MAIN TITLE

Chapter 1

The Interdisciplinary Struggle

While it is evident that music plays a vital role in film and the topic receives attention from music buffs, film buffs, and film studies, it has received scant attention from music scholarship. Its interdisciplinary nature is a major reason why the relationship between music and film has not received the academic attention which it deserves. Both music and cinema have their own specialized terminology, and in order to approach a serious discussion of the topic, each discipline has to understand the specialized terminology of its respective other as it applies to the complexities of their interaction. With regard to the lack of academic writing, K.J. Donnelly comments:

> Whilst film scholarship has largely ignored film music as a problem it would rather not face, music scholarship has persisted in the prejudice that film music is somehow below the standard of absolute music.[1]

David Neumeyer, Caryl Flinn, and James Buhler note,

> Film music's interdisciplinarity, like that of the cinema itself, produces and is produced by a wide array of methodologies that can sometimes operate in direct conflict with one another.[2]

This issue was noticed as early as 1936, when in *Film Music*, Kurt London commented on the way film music was treated:

> The music which accompanies the film is still struggling for its place in the sun; the film people themselves invariably treat it very casually and are not quite clear in their own minds about its importance; musicians take it up more for the sale of fees than for art's sake… the public finally does not trouble overmuch about music because it always fails to understand the cause and effect of film musical ideas.[3]

In addition, there is the erroneous and widespread belief that certain types of music are inevitably required in a given situation. For example, many believe that if someone is running, the music must "run" as well. This concept restricts what music can and cannot do,

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[1] Donnelly, *Film Music*: *Critical Approaches*, 1.

[2] Buhler, *Music and Cinema*, 3.

[3] London, *Film Music*, 126.

limits its values, and is a disturbing fallacy as well. In truth, music and film have an impact on each other and it is through their interaction in which the forces of their combined efforts have an impact the developing narrative.

Due to the interdisciplinary and internal complexity of the movie musical and the multiple discursive nature of music, it is impossible for any comprehension to conform to a strict methodological and analytical standard. While the functional role of music is identifiable and can be generalized, any example extracted can overlap into other categories. The roles considered here are meant to be only a vague outline of the associations between music and the movie musical.

In this study, the analysis of musical numbers granted particular attention, are each treated with their own means of musical and visual analysis. Although three of the selections are popular songs, they are each unique in composition, function, and in the treatment given to their visual presentation. The final example, an adaptation from a concert piece, has its own unique qualities as well, and it is perhaps best not to subject to a traditional mode of symphonic analysis.

The treatment and presentation of each musical number will be through their orchestration, choreography, camera angle, and editing. While musical form is the fundamental determinant, each is a unique expression of the music itself. As with the music, there is no absolute form of analyses for visuals and what the whole arrangement represents.

Chapter one briefly addresses the interdisciplinary nature which has contributed to the lack of serious scholarship within this field. It also gives a brief introduction to the roots of the musical and presents common functions in which the music is responsible.

Chapter two considers the contributions of MGM's Freed Unit and Music Department to the movie musical. Their combined efforts, mutual appreciation of art, and desire to create complete works of art is what made the integrated musicals of the late 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s an entire collection of works which few later ones can be compared to.

In chapter three, the impetus of *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951) and two of its musical numbers are discussed. The first number, "Love is Here to Stay," is the first theme associated with Jerry and Lise (played by Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron) and is used to establish their relationship. The second number is the "blues" excerpt from the *An American in Paris* ballet, an adaptation of George Gershwin's concert piece of the same name. The selected examples leads to a thematic duality and duel-ity with the music associated with the two protagonists, Jerry and Lise.

The fourth chapter examines two musical examples from the most well-known movie musical, *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952). What relates and sets the two numbers apart from each other is their physical location.

In order to better relate the two selected movie musicals to each other, the final chapter compares and contrasts their musical treatment. In the conclusion, the changes in Hollywood and their impact on the genre are examined and future considerations are considered.

