



## BOOKFILTER'S BEST SUMMER RELEASES FOR THEATER BUFFS

MICHAEL GILTZ | JULY 5, 2018

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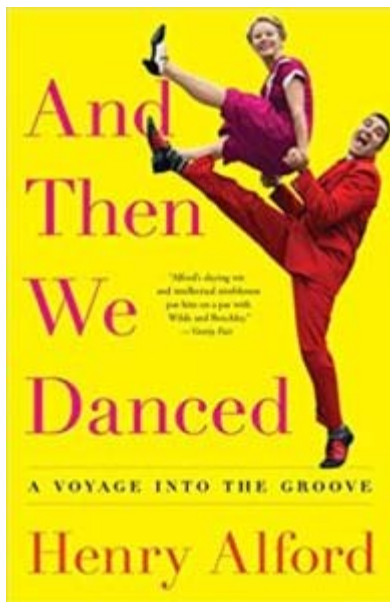


The savvy reader's favorite website [Bookfilter.com](https://www.bookfilter.com) chooses the best theater books ready for the spotlight, exclusively for Broadway Direct.

Summertime. It's the perfect time of year to send the kids to theater camp, take a road trip to visit your favorite theatres around the country, head to Broadway or the West End and see the latest shows (tickets are always easier to get when the most residents are headed out of town), act in your local community theater's summer romp — you get the idea. And wherever or whenever you are enjoying the arts, books about theater can join you in the fun. Read them on the plane, in bed, at the library, on the beach, or even in the car (while someone else is driving, of course). Here are the latest and best books about theater, chosen just for you.

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[And Then We Danced](#)

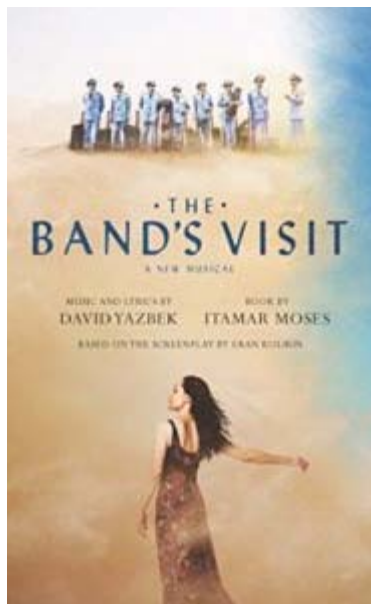


By Henry Alford  
\$26, Simon & Schuster

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 dance while sharing his own story 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.

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[\*\*\*The Band's Visit\*\*\*](#)

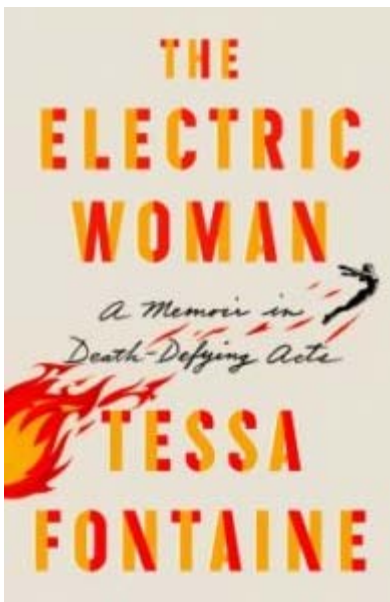


Book by Itamar Moses; music and lyrics by David Yazbeck  
\$14.95, Theatre Communications Group

The musical that swept the Tony Awards (10, including Best Musical) is now available in paperback and e-book. That means you can attend a performance of *The Band's Visit* on Broadway, watch the marvelous 2007 film it's based on, listen to the cast album featuring Tony winners Katrina Lenk and Tony Shalhoub, and now read the book and lyrics. Overkill? Hardly. When a show is this subtle and moving, the chance to revisit the story and savor the words is especially welcome. It's also a master class in adaptation, demonstrating with ease how to bring alive the inner life of characters who keep their own counsel but can't hide their basic humanity and beating hearts.

