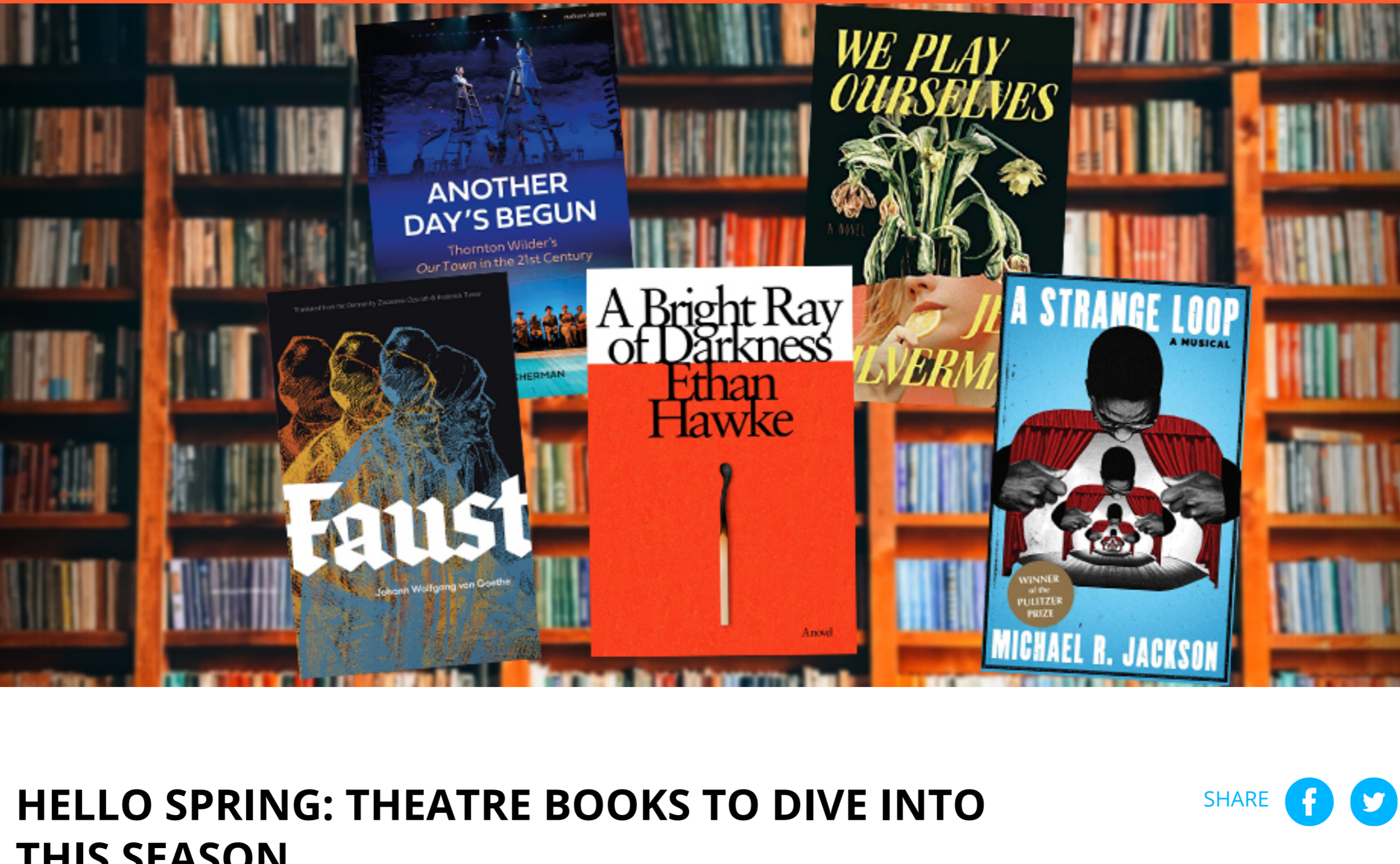


ALL BROADWAY SHOWS IN NYC SUSPENDED THROUGH MAY 30, 2021. [LEARN MORE.](#)