Chapter 2

Music and the Musical

In the film musical, music is the descriptive device. According to George Burt, whether the audience is conscious of it or not, "music has an impact on film, and film on music."[4] Be it implicitly or explicitly, it is the music which invariably evokes or suggests something about a scene. In film musicals, this interaction and its effect multiply exponentially: The music is the film, the film is the music. To Bernard Herrmann, "it is almost impossible to make movies without music. Movies need the cement of music. I've never seen a movie better without it. Music is as important as the photography."[5] Of all the film genres and according to music director Nathaniel Shilkret, "[the] effective use of film is not limited to pictures of a dramatic nature. It is in musicals that film music has had its greatest use and development. In these pictures music is an integral part of the whole."[6] Without the musical numbers, the film musical would cease to be a musical!

The film musical is the counterpart for adults of a fairytale for children. *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952) exemplifies this in the title number. When Don (played by Gene Kelly) jumps in puddles and splashes around in the rain, his action and the music take the viewer back to their ideal childhood days spent in the rain. In *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), Dorothy Gale, (portrayed by Judy Garland), sings "Over the Rainbow," to describe the technicolor fantasy she dreams of.

Music, the most abstract of the arts, is capable of making which makes the most direct connection to the psyche. It is the communicative link between the narrative and the audience. In the musical the music and lyrics not only advance the narrative, but are used

[4] Burt, *The Art of Film Music*, 6.

[5] Karlin, *Listening to Movies*, xi.

[6] Ibid, 169.

by the characters to express themselves and establish relationships through song and dance. Moreover, the music itself not only makes a statement, but "the arrival and departure of music in a film is its own statement because it is an event."[7] It is this event, an integrated device, which functions to foreshadow, express, or recall the climactic points of the narrative.

The use of musical numbers as an integral device are directly referred to in *Summer Stock* (Charles Walters, 1950). When Jane (played by Judy Garland) asks Joe (portrayed by Gene Kelly) about the excitement of show business and the theater, he explains: 'We're trying to tell a story with music, song, and dance, and well, not just with words. For instance, if the boy tells the girl that he loves her, he doesn't just say it, he *sings* it.'[8] When he shows her, he not only demonstrates a musical number, "You, Wonderful You," but their performance of it firmly establishes their plot-destined relationship celebrated in the finale. Furthermore, it is a musical number which makes a direct reference to the function of music, song, and dance in the film musicals. Moreover, the number is reprised later in a musical, *Fall in Love*, whose process and performance takes place within the film musical, *Summer Stock*. Thoughts are expressed as lyrics verses words, the music sets the tone, the dance is the kinesthetic expression, and the movement is an exploration of space. However, the musical structure is the fundamental determinant of what Jane and Joe dance to and visually express.

Another example of this occurs in the dressing room scene in *Du Barry Was a Lady* (Roy Del Ruth, 1943). When Alec (played by Gene Kelly) wants to tell May (played by Lucille Ball) that he loves her, he plays the piano and sings his emotions to her with "Do I Love You". When she says he loves him, he tap dances out of her room and continues to dance towards the stage. His dance is to the same tune; first backed by a chorus and the

[7] Falk, *Foundations in Film Music*, Fall 2008.

[8] *Summer Stock*, DVD, Chapter 17, 2006.

Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, then backed by the orchestra and joined by an ensemble of dancers. The act of dance is not only a visual and kinesthetic interpretation of his thoughts, but is an expression of joy and happiness through a visual exploration of space determined by the structure of the music.

In order to discuss the relationship between music and the musical, these aspects need to be considered: (i) ambience of time and place, (ii) emotional appeal, (iii) character relations and continuity, (iv) theatrical celebration and finality, and (v) character realization and transformation. While these are dramatic score principles, they can be adapted and applied to the function of music in the film musical as well.