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***The Electric Woman***



By Tessa Fontaine

\$27, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Ever want to run away with the circus? In this autobiography, Tessa Fontaine does just that. She pivots from helping her mother, who battles stroke after stroke, to finding the courage when opportunity strikes to join the last traveling sideshow in America. Suddenly, Fontaine is transformed from caregiver to risk-taker: She becomes a snake charmer, an escape artist, and even Electra, the Electric Woman, while working as a member of Wonder of Wonders. Fontaine does take inspiration from life in a carnival attraction, but it's the stories of her fellow artists on the road that linger. Plus, it's a peek behind the scenes and the secrets that go with it. For instance, want to know the secrets of a fire eater? There is no secret: You eat fire by eating fire.

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[A Mask of Shadows](#)

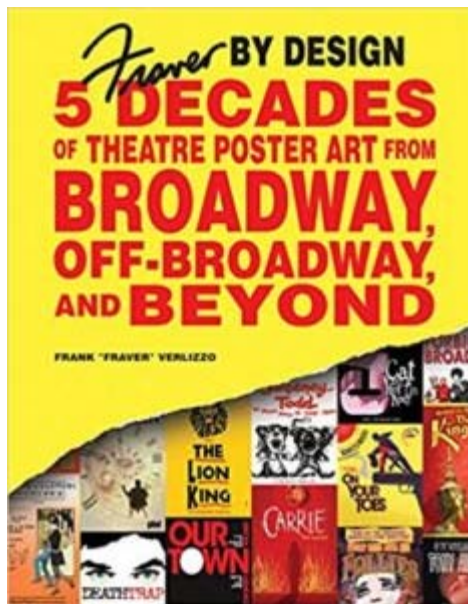


By Oscar de Muriel  
\$25.95, Pegasus Books

If you want to read about murder in the world of the theater, Shakespeare is always ready to serve. Is one actor cheating on another in real life? *Othello* offers up the perfect dialogue for their onstage confrontation. Are young lovers kept apart by their families? *Romeo & Juliet* is the inevitable backdrop. If you have murder and the supernatural crossing paths, *Macbeth* conjures the perfect atmosphere. This new entry in an Edinburgh mystery series set in the late 1800s has it all: the Scottish play, the oddball pairing of detectives “Nine-Nails” McGray and Inspector Ian Frey, and a backstage crew member named Bram Stoker. Anyone waiting for Broadway or their local troupe to revive *Deathtrap* will be right at home.

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

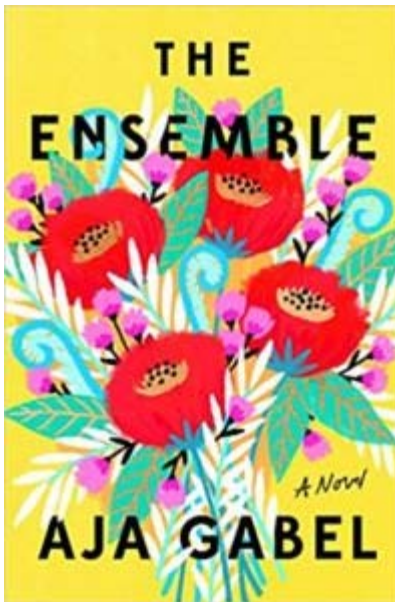


By Frank "Fraver" Verlizzo  
\$34.99, Schiffer Publishing

The best theater posters capture the spirit of a show in one indelible image, stand on their own as art, and are powerful ads that make fans reach for their wallets to buy tickets. *Fraver by Design* is just as versatile. First and foremost, it's a career retrospective for Frank "Fraver" Verlizzo, one of the most acclaimed artists on Broadway. It's also a visual treat, bursting with anecdotes about shows, a casual history of the art of theater posters, a behind-the-scenes peek at the selling of Broadway, and a master class in how to go about crafting these works of art. Essentially, this is a coffee table book, a handsomely produced collection of hundreds of classic posters. But most every image has a succinct paragraph about it, ranging from amusing stories to insights on how it was created, or just Verlizzo's enthusiastic excitement over working with, say, Mia Farrow or the show at hand. Before you know it, you're knee-deep in stories and knowledge that will be a treat for fans and genuinely useful for professionals.

