CHECK OUT THE BEST THEATER BOOKS OF THE **MONTH FOR FEBRUARY 2023**

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MICHAEL GILTZ | FEBRUARY 14, 2023

Broadway Direct spotlights the best theater books of the month, just for you.

Don't Think, Dear: On Loving and Leaving Ballet

By Alice Robb \$29.99, Mariner Books

Acting Naturally

By David Thomson \$30, Knopf Publishing Group

Try Not to Hold It Against Me: A Producer's Life

By Julian Schlossberg \$26.95, Beaufort Books

Three new nonfiction books explore the world of the arts, one from the perspective of a student devoting her life to dance, another from a critic offering insight into what makes great acting, and a third from a producer who somehow makes artists' crazy ideas into reality.

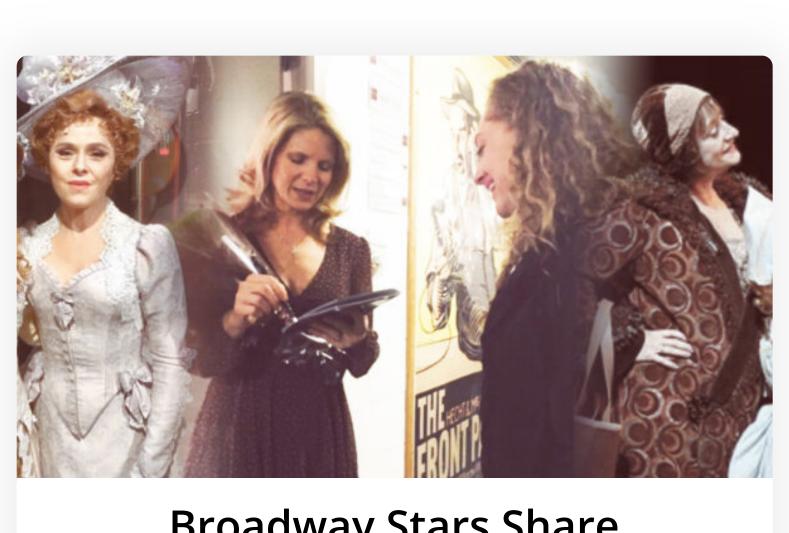
It must have been tempting for Alice Robb to deliver a takedown on the world of ballet. Robb scored a slot at the prestigious School of American Ballet, realized at age 15 she wasn't going to make it to the heights of the profession, and quit ... only to discover the traits that had been drummed into her — stoicism, silence, and submission — were *exactly* what the world expected of women, and they served her well. Ironic? Oh yes, and it says as much about the world as it does about ballet. But Robb digs deeper. She explores her genuine love for the world of dance, profiles fellow classmates from her time in it, and lucidly charts the highs and lows, the good and the bad, of ballet. That damning title — *Don't Think, Dear* — shows Robb didn't *always* do as she was told, and thank goodness for that.

Critic David Thomson is a child of the cinema. But as one of the most interesting writers alive on that art form, his insights and quirky asides about the movies are catnip to any fan of the arts. For years now, it seems like Thomson has been tidying up after his magnum opus, The New Biographical Dictionary of Film, was named in one poll by Sight & Sound as the greatest book on cinema ever written. After looking closely at directors and the role of murder in the movies, he now steps back and considers the challenge of acting naturally. To be sure, good acting on film can be radically different than good acting on stage. But good actors are good actors, and it's no surprise that four of the five actors on the cover have triumphed on stage and the fifth got their start on the boards. (Those actors would be Nicole Kidman, Meryl Streep, Denzel Washington, Marlon Brando, and Cary Grant.) Thomson is a treat to read and will surely make any theater buff see the work of actors in a fresh light.