Due to the lack of scholarship in the relationship between the function of music in film, it is necessary to adapt dramatic score principles to the role of music in film musicals. In the case of the film musical however, music becomes a more literal and often visual form of expression to not only meet the demands and requirements of the narrative conflict and the interrelationships of the characters, but needs to consider the emotional shape of the scene as well. According to George Burt, it is the music which "has the power to open the frame of reference to a story and to reveal its inner life on a way that could not have been as fully articulated in any other way."[9] Instantaneously, the music can heighten the effect of a scene or sharpen its focus on a key aspect of the narrative.

In addition to the principles about to be discussed, it has to be remembered that music is a temporal art; like film, it is an art which takes place in time. As a result, the music can have a major impact on the pacing of events. According to George Burt, it is the music which "mov[es] things along when needed, dwell[s] on something that requires attention, [and] accent[s] this or that instant or event to help bring out the various connections and

[9] Burt, *The Art of Film Music*, 3-4.

divergent points of view."[10] While these inherent capabilities of music have been known in opera for centuries, in film and especially film musicals, they are just as fundamental.[11]

Ambience of Time and Place

Since most movie musicals contain nostalgic elements, and romanticized views of a time and place, along with costumes and scenery, music can be the vital element which assists this. This holds true even when preexisting music is altered and adapted to fit with the narrative. The use of old popular songs is a powerful agent, and the fact that the audience is already familiar with them makes this agent even more powerful. As Jane Feuer observes, "nothing succeeds better at evoking nostalgia than the popular songs of an earlier era. By inserting old songs into new narratives, the Hollywood musical could have the best of both generations."[12]

While the music in *Easter Parade* (Charles Walters, 1948) is a collage of old and new Irving Berlin songs, the new music stylistically fits with the old songs from the 1910s. And even though *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951) is set in post-World War II Paris, all of George Gershwin's music is from before the war.

In romanticized biographical musicals based around the song catalogue of a composer or songwriting team, this idea is greatly exploited. The songs are already associated with a respective time period; most often the rise and success of the solo or team composer, and the tunes are familiar. These movie musicals all use the music to trace the struggle, rise, of a musical artist or artistic team: *Till the Clouds Roll By* (Richard Whorf, 1947) traces the life of Jerome Kern, *Words and Music* (Norman Taurog, 1948) is centered around Lorenz Hart and Richard Rogers, *Three Little Words* (Richard Thorpe, 1950) pays tribute to Harry Ruby and

[10] Burt, *The Art of Film Music*, 4.

[11] Ibid, 4.

[12] Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, 97.

Burt Kalmar, and *Deep in My Heart* (Stanley Donen, 1954) is a romanticized tribute based on the life and music of Sigmund Romberg.

When original music is composed in an older style and blended with new music (original songs or prerecorded), it can attract old and young audiences. In Paramount's movie musical version of *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978), original and prerecorded music are used to appeal to a larger audience. While the pre-existing music evokes nostalgia for the 1950s, the period in which the film is set, the new music is written in a similar style. The use of electric guitar and bass can attract the younger generation, while the musical style will attract the older generation and evoke in them their youth and the late 1950s.

The 1980 cult film, *Xanadu* (Robert Greenwald, 1980), which is set in 1980, is a montage of original music; 1980s rock, 1980s pop, and 1940s big band music. Of all the music, it is the 1940s tune, "Whenever You're Away From Me," danced to by Olivia Newton- John and Gene Kelly, that most vividly recalls the musical numbers of classic Hollywood through camera angles and editing which treat it as a set piece.

Emotional Appeal

According to Elmer Bernstein, 'film conspires with your imagination to remove you from your present reality and take you on a freewheeling trip through your unconscious."[13] In order to get the audience to participate, there is no better medium to appeal to the audience than music. In accordance with Bernstein, music is a "non-plastic, non-intellectual communication between sound vibration and spirit."[14] Invariably, this allows each listener to make their own personal assessment of the how and what the music used makes them feel.

[13] Burt, *The Art of Film Music*, 10.

[14] Ibid, 10.

With film and even more so for film musicals, music is the communicative link between the screen and the audience, and there is no better way to appeal to emotions than through music.