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***The Ensemble***

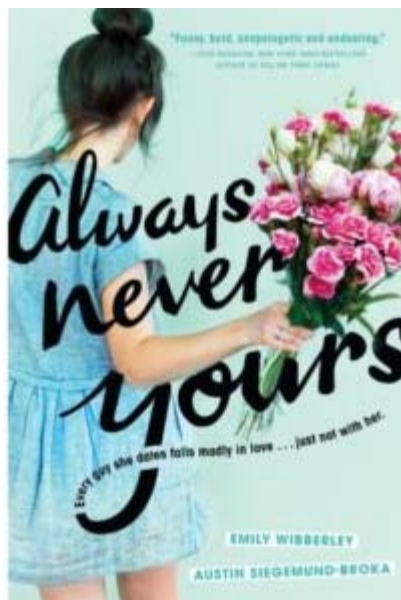


By Aja Gabel

\$26, Riverhead Books

The hothouse-flower atmosphere of a classical string quartet is the rarefied world explored in this acclaimed debut novel. Jana, Brit, Daniel, and Henry have nothing in common but their passionate devotion to classical music. But none of them has any other constant in their lives except their music, so they are linked for life. Oh, and there's sex and friendship and betrayal and (sometimes) respect and hard-nosed business decisions and artistic gambles and triumph and tragedy. (It's not all debates over the pacing of a movement!) Their ensemble, the Van Ness Quartet, finds success, and so has author Aja Gabel by capturing the risks and rewards of a life in the arts. Whatever the fate of their ensemble, Gabel is clearly off to an excellent start.

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## Always Never Yours

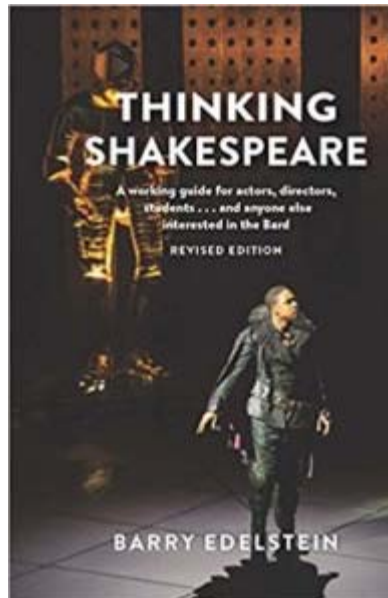
By Emily Wibberley and Austin Siegemund-Broka

\$17.99, Penguin Books

High-schooler Megan Harper is a prep course for true love: Everyone she dates finds their soul mate ... right *after* breaking up with her. She can't direct her love life but Megan can direct plays. She has her sights set on a career in the theater, but her college application to the ideal arts program lacks one required element: an acting credit. Hoping to get by with the smallest role possible, Megan naturally finds herself cast as Juliet. In a nice twist, she *doesn't* find love with her Romeo. Instead, it's classmate and playwright-in-waiting Owen who partners with Megan on her backstage schemes while she helps him with the structure of his own play. If we know our young adult novels, Megan and Owen will find themselves cast in a real romance by the end of the novel.

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## Thinking Shakespeare



By Barry Edelstein

\$17.95, Theatre Communications Group

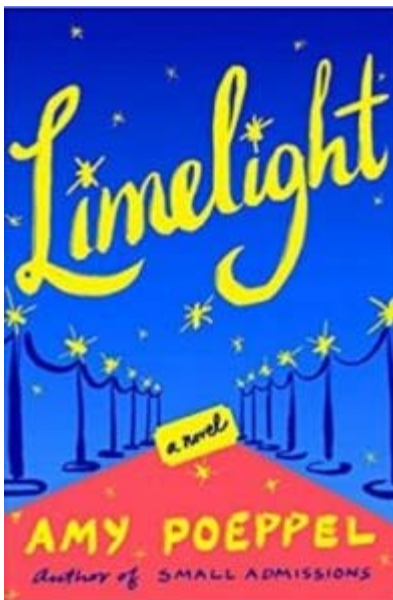
Director and educator Barry Edelstein knows Shakespeare. Adam Gopnik of *The New Yorker* once said Edelstein knows more about Shakespeare than anyone he knows. Actors and directors in the theater already know Edelstein: He's taught Shakespeare at Juilliard, NYU, USC, the Public Theater, and countless other programs. He's directed everyone from Kevin Kline to Gwyneth Paltrow. And that's why *Thinking Shakespeare* is an essential text for anyone tackling



the Bard. But theatergoers can benefit just as much from his insight into the world and the characters and the power of these plays. You'll be thinking Shakespeare — and thinking *of* Shakespeare — in ways you never imagined.