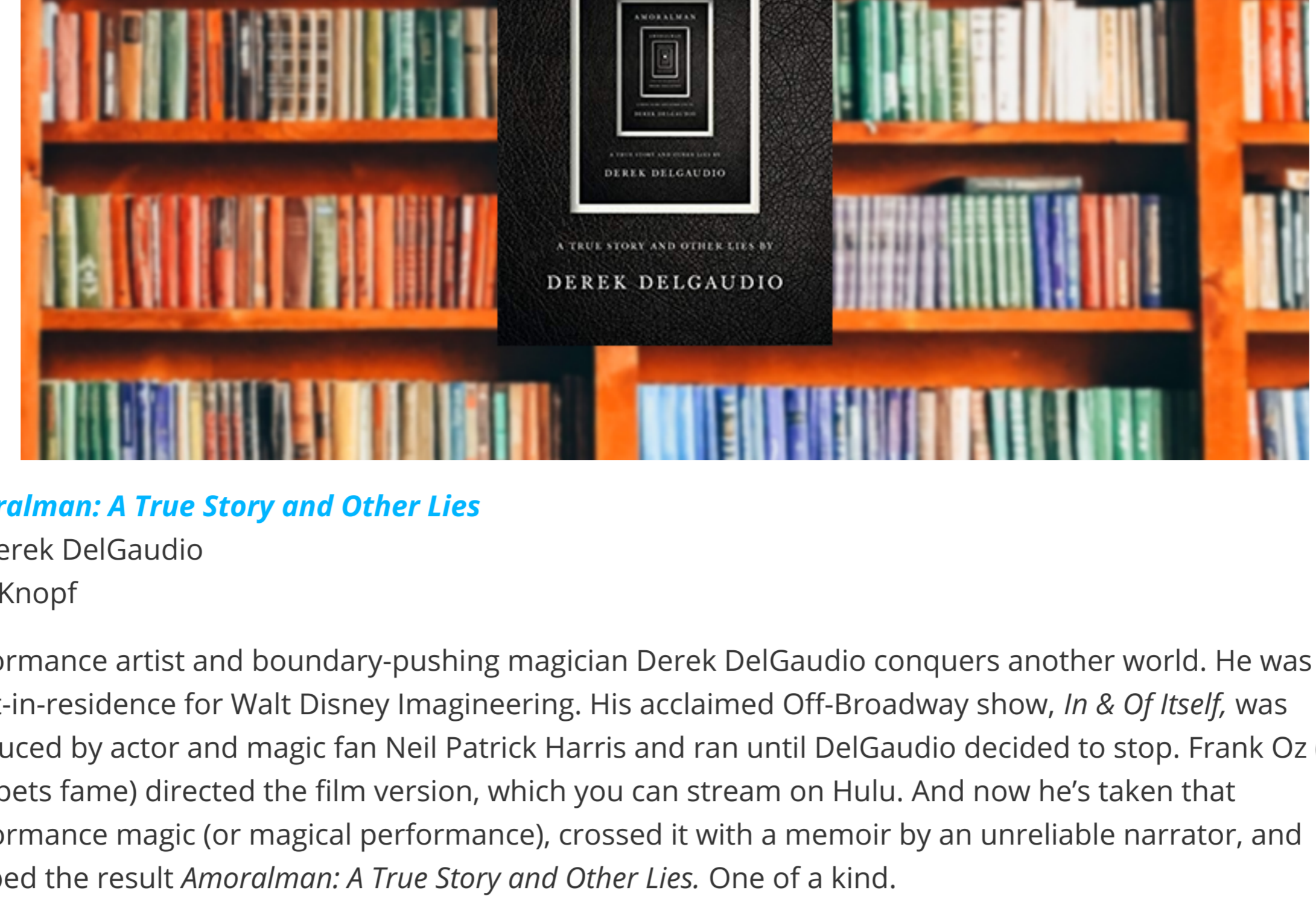


## HELLO SPRING: THEATRE BOOKS TO DIVE INTO THIS SEASON

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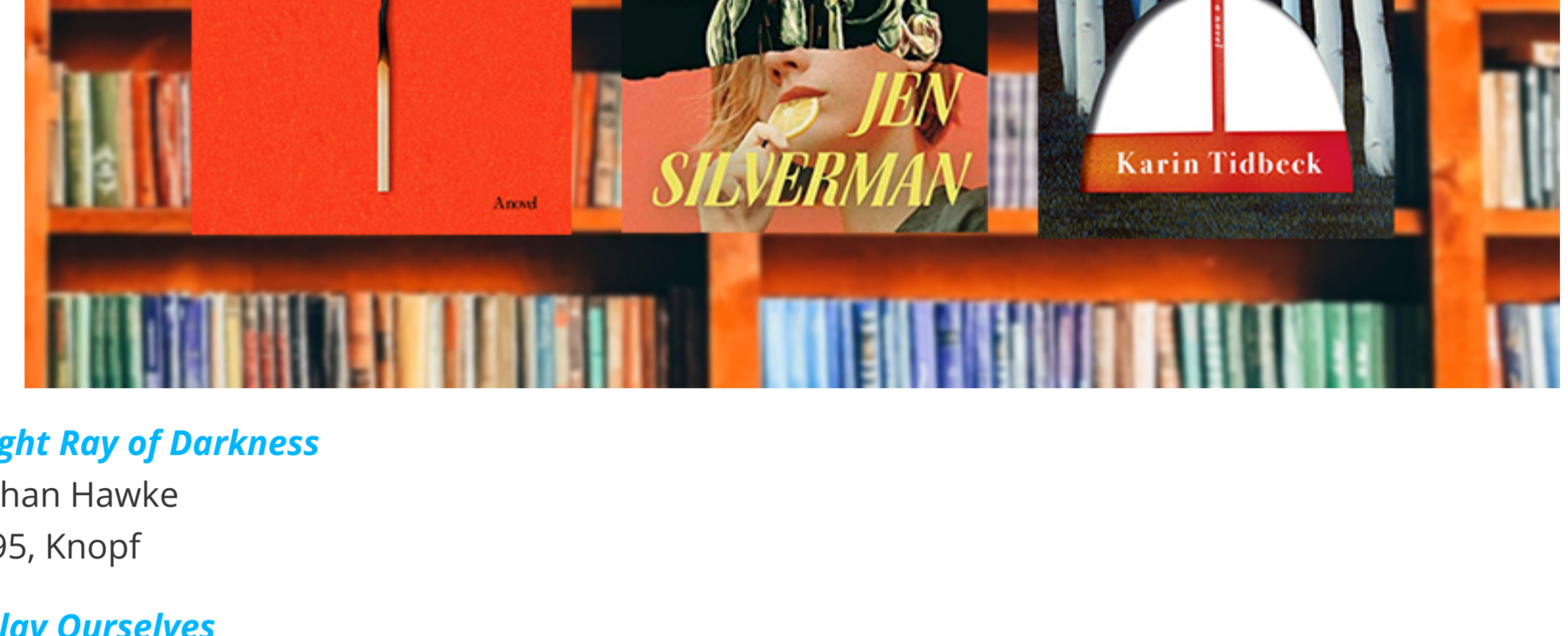
MICHAEL GILTZ | MARCH 30, 2021

Writers are writing and plans are being made for upcoming performances, and we are all looking forward to theatre slowly coming back to life all over the world. But wherever you are in the world and whenever theater bounces back for you, books about theater are available right here, right now, to feed your hunger. Enjoy!



**Amoralman: A True Story and Other Lies**  
By Derek DelGaudio  
\$27, Knopf

Performance artist and boundary-pushing magician Derek DelGaudio conquers another world. He was an artist-in-residence for Walt Disney Imagineering. His acclaimed Off-Broadway show, *In & Of Itself*, was produced by actor and magic fan Neil Patrick Harris and ran until DelGaudio decided to stop. Frank Oz (of Muppets fame) directed the film version, which you can stream on Hulu. And now he's taken that performance magic (or magical performance), crossed it with a memoir by an unreliable narrator, and dubbed the result *Amoralman: A True Story and Other Lies*. One of a kind.



**A Bright Ray of Darkness**  
By Ethan Hawke  
\$27.95, Knopf

**We Play Ourselves**  
By Jen Silverman  
\$28, Random House

**The Memory Theater**  
By Karin Tidbeck  
\$25.95, Pantheon

Three new novels steeped in theater. Tony and Oscar nominee Ethan Hawke delivers what may be his most popular novel yet with *A Bright Ray of Darkness*, about an actor who plays Hotspur in a major production of *Henry IV* opposite a grandiose train-wreck of a costar playing Falstaff. Come for the titillation — Hawke starred as Hotspur opposite Kevin Kline's Falstaff at Lincoln Center — and stay for the involving story and Hawke's intense insight into life on the stage. Queer feminist playwright Jen Silverman's debut novel, *We Play Ourselves*, is about a queer feminist playwright (and poetess) who flees public embarrassment and seeks refuge ... in Hollywood? Hilarity and more art gleefully mirroring life ensue. And in the fantasy novel *The Memory Theater*, best friends Dora and Thistle are trapped in the realm of The Gardens, where the party never ends but they are the waitstaff. They boldly venture between worlds and seek out a traveling theater troupe, which can unfold the fabric of reality and perhaps save them all.