Some people devote their lives to performing. Others cheer it on - or critique it - from the audience. And some people help make it happen. The producer is that crazy person who herds cats (deals with the artists), raises money, and handles a thousand other details to get words from the page onto the stage (or screen or TV monitor). Julian Schlosssberg has done it all and now wants to ... well, not dish — he's too genial for that — but he's got stories, for sure. Schlossberg has done it all, from the six-time Tony-nominated musical Bullets Over Broadway to the Cannes Film Festival to Las Vegas and TV. Barbra Streisand, Elia Kazan, Liza Minnelli, Burt Reynolds, Shirley MacLaine, Frank Sinatra, Al Pacino, Lillian Hellman, and many other luminaries make appearances. Even the blurbs are intriguing, including a foreword from the great Elaine May to this comment from Oscar winner F. Murray Abraham: "Mike Nichols was doing a play in London and afterwards invited me to join him and Jeremy Irons for a bite, where he introduced me to Julian Schlossberg. When Julian left to catch a plane, Mike said, 'There goes the nicest producer in show business.' Like a fool, I believed him. I still do." Can you resist that? We can't either.

Michael Giltz is the cohost of the weekly entertainment podcast Showbiz Sandbox. He covers all areas of entertainment as a journalist, critic, feature writer, and analyst, contributing to numerous outlets, including the New York Daily News, New York Post, New York Magazine, 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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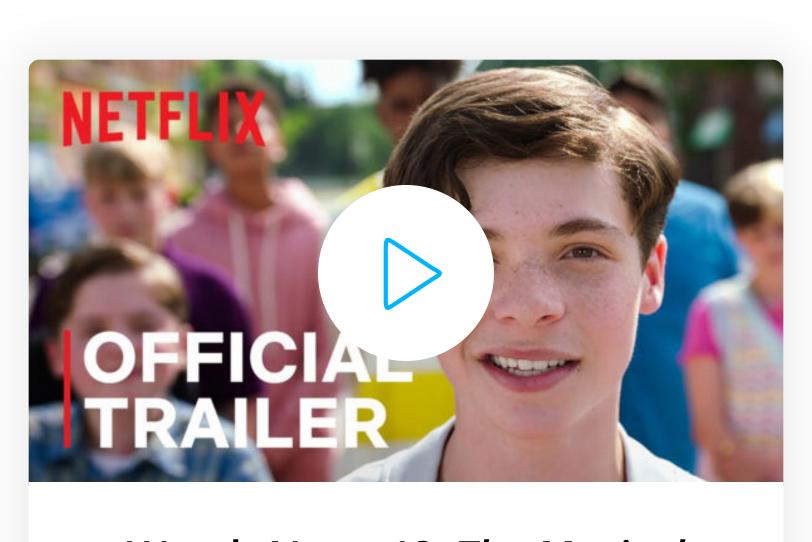


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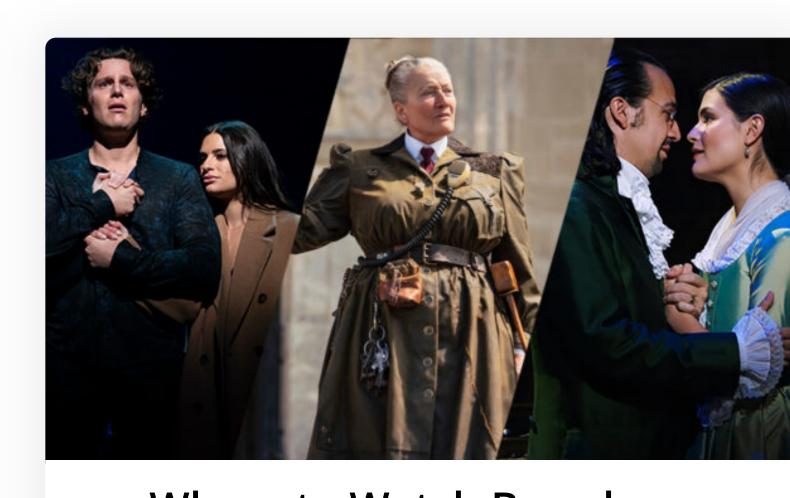
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