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## **Limelight**



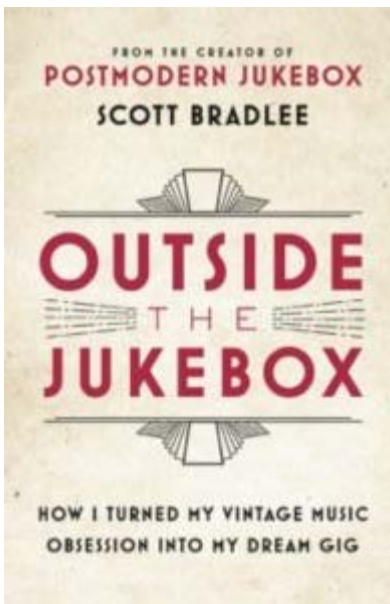
By Amy Poeppel

\$26, Atria/Emily Bestler Books

In this frothy follow-up to her bestseller *Small Admissions*, Amy Poeppel shines the spotlight on teen idols and blockbuster Broadway productions. Her heroine is Allison Brinkley, a woman who urges her husband and family to embrace her desire to move from a Dallas suburb to Manhattan. It'll be fun! Until she's fired on the first day of her new job, severely damages a parked car while panicking about dropping off the kids at school (why is everyone honking?), and temp work doesn't seem to be temporary. But that damaged car leads to an obnoxious voice mail message, and that leads Allison to a lavish Manhattan apartment and the kid she considers a spoiled brat who is seemingly abandoned by his parents and who turns out to be really, really famous (his poster is on her daughter's wall). Before you know it, Allison is babysitting — OK, working as an assistant to — said teen idol, making his Broadway debut. She finds herself involved in utter nonsense, sure to be holding down beach towels all over the Hamptons and Fire Island.

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## **Outside the Jukebox**

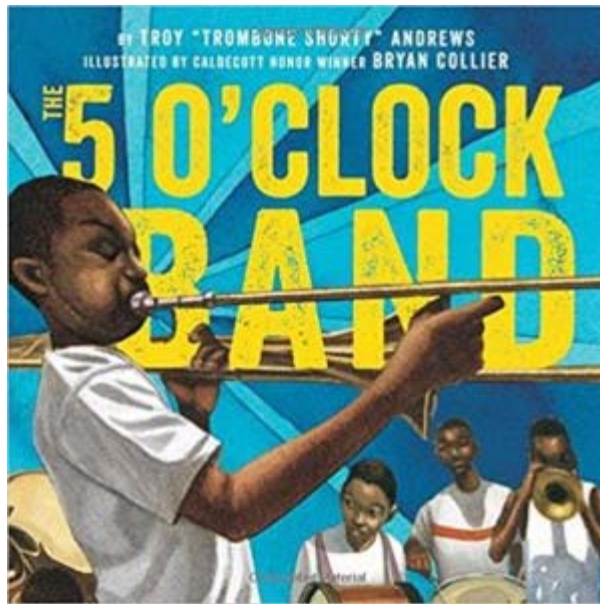


By Scott Bradlee  
\$23, Hachette Books

Postmodern Jukebox is the genius brainchild of Scott Bradlee, a struggling jazz musician in New York City who stumbled onto viral video success by doing “period” covers of current hits. The band performed songs by Nickelback done in the style of Motown, and doo-wop, ragtime, and swing versions of other songs soon followed — all recorded in Bradlee’s basement apartment in Queens. But a cover of Macklemore & Ryan Lewis’s “Thrift Shop” exploded in popularity, and before he knew it, Bradlee’s goofy idea led to appearances on *Good Morning, America*, albums, massive YouTube success, and eventually world tours. He’s featured a slew of *American Idol* alums, Broadway vets including Shoshana Bean, and more musicians than you can shake a baton at. It works because they’re not making fun of the songs they cover. PMJ is demonstrating that Meghan Trainor’s “All About That Bass” isn’t just a catchy single, it’s a solid song. Now Bradlee has delivered this DIY manifesto/memoir with *Outside the Jukebox*, a book that chronicles his unlikely journey and details the stumbles and successes along the way with the same enthusiastic charm that has made his high-concept band such a triumph.