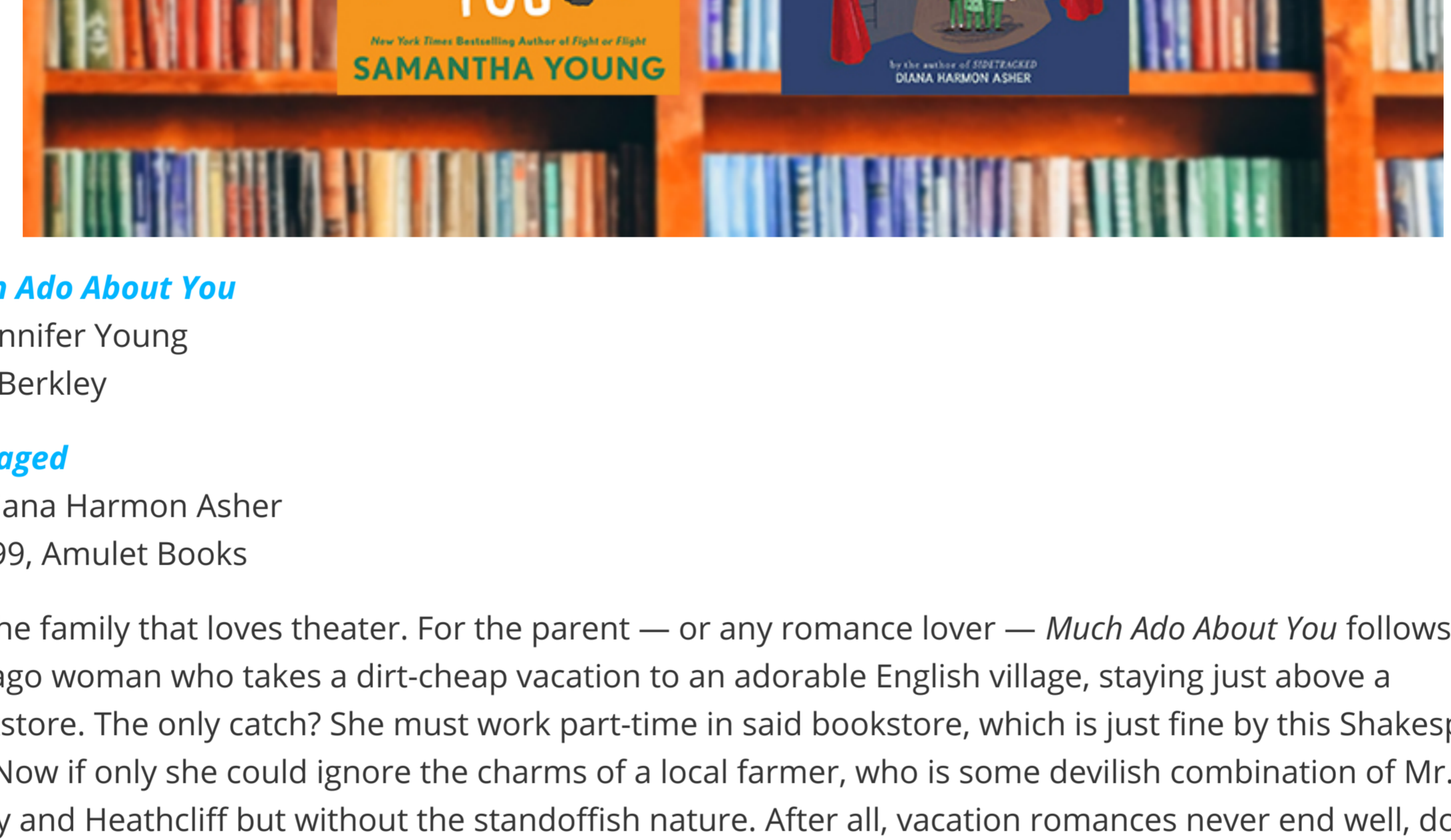


**Tom Stoppard: A Life**  
By Hermione Lee  
\$37.50, Knopf

**Mike Nichols: A Life**  
By Mark Harris  
\$35, Penguin Press

**Walking with Ghosts**  
By Gabriel Byrne  
\$26, Grove Press

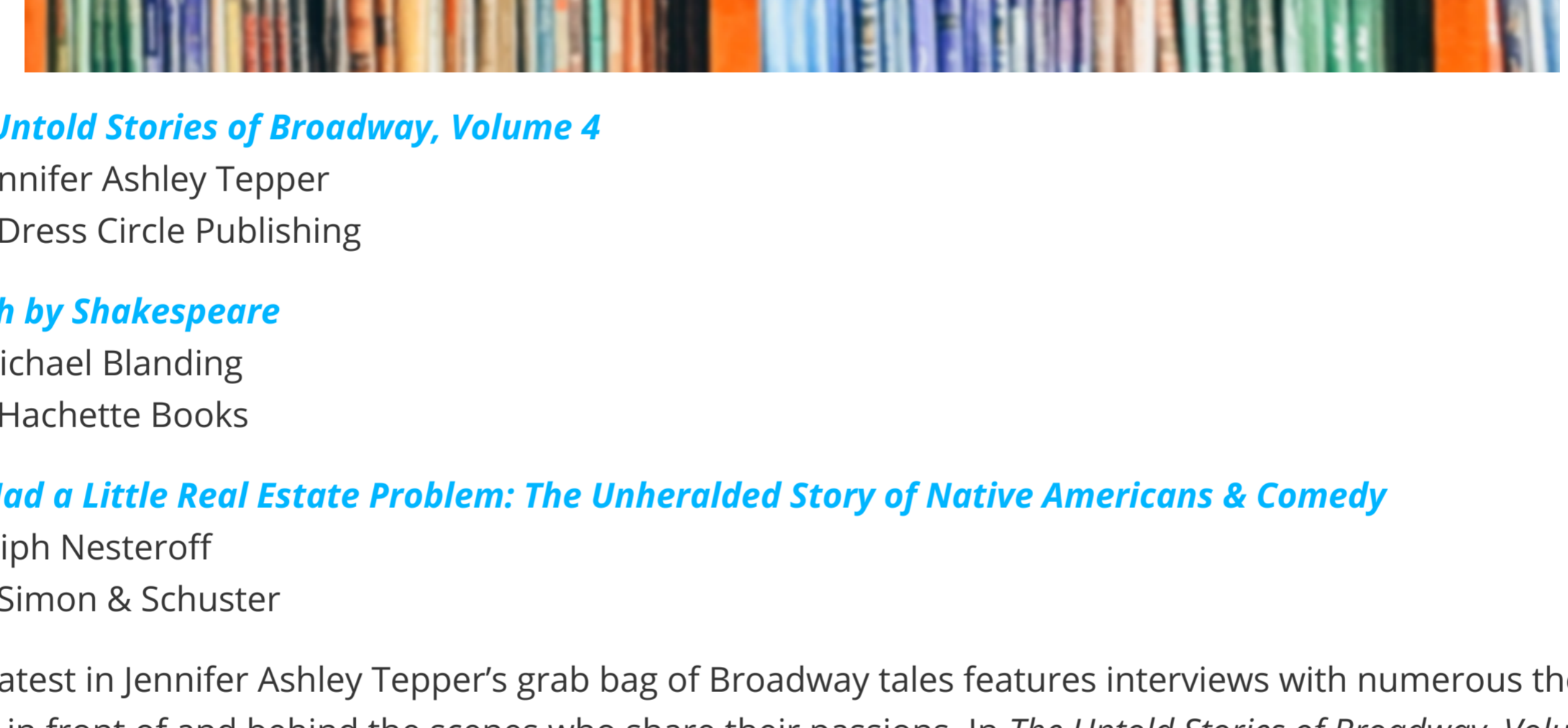
Three of the best biographies of the year just happen to focus on three major artists who have done some of their best work in the theater: playwright Tom Stoppard, director Mike Nichols, and actor Gabriel Byrne. Stoppard encouraged biographer Hermione Lee to tackle his life and she does just that, from his rambling, fortuitous childhood to his flood of masterpieces and the late-in-life revelation of his Jewish roots. Author Mark Harris (Tony Kushner's husband) already enjoyed acclaim for his books about Hollywood; now Harris tackles the charming and charming life of one of our best directors. Nichols revolutionized improv sketch comedy with Elaine May, made Neil Simon a commercial juggernaut, and came zinging out of the gate in Hollywood with three great films: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (a definitive take on one of our greatest plays), the era-defining comedy *The Graduate*, and *Carnal Knowledge*. (We'll ignore the disaster *Catch-22*.) That run lasted from 1958 to 1971, and if Nichols never did anything as important again, the misfires and bland commercial hits are just as interesting to learn about as the successes. Finally, actor Gabriel Byrne proves a formidable writer in *Walking With Ghosts*. He's on fire detailing a childhood of religious fervor and then excoriating the priest who molested him. Byrne fled the seminary and found refuge in theater, of course. He jumps back and forth from memories of his youth and hardscrabble early days to triumphs in film and onstage with Eugene O'Neill, whenever the drink allows him space to remember. Can every great Irish actor also spin a yarn so easily when putting pen to paper, or does it just seem that way?



