

BOOKFILTER'S WINTER 2020 THEATER BOOK ROUNDUP

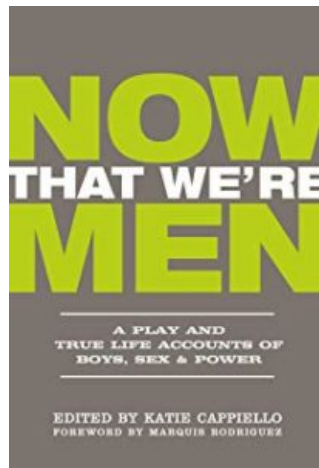
MICHAEL GILTZ | FEBRUARY 4, 2020

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Your favorite source for theater news and features chooses the best theater books ready to take their bow.

In the winter, theater catches its breath. Schools all across the country did their fall productions followed quickly by holiday shows. Parents smiled through seasonal concerts at grade schools and celebratory traditions in houses of worship. Community theatres trotted out *A Christmas Carol* or whatever annual treat fills the coffers. Fans splurged on touring hits or made the pilgrimage to Broadway. And now it's time for the Tony Award season to heat up, though many productions wait until April or May to open so they can be fresh in the minds of voters. So the winter is a chance to catch up with shows you haven't seen yet. Or you can stay indoors, get warm by the fire, and catch up on all the best new theater books. Some days, the only curtain-raising you want to see is the one showing snow outside while you remain inside and dream of theater to come.

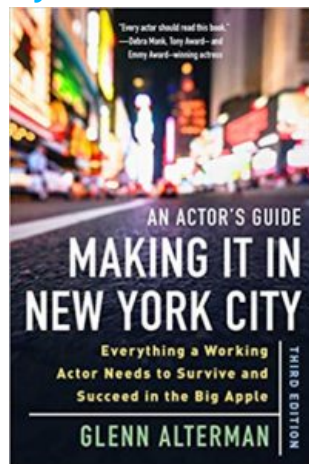
[Now That We're Men](#)



By Kate Capiello
\$19.95, Dottir Press
Out now

Once upon a time, the worst sort of play was an “issue” play, something written for teens on a hot-button topic. They were tiresome, finger-wagging, and, worst of all, bad dramas. Even theater kids hated those plays that were never staged anywhere except in schools. Why couldn’t they do a real play? Well, no more. Now, plays tackling serious topics and created to spark dialogue are smart, sharp, and ready for prime time. Case in point: playwright Kate Capiello’s hit *SLUT* might scare timid programmers, but it is packaged with a discussion guide and other features. No one shrugs indifferently at shows like that. Here’s an updated version of Capiello’s acclaimed *Now That We’re Men*, which covers rape culture, toxic masculinity, sexting, and more ... without making boys feel like there’s a target on their backs. This paperback edition includes an activist guide and “raw dispatches” from boys, teens, and young men.

An Actor’s Guide: Making It in New York City — Third Edition

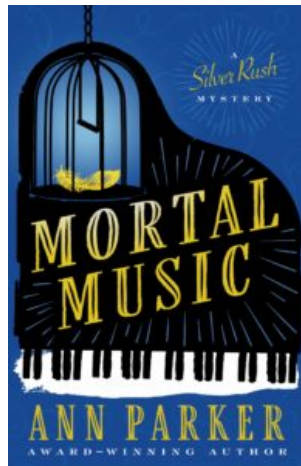


By Glenn Alterman
\$19.99, Allworth
Out February 4

New York City is a mecca for actors, of course. And from what we hear, if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere. Actor Glenn Alterman updates his practical guide to surviving in the Big Apple with this paperback filled with all sorts of tips and advice about head shots, creating your own website, the best way to contact casting directors, survival jobs (a.k.a. jobs that pay the rent, a.k.a. waitering and catering), and even warning signs of tips and scams. And guess what? Almost everything he writes about applies to other acting meccas such as L.A., London, Chicago, and wherever else you plant your flag and work to make that big break happen. It’s perfect for actors heading into the big wide world or kids with the bug who want to

start thinking now about what being a working actor is really like.

Mortal Music



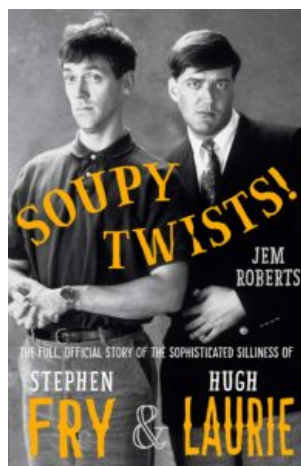
By Ann Parker

\$26.99, Poisoned Pen Press

Out now

The seventh book in Ann Parker's Silver Rush series doubles down on the theatrical fun. Our hero Inez Stannert is a pianist and music store owner in San Francisco during the 1800s. (She had us at pianist.) Famous opera diva Theia Carrington Drake gives Stannert the big break she's been hoping for: accompanying the singer at some high-profile personal appearances. Great! Until, that is, Drake's pet bird is killed, her signature outfit is slashed to pieces, and Stannert realizes a madman is stalking the opera houses of San Francisco. Wait, San Francisco had multiple opera houses? The period details of life on and off the stage in the 19th century are fun dressing for Parker's usual clever mysteries. Inez Stannert will surely be back for an encore.