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***The 5 O’Clock Band***

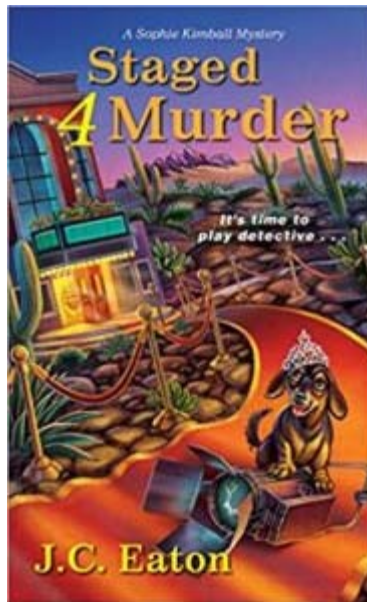


By Troy Andrews, illustrations by Bryan Collier  
\$17.99, Harry N. Abrams

Troy Andrews, a.k.a. Trombone Shorty, is one of the best New Orleans jazz artists to break out in recent years. His debut picture book (also called *Shorty*) was a treat, and this eye-catching follow-up is just as strong. Shorty is a kid who loves playing music, so he's devastated when he runs late and misses rehearsal with his bandmates. They play on street corners, strut their stuff, and learn what it takes to make it as a musician — and if Shorty can't be there for them, maybe this isn't the life he's meant to lead. Trying to catch up with his pals, Shorty stumbles across everyone from restaurant owners to Mardi Gras Indians and adult street musicians, all with some words of wisdom to offer about what it takes to be a true bandleader, artist, and stand-up guy. Sweet, engaging, and vibrantly illustrated, *The 5 O'Clock Band* might just turn an entire generation on to the joys of the trombone ... or at least New Orleans.

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***Staged 4 Murder***



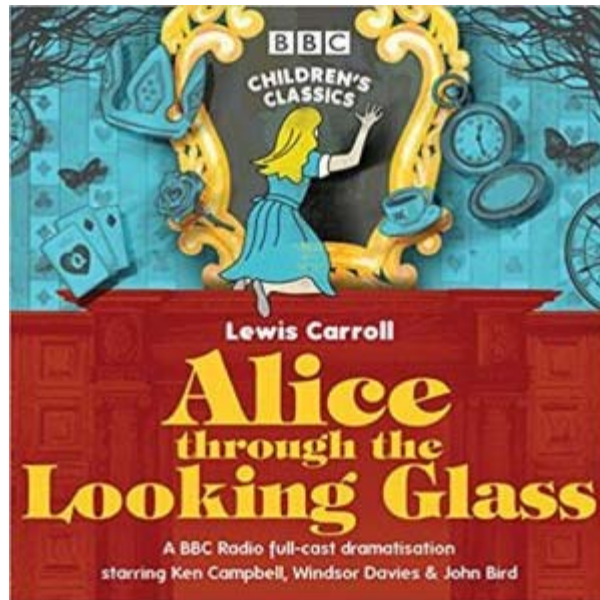
By J.C. Eaton

\$7.99, Kensington

In this cozy mystery series, Sophie Kimball is an accounts clerk for the police department, turned private eye. Now living in Arizona to be near her retired mom, Sophie has a lot to deal with: Her ex-boyfriend has moved to town and works alongside Sophie at her new private investigation firm. He's also looking more and more like an ex-ex-boyfriend, and does Sophie really want that? One thing is clear: Her mom and her mom's book club all want parts in the local community theater's mounting of Agatha Christie's play *Mousetrap*. But every community theater company in the world has one member everyone else can't stand, and when the bad apple in this one is strangled backstage, Sophie must solve the murder before the offstage body count rivals the onstage one.

