



BOOKFILTER'S FEBRUARY PICK OF THE MONTH

MICHAEL GILTZ | FEBRUARY 11, 2019

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Sounds Like Titanic: A Memoir

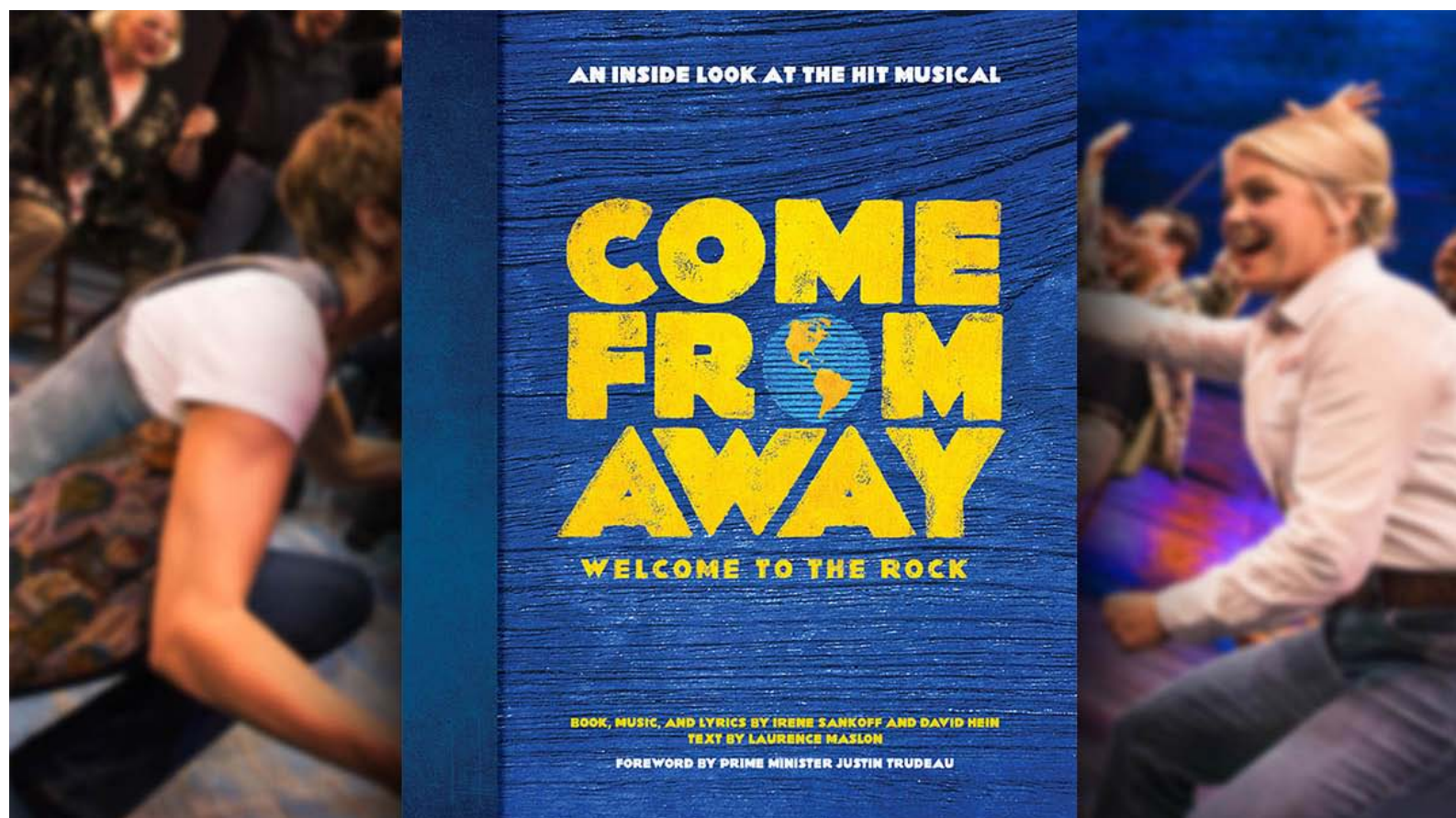
By Jessica Chiccehitto Hindman

\$25.95, W.W. Norton

Jessica Chiccehitto Hindman had the makings of a nutty, hard-to-believe memoir. This aspiring violinist made it from the mountains of Appalachia to study classical music at Columbia University in New York City. So how did she end up touring with *The Composer*, a purveyor of easy-listening faux-classical music hawked at street fairs and PBS drives around the country? Even more unexpected, when Hindman “performed” his music, she and the other musicians were just pretending to play. *The Composer* began each concert by pressing Play on a CD player and then everyone would just mime their parts in front of microphones that were turned off. Audiences cheered and Hindman soaked it up, but obviously, it was all pretty bizarre. From endless nights eating at chain restaurants to smiling as fans snatched up one crappy album

after another while praising Hindman’s talent and “a real gift,” her dreams of being a professional violinist had turned into a depressing — but profitable — nightmare. The easy jokes and barbed anecdotes were there for the taking. And, yes, Hindman offers them up. But she also jumps back and forth in time, describing in intimate detail her childhood obsession with the violin, the genuine sacrifices her family made to get her lessons, and how, even at 11 years old, Hindman realized she was good ... but not that good. Whether shooting up hormones in her dorm room (so she could make money selling her eggs) or detailing the weird transition from being “rich” in Appalachia (her father was a doctor) to being poor at Columbia University, Hindman has turned a one-note joke into a rich and painful look at the drive to succeed in the arts. She may have fallen short as a violinist, but she triumphs as a writer.

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