Soupy Twists



By Jem Roberts

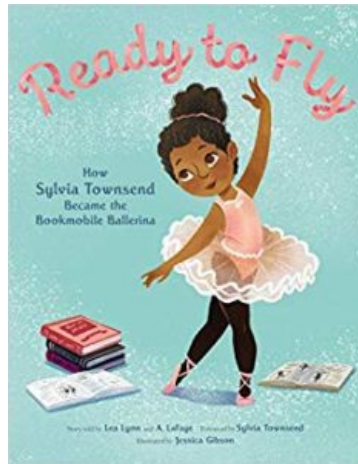
\$24.95, Unbound

Out now

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. 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*; 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 Shakespearean 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. 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. Read more about this [January Pick of the Month!](#)

[Ready to Fly](#)



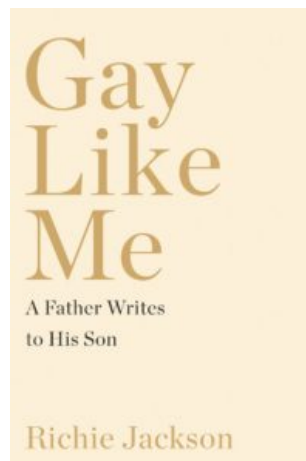
By Lea Lyon and Alexandria LaFaye; illustrations by Jessica Gibson

\$18.99, HarperCollins

Out now

It's a thrill to see children fall in love with ballet. Seeing them dance down the aisles after experiencing *The Nutcracker* is a memory that can't be beat. Then when you realize this new-found passion can lead to them getting off their smartphones and reading? That's a double win. For little kids enchanted by the ballet — and those who have never been — should find *Ready to Fly* a treat. It tells the true story of beloved ballerina Sylvia Townsend, who taught herself the rudiments of dance by borrowing titles from the Bookmobile that came to her neighborhood. Ballet and books and borrowing and being grateful? Now that's a pretty sight.

[Gay Like Me: A Father Writes to His Son](#)

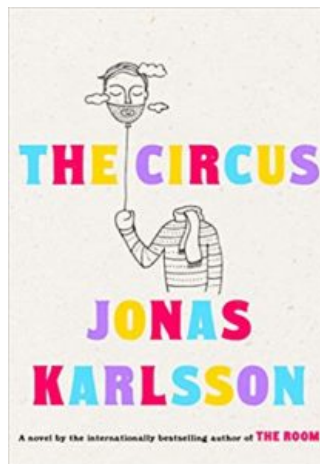


By Richie Jackson

\$24.99, Harper

Producer Richie Jackson is an out and powerful player in theater and television. He executive-produced Showtime's *Nurse Jackie*, starring Tony winner Edie Falco, throughout its entire seven-season run. Most recently he produced the revival of Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song* on Broadway, starring Michael Urie, an acclaimed work that's currently touring the country. In short, Jackson has it all, including a husband and a son he loves. Then that son came out to him, prompting Jackson to write this passionate memoir/survival guide. Seeing the world through the eyes of a kid just starting out, Jackson marvels at how far we've come, but recognizes how freedom must be fought for and won in every generation. It's personal and political, and, for the first time, it finds a lauded producer baring his soul not through the words of others but with his own clear voice.

The Circus



By Jonas Karlsson
\$23, Hogarth

Actor Jonas Karlsson is one of the most well-known talents in Sweden, working on stage and in films, and even authoring a string of books, including short stories and novellas. He hasn't performed on stage in the U.S. yet, but his films have played everywhere and he appeared in the "Hated in the Nation" episode of TV's *Black Mirror*. But you have no excuse for not savoring his talents on the page. A combination of Borges and Kafka, Karlsson's novels, such as *The Invoice* and *The Room*, are short, beguiling, and charming. *The Circus* is no exception. It begins with a quiet man obsessed with his record collection. Then a friend pops back into his life, drags our hero to the circus, volunteers for a disappearing act ... and really disappears. And doesn't come back. Snap it up, enjoy it, and when Karlsson finally performs on stage in America, we're sure you'll catch his attention when you ask him to sign your copy of this book instead of your *Playbill*. OK, who are we kidding? You'll ask him to sign the book *and* the *Playbill*.