**Much Ado About You**  
By Jennifer Young  
\$16, Berkley

**Upstaged**  
By Diana Harmon Asher  
\$17.99, Amulet Books

For the family that loves theater. For the parent — or any romance lover — *Much Ado About You* follows a Chicago woman who takes a dirt-cheap vacation to an adorable English village, staying just above a bookstore. The only catch? She must work part-time in said bookstore, which is just fine by this Shakespeare fan. Now if only she could ignore the charms of a local farmer, who is some devilish combination of Mr. Darcy and Heathcliff but without the standoffish nature. After all, vacation romances never end well, do they? *Do they?* For the theater-obsessed kid, *Upstaged* is a sweet middle-grade novel about seventh-grader Shira, who comes out of her shell when her best friend pushes her to audition for *The Music Man*...and she gets the part! She may be playing a member of a male barbershop quartet, but still! It's fun, and Shira may have just found a home.

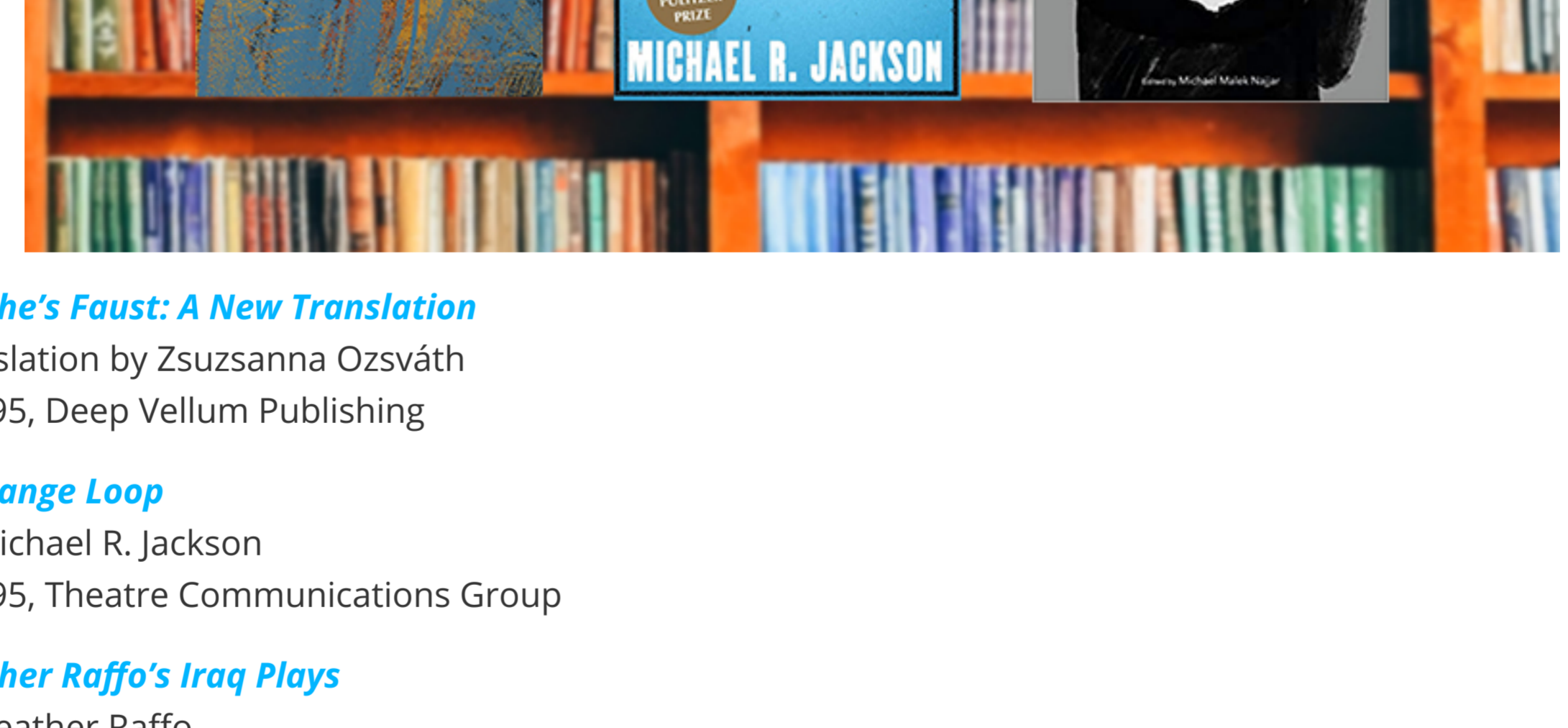


**The Untold Stories of Broadway, Volume 4**  
By Jennifer Ashley Tepper  
\$20, Dress Circle Publishing

**North by Shakespeare**  
By Michael Blanding  
\$30, Hachette Books

**We Had a Little Real Estate Problem: The Unheralded Story of Native Americans & Comedy**  
BY Kliph Nesteroff  
\$27, Simon & Schuster

