



BOOKFILTER'S OCTOBER PICK OF THE MONTH

MICHAEL GILTZ | OCTOBER 4, 2018

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Every month, BookFilter selects the best new theater book, exclusively for Broadway Direct readers.

Dear Evan Hansen: The Novel

By Val Emmich with Steven Levenson, Benj Pasek, and Justin Paul

\$18.99, Poppy

The Tony-winning musical *Dear Evan Hansen* may be the first Broadway show in history to get a novelization. That's the publishing term for a book spun off from an original film or TV show. Usually, novelizations are quickie knockoffs intended to capitalize on unexpected success. But once in a while, they prove to have a life of their own — not merely adding extra details to stories people already know but they're satisfying all on their own. Think *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* by William Kotzwinkle, one of the best-selling novelizations in history.

Dear Evan Hansen: The Novel certainly hopes to follow that path. It's a young-adult novel that is remarkably faithful to the stage musical. At the same time, it adds all sorts of new detail, most

significantly the in-depth point of view and backstory of Connor, the teen who dies by suicide. Sure, he appears on stage as a ghostlike presence who comments wryly on the action. But in the novel, Connor's voice is front and center, and exactly what leads him to despair is laid out in detail. The novel doesn't explain any mystery from the musical — that show is Evan's story, not Connor's. But it may prove irresistible to fans of the show, while anyone who has yet to make it to Broadway or catch the tour can read the novel and fill in the gaps their imaginations strain to complete. After all, you can't keep listening to the cast album every single day, can you?

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