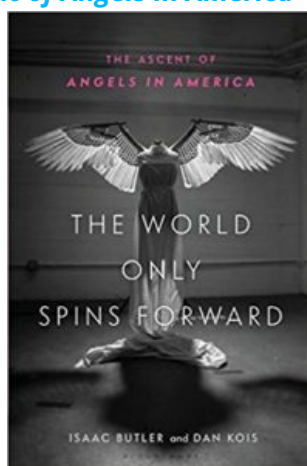
Introduction to the Alexander Technique



By Bill Connington
\$26.95, Methuen Drama
Out now

Acclaimed theatrical publisher Methuen has a new series called Acting Essentials that collects key works in their catalog. Up first? This paperback textbook introducing the Alexander Technique in a style perfect for theater majors, those taking acting classes as electives, kids in high school who want to make theater their life, and fans of the art who can learn so much by reading what actors learn. This approach covers every tool an actor uses, including mind, body, voice, emotions, and imagination. With more than 150 exercises, it's a fun how-to for anyone looking to boost their confidence, poise, and flexibility for any situation, from a job interview and public speaking to finally auditioning at the local community theater.

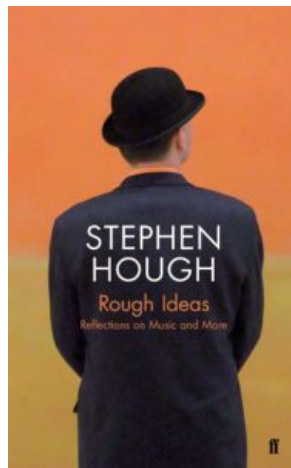
The World Only Spins Forward: The Ascent of Angels in America



By Isaac Butler and Dan Kois
\$20, Bloomsbury Publishing

Is it possible that Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* turns 30 in 2021? His epic feels like it's always been around and like it's brand-new. The landmark play has been staged and restaged all over the world, and turned into a blockbuster all-star HBO miniseries and even an opera. Happily, it's also been documented in one of theater's best oral histories. *The World Only Spins Forward*, about the backstage struggles and the AIDS-ravaged Reagan era that fueled Kushner's righteous rage, came out in 2018 and received so many awards and sold so well, it's only now coming out in paperback. That makes it perfect for revisiting or reading for the first time. If you cart the paperback around with you, make sure you carry along a copy of the play. You'll want to check a line, read a scene, or just start mounting your own production of the show right away.

Rough Ideas

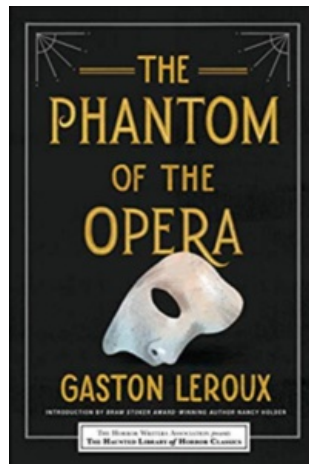


By Stephen Hough

\$30, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Writing about music can be like dancing about architecture ... unless you're Stephen Hough. This British pianist can do it all: He is a classical pianist with more than 60 recordings to his credit, including *Brahms: The Final Piano Pieces*, which just came out in January; he's a painter; he's an essayist; and he's a one-time blogger for *The Telegraph* newspaper. What, no podcast? This compilation of essays covers the waterfront, with Hough engagingly answering the questions pianists often get asked at talk-backs, alongside unexpected ventures into art criticism, discussions of assisted suicide, and thoughts on life as a gay Catholic. If you're aren't already a fan of his playing, this book will surely make you one of his writing.

The Phantom of the Opera



By Gaston Leroux; Introduction by Nancy Holder

\$14.99, Poisoned Pen Press

The Horror Writers Association is sponsoring a new series of editions from mystery publishers Poisoned Pen Press. Called Haunted Library Horror Classics, it kicks off with this new paperback edition of Gaston Leroux's gothic romance *The Phantom of the Opera*, which was serialized and then published as a novel some 110 years ago this year. It's been filmed many times, but of course it's now most famous as the inspiration for Andrew Lloyd Webber's classic musical version that is still playing on Broadway and will probably still be there 110 years from now. This edition features a new introduction by the Bram Stoker Award-winning author Nancy Holder. Mask not included.

Michael Giltz is the cohost of Showbiz Sandbox, where he covers movies, music, TV, and, of course, theater and books. He has written for *Huffington Post*, *New York Post*, *New York Daily News*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Advocate*, and many other publications in which Michael profiles talent, covers the theater business, and

reviews shows in New York City and London. When he's not attending the theater, he's reading about it.

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