The latest in Jennifer Ashley Tepper's grab bag of Broadway tales features interviews with numerous theater stars in front of and behind the scenes who share their passions. In *The Untold Stories of Broadway, Volume 4*, they dish on the way shows such as *Hair* and *Fiddler on the Roof* fought for social justice, the forgotten stars who should be remembered, after-hour anecdotes from Studio 54, and many more titillating topics. Author Michael Blanding delivered a *New York Times* bestseller with the true-crime catnip *The Map Thief*. Now he's on to another crime: the real mystery of who wrote Shakespeare's plays...but lifted details wholesale from the plays and life of Sir Thomas North, whose work appeared decades earlier. Blanding captures McCarthy's quirky passion and the *extremely* cutthroat blood sport of Shakespearean scholarship. Finally, Kliph Nesteroff captures the untold story of Native Americans and the vast impact they've had on theater — and comedy in particular — in *We Had a Little Real Estate Problem*. He tells it all, from the Indigenous Americans forced to choose between prison or appearing in Wild West shows to groundbreaking like Will Rogers, who was a Cherokee citizen who became America's most popular comedian, a big draw for the *Ziegfeld Follies*, the highest paid movie star, and ultimately the subject of a smash Broadway musical. The story continues today with standup comics who follow in Rogers's footsteps via their own winning comedy and equally pointed political commentary.