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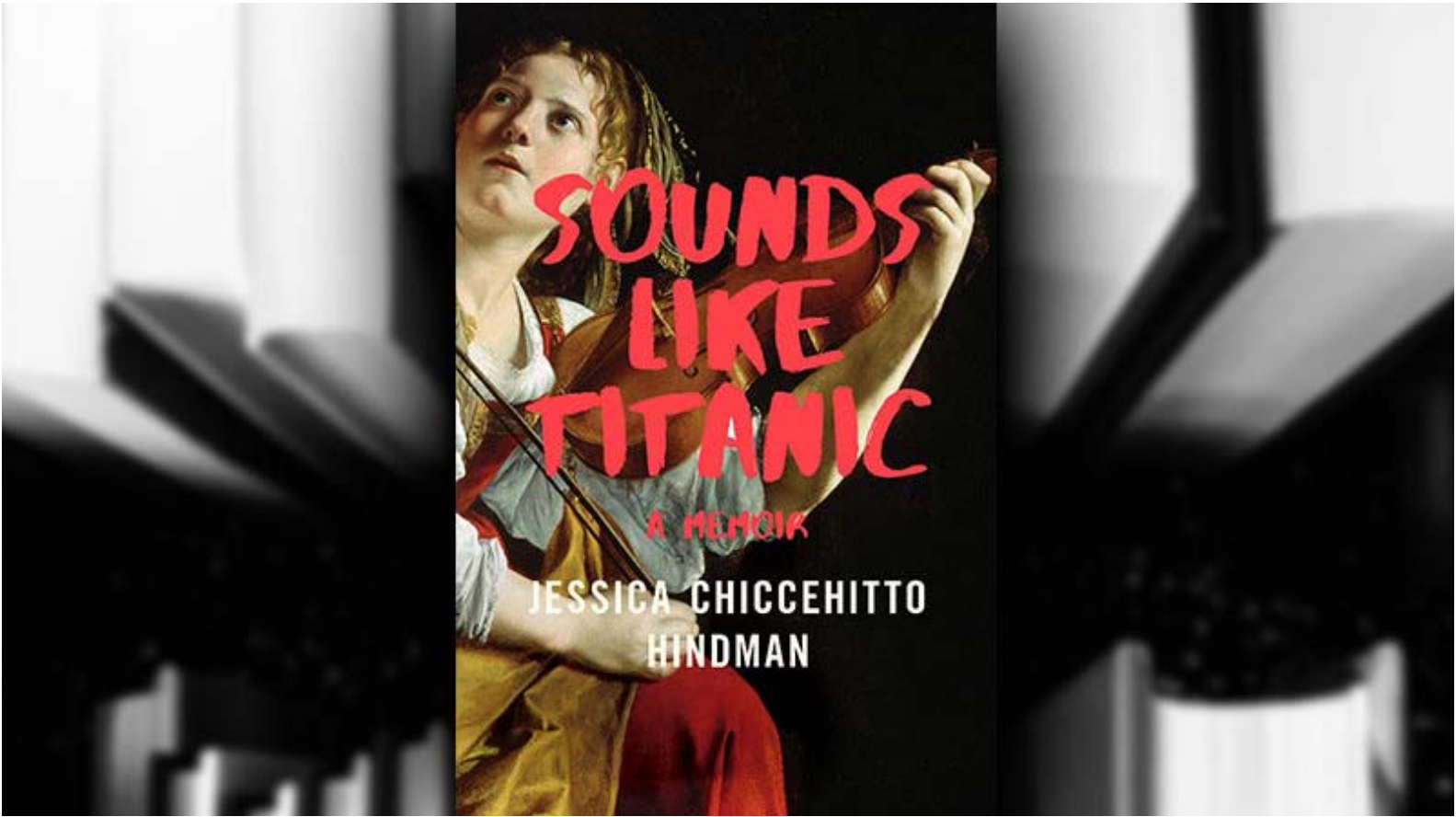
**[Alice Through the Looking Glass: A BBC Radio Full Cast Dramatisation](#)**



By Lewis Carroll, adapted by Stephen Wyatt  
\$16.99, BBC's Children's Classics

Technically, you can't always be in a theatre watching a show. Sometimes you have to be driving or taking public transportation to get to a theatre so you can watch a show. (We've tried sleeping in a theatre, but apparently that's frowned upon.) Thankfully, the BBC has recorded countless radio plays, fully-cast dramatizations of classic works that are richly dramatic, highly entertaining, and wonderful sparks for the imagination. Two of their latest include a new takes on Lewis Carroll's whimsical *Alice Through the Looking Glass* and the beloved U.K. children's classic *Tom's Midnight Garden*. Both are wonderful changes of pace for long car rides, even if you already indulge in podcasts and audiobooks and the like. It's perfect for kids and any adults who want to experience the pleasure of old-time radio.

