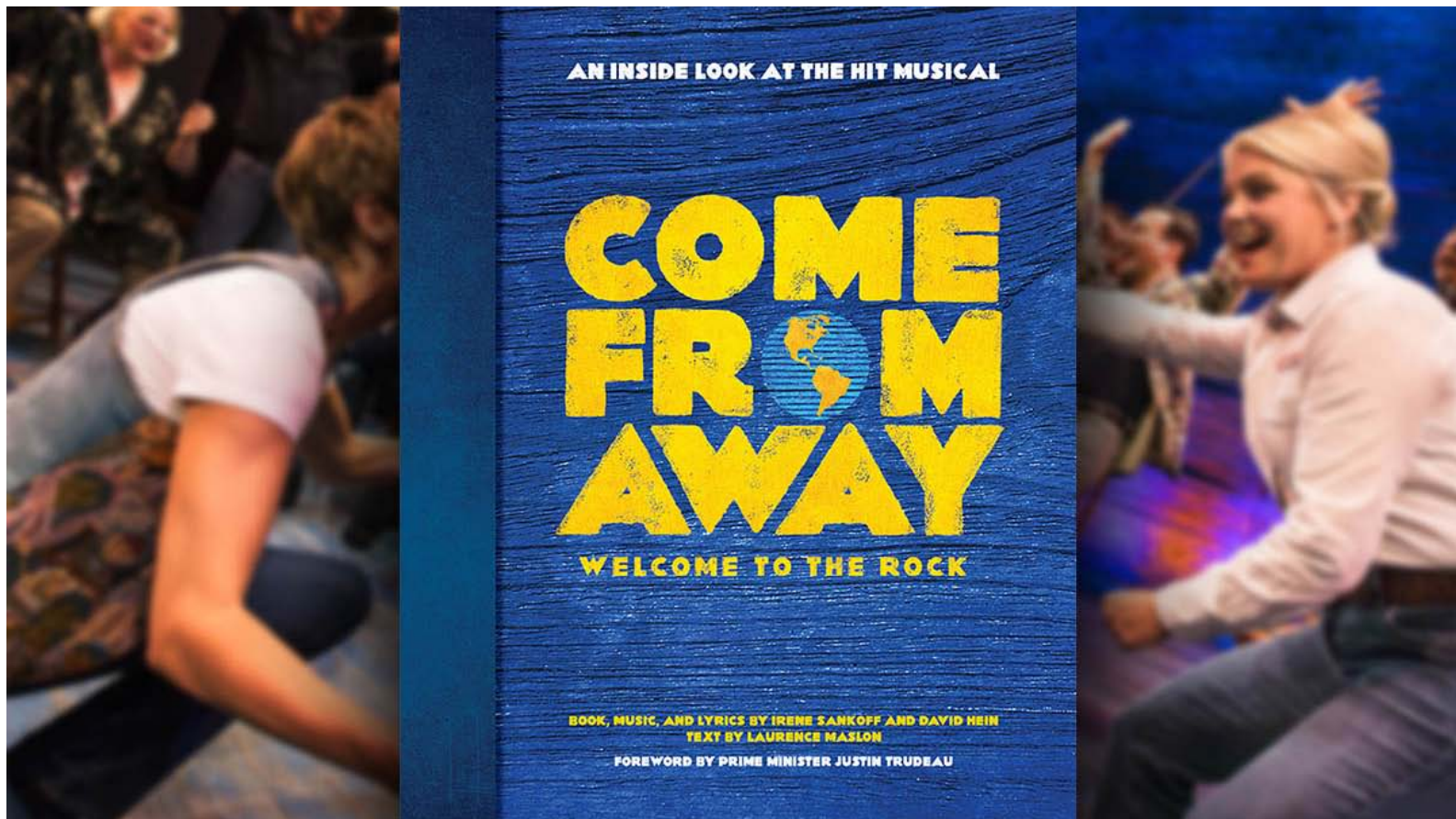
KEEP READING:



Bookfilter's February Pick of the Month



Mean Girls on Broadway: "I'd Rather Be Me" Official Lyrics & Meaning



Come From Away Launches Book

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