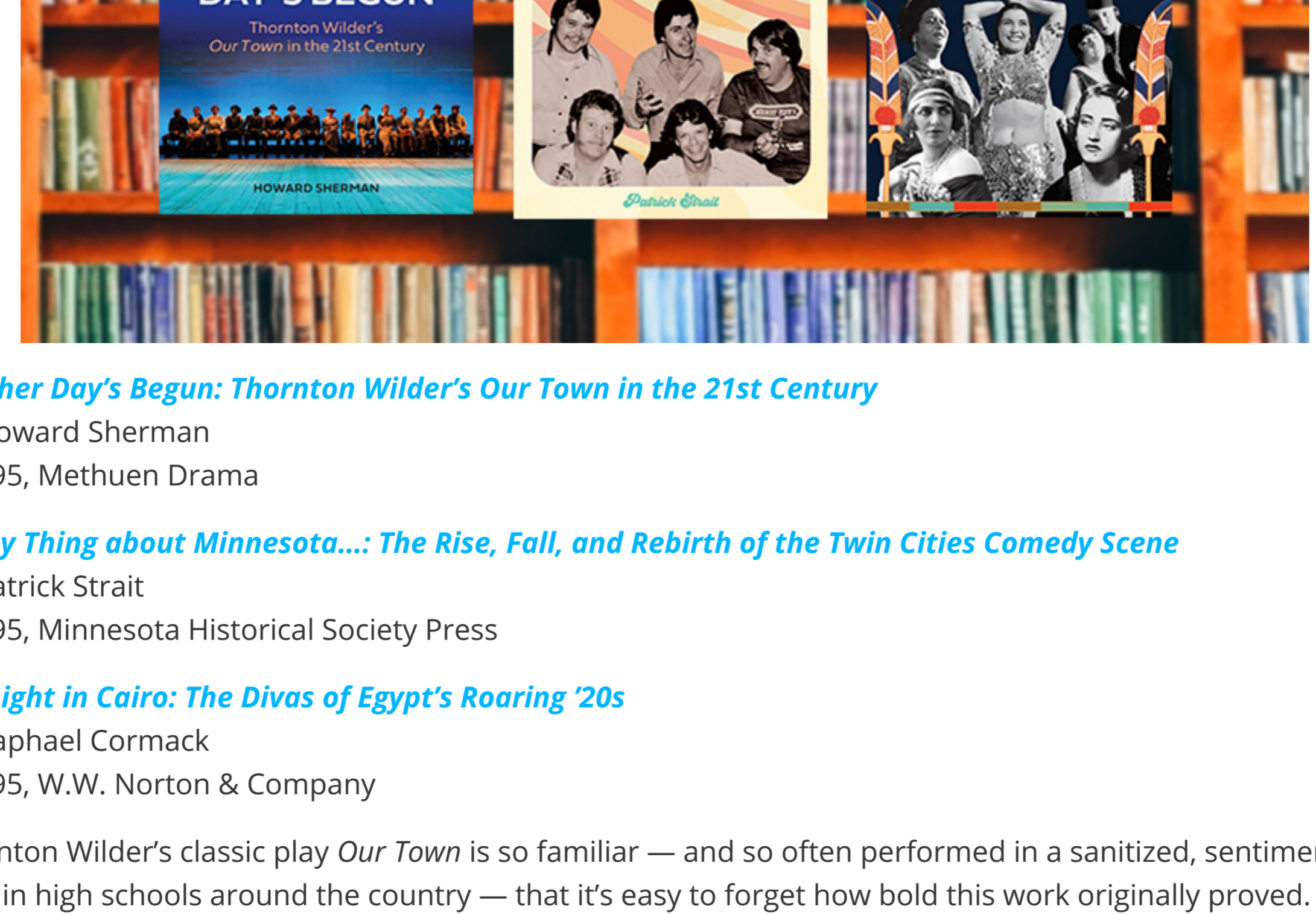


**Goethe's Faust: A New Translation**  
Translation by Zsuzsanna Ozsváth  
\$15.95, Deep Vellum Publishing

**A Strange Loop**  
By Michael R. Jackson  
\$15.95, Theatre Communications Group

**Heather Raffo's Iraq Plays**  
By Heather Raffo  
\$34.95, Methuen

Ultimately, nothing satisfies like seeing a play. But whether you've seen one or hope to do so someday, it's a special satisfaction to read a play and bring it to life in your mind. A new translation of Goethe's *Faust* is always cause for celebration. Michael R. Jackson's Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Strange Loop* is a mind-bending work nicely encapsulated by its surreal cover image. And *Heather Raffo's Iraq Plays* is a deeply challenging and rewarding collection.



**Another Day's Begun: Thornton Wilder's Our Town in the 21st Century**  
By Howard Sherman  
\$26.95, Methuen Drama

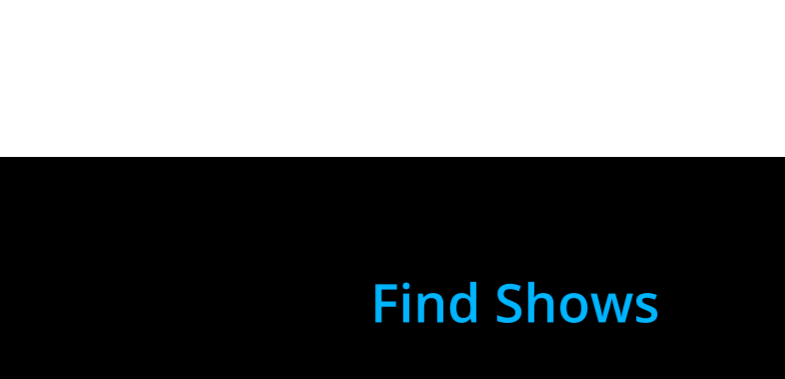
**Funny Thing About Minnesota...: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the Twin Cities Comedy Scene**  
By Patrick Strait  
\$24.95, Minnesota Historical Society Press

**Midnight in Cairo: The Divas of Egypt's Roaring '20s**  
By Raphael Cormack  
\$28.95, W.W. Norton & Company

Thornton Wilder's classic play *Our Town* is so familiar — and so often performed in a sanitized, sentimental style in high schools around the country — that it's easy to forget how bold this work originally proved. Author Howard Sherman tells the tale anew with *Another Day's Begun*: He brings the story up to date with examinations of the many bold and exciting productions that have appeared in—St. Paul. It was the birthplace of "original five" comics, including Louie Anderson, who made their bones as standups and then opened clubs and drew the country's best to the Twin Cities, on to its collapse and 1990s rebirth, Strait covers it all. Even less known to Twin cities is the arts scene of Cairo. Apparently, the 1920s weren't roaring just in New York City: In Egypt's capital city, women ruled the roost as talented stars of the movie, cabaret, and theater, and they were showbiz impresarios. From vaudeville acts to stage legends and nightclub singers, women were the pulse of Cairo until modernism passed them by and religious mores won out over secular dreams of equality. Author Raphael Cormack captures this tumultuous, promising, but doomed era with *Midnight in Cairo*. It would make a great musical!

Michael Giltz is the co-host of the weekly entertainment podcast Showbiz Sandbox. He has covered all areas of entertainment as a journalist, critic, feature writer, and analyst, contributing to numerous outlets including the New York Daily News, the Los Angeles Times, Huffington Post, Entertainment Weekly, and The Advocate. When Michael's not attending the theater, he's reading about it.

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5 Questions with Kimber Elayne Sprawl of *Girl From the North Country*



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