Elizabeth Winkler

CHECK OUT THE BEST THEATER BOOKS OF THE MONTH FOR MAY 2023



FOREWORD BY LINIMANUEL MIRANDA

MICHAEL GILTZ | MAY 26, 2023

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

Gays on Broadway

By Ethan Mordden \$29.95, Oxford University Press

Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies

By Elizabeth Winkler \$29.99, Simon & Schuster

Hamilton and Me: An Actor's Journal

By Giles Terera

\$17.95, Theatre Communications Group

The world of theater is endlessly absorbing, and three new books prove it.

degeneracy" on stage in the 1920s to the talented artists who smashed through those barriers and the many classic shows they created or starred in or both. The author of major works such as *Anything Goes: A History* of American Musical Theatre, Mordden captures the long journey, from the "nances" of vaudeville who offered up coded queers to *The Nance*, the Broadway show starring Nathan Lane, one of theater's biggest stars. Who the heck was Shakespeare? Journalist and critic Elizabeth Winkler made waves with her essay "Was Shakespeare a Woman?" in *The Atlantic*. It was named one of the best essays of the year, but that didn't

Historian and novelist Ethan Mordden is the perfect guide through the fraught and fascinating history of

gays on Broadway. He covers it all, from the Whac-A-Mole attempts to prevent any portrayal of "sexual

mean turning it into a full-length book was actually going to work. Forsooth! Anyone who thinks the world of Shakespearean scholarship isn't rife with backbiting, feuds, and intriguing changes in what we know, how we know it, and how we *interpret* what we know simply hasn't been paying attention. In *Shakespeare Was a* Woman, Winkler captures the many famous names who've pondered the identity of Shakespeare (from Mark Rylance to Sigmund Freud to RBG) and how even the suggestion that Shakespeare might not have written his plays became sacrilegious. Then she explains why people are so desperately determined not to question certain beliefs. The reviews have been raves, from *Publishers Weekly* to *The Washington Post*. Really, it's so erudite and learned about British culture and history that you wonder how an American managed to parse it all. Is it possible? Surely there's nothing to the rumor that Winkler is a front for King Charles III....

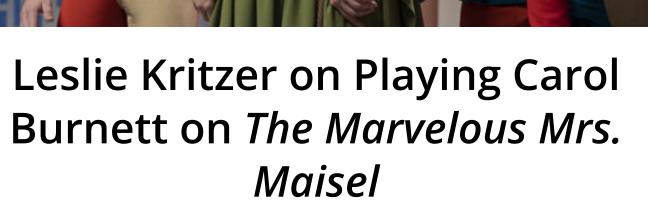
Finally, the diary of an actor tackling a major role is a marvelous genre in the world of books by and about the theater. Giles Terera adds to this illustrious tradition with *Hamilton and Me*, his journal about tackling the juiciest role in the biggest smash-hit musical since...oh... A Chorus Line? Really, it's hard to compare the musical *Hamilton* to almost anything other than the landmark shows that immediately spring to mind, like *A* Chorus Line and Oklahoma! and My Fair Lady. Imagine auditioning for a part in a show that's already a oncein-a-generation phenomenon. That was the situation faced by Terera. Hamilton was coming to London and he tried out for a role, dove into research, and surfaced in the West End as Aaron Burr in the production that proved *Hamilton* would indeed conquer the world. Terera won an Olivier as best actor for his performance, and we won this detailed account by an artist of how he did it. Any aspiring actor or fan of the show will want to know what it was like to be in the room where it happened. (Hey, *you* write about *Hamilton* and try not to use that line. It ain't easy!)

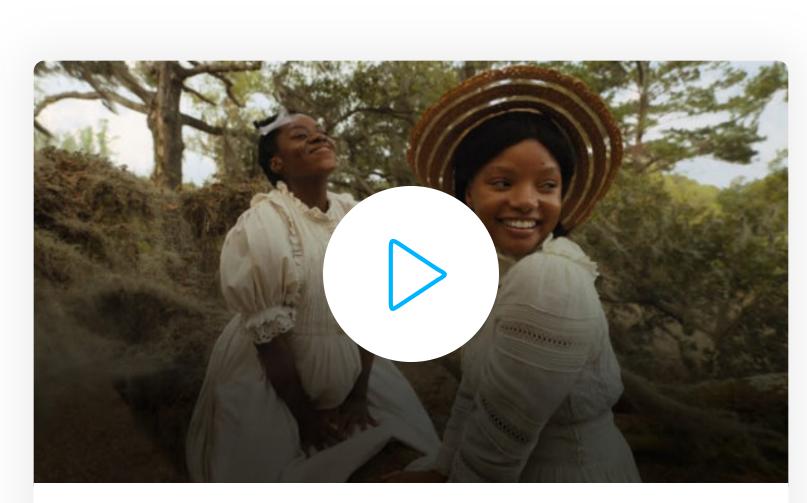
Michael Giltz is the cohost of the weekly entertainment podcast Showbiz Sandbox. He covers all areas of entertainment as a journalist, critic, feature writer, and analyst, contributing to numerous outlets, including the New York Daily News, New York Post, New York Magazine, the Los Angeles Times, Huffington Post, Entertainment Weekly, and The Advocate. When Michael's not attending the theater, he's reading about it.

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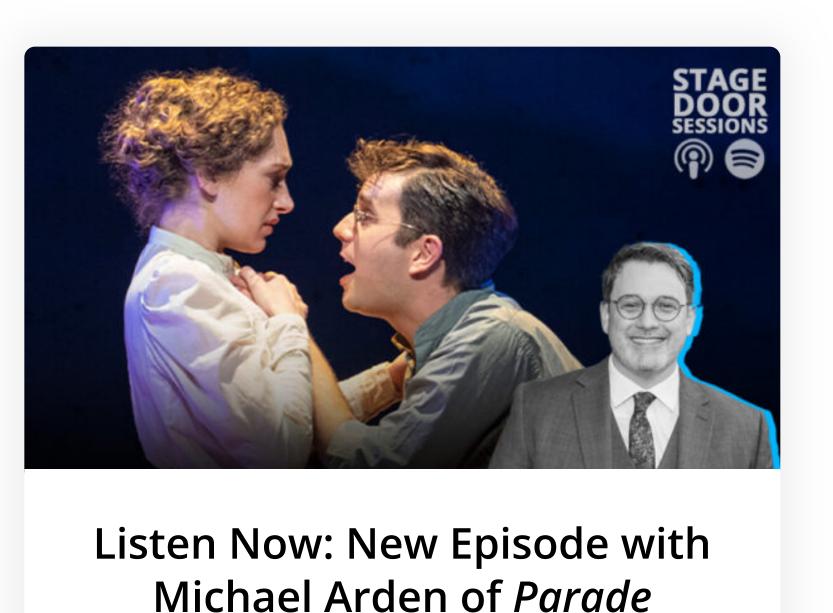
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