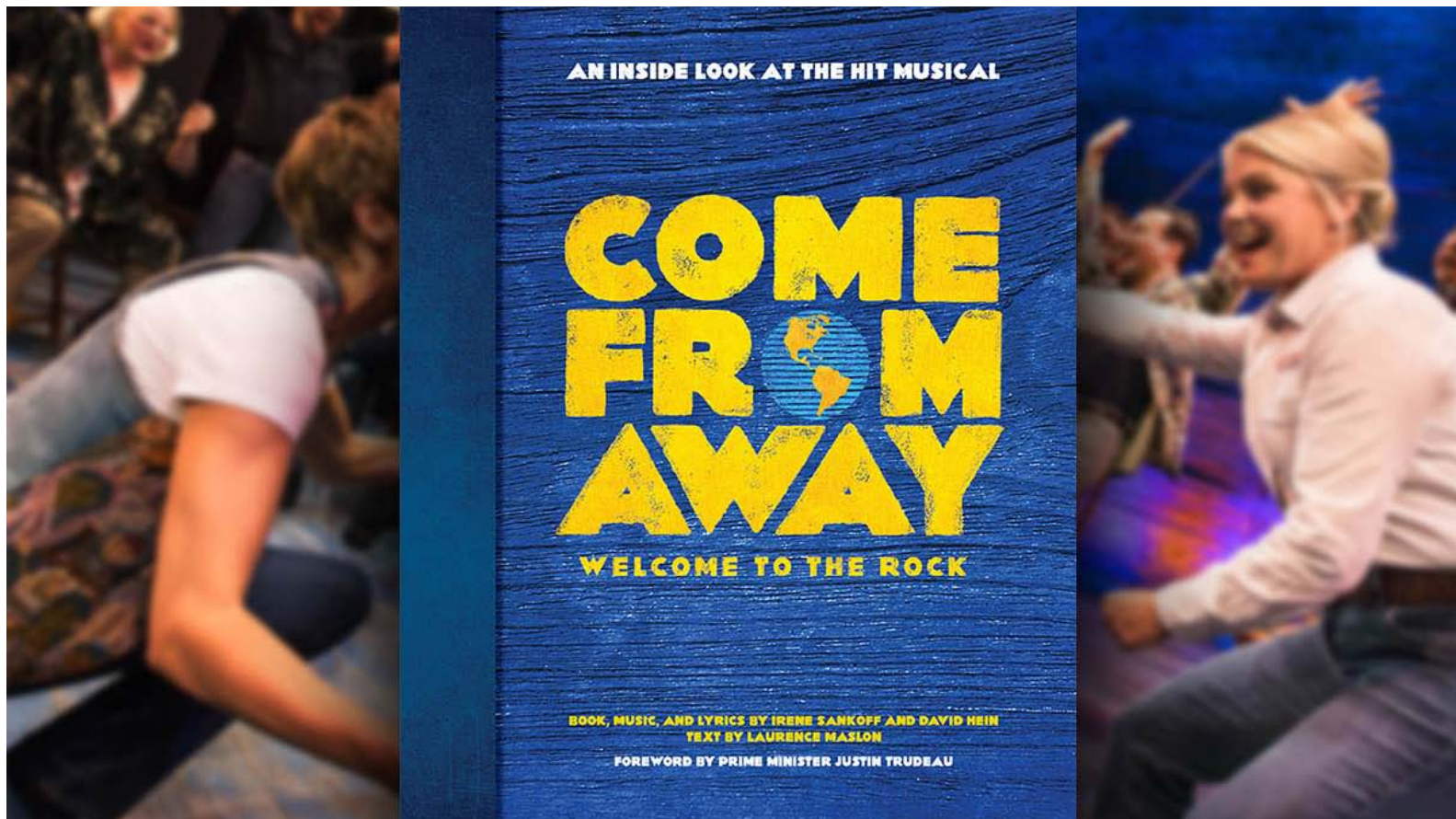
**KEEP READING:**



**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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