

BOOKFILTER'S JULY BOOK OF THE MONTH

MICHAEL GILTZ | JULY 9, 2018

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

And Then We Danced

By Henry Alford

\$26, Simon & Schuster

Henry Alford is this generation's George Plimpton, a writer who researches a topic by diving into it headfirst to see what happens. Here, Alford tells the story of dance while sharing his own story of using dance lessons to boost his confidence.

It began with a story in *The New York Times*: Alford wrote in 2012 about taking a class to learn Zumba, a workout that successfully disguises getting fit with having fun. It's this generation's Jane Fonda Workout — or, more accurately, Jazzercise with a Latin twist. (Indeed, it was originally dubbed “rumbacize.”) Alford's piece was engaging and amusing, and it proved hugely

popular. That prompted a book deal and a chance for Alford to explore the world of dance from the past to the present by studying and watching and (mostly) doing.

Part history and part memoir, *And Then We Danced* offers thumbnail sketches of artists such as Twyla Tharp and George Balanchine, a look into Arthur Murray's dance studios and Bob Fosse's revolutionary work on Broadway and film, and the origins of everything from tap to ballroom to swing and, yes, even Zumba. You get a terrific wide-angle perspective on dance and how theater has embraced and refined the latest moves into its vocabulary.

The movement in every show, from *Oklahoma!* to *Hamilton*, won't just be entertaining and beautiful: You'll know what style they're using, what artist they're quoting, and how it all builds upon centuries of dance and performance. Even Misty Copeland approves. The principal dancer at the American Ballet Theatre and Broadway star (all too briefly in *On the Town*) calls this book "captivating."

By the time we arrive at the scene when Alford is 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.

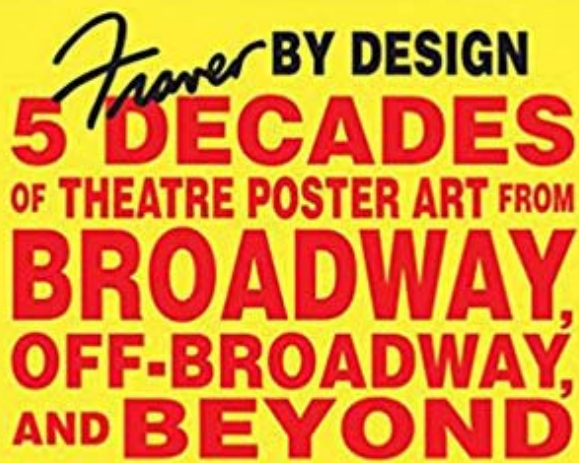
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