In *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944), it is the haunting quality of the main theme which evokes the emotions of loss and melancholy. At the same time it embodies the mystique of the detective who has fallen in love with a ghost! Regarding the music, composer David Raksin comments:

> It is as though I am remembering somebody else, someone I understood very intimately although he lived more than a quarter of a century ago. I feel certain that the reason more people responded as they do to that melody, in the picture and on its own, is that it is 'about' love, specifically about that yearning particular to unrequited love…[15]

Later, when Laura appears and turns out to be alive, there is no music; it stops just before her arrival in the apartment. She is now a suspect in the murder case.

In *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Blake Edwards, 1961), the popular song "Moon River," composed especially for the film by Henry Mancini and lyrics by Johnny Mercer, is the center of the drama. Used selectively in the film, including the main title, Holly Golightly's (played by Audrey Hepburn) rendition, when the cat (associated with Holly) is found, and the end title, makes this popular song effective for the audience to identify with dreams, reality, and heartbreak of both main characters. In addition, it is the character sketch for Holly, that underneath all her sophistication, she is still a simple country girl.

Character Relations and Continuity

In musicals, it is through music that character relations and continuity are established and maintained. Here, music can foreshadow or refer back to their specific musical number, and function linearly to maintain continuity from the main title to the end credits. Through musical repetition and/or underscore, the relationships between the characters and their associated plot points can easily be traced through the narrative.

[15] Prendergast, *Film Music*: *A Neglected Art*, 61.

There are two musical numbers in *Cover Girl* (Charles Vidor, 1944) which connect the characters to the narrative. Before the plot-destined couple, Rusty and Danny (played by Rita Hayworth and Gene Kelly) perform their number, "Long Ago and Far Away,"[16] the melody underscores two of their future-oriented conversations *before* they perform their musical number. Yet, it's Rusty, Danny's heroine, who begins the number which Danny responds to in verse. To further their plot destiny, they dance and easy dance to express the music visually. Just before the lovers are reunited, it is Danny who hums and sings the third verse, which Rusty responds to and sings the fourth verse.

A song which connects the three main characters to the narrative and their quest to find a pearl, their omen for success, is "Make Way for Tomorrow". First performed to cheer themselves up after one of apparently many attempts to find a pearl, but are interrupted in the street by the policeman on patrol. Their reprise to end the show, performed at the same setting, is *not* interrupted as they celebrate their reunion. [17] This, combined with the lovers reunited and the newly found pearl are the sign that their tomorrow is about to arrive.

In *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1954), "The Heather on the Hill" is used not only to establish and further Tommy and Fiona's relationship (played by Gene Kelly and Cyd Charisse), but to maintain continuity and foreshadow their reunion to a choral reprise of "Brigadoon". To establish their relationship, Tommy sings "The Heather on the Hill" to Fiona, followed by their dance among the heather.[18] When Tommy realizes he really does love Fiona, they dance to the music again. After Tommy returns to New York City and realizes he is still in love with her, he hears Fiona sing the refrain in his recollection medley; "Waitin' For My Dearie," "Go Home to Bonnie Jean," and "The Heather on the Hill". Just

[16] *Cover Girl*, DVD, Chapter 15, 2003.

[17] Ibid, Chapter 28, 2003.

[18] *Brigadoon*, DVD, Chapters 10-11, 2005.

before he is reunited with her, "The Heather on the Hill," an aural cue for the audience, underscores his return to the village.

Character Realization and Transformation

When the action and words are set to music in the musical, this combination is designed for the audience to remember the key plot points. Within the narrative, the integrated number can function to express the protagonist's ability to find similar points of interest. As a solo number, it can function as an expression of satisfaction with the self. This allows the most often lead male protagonist comes to terms with himself and/or transforms through his relationship with his heroine.

For example, in *Easter Parade* (Charles Walters, 1948, when Don (played by Fred Astaire) realizes that Hannah (portrayed by Judy Garland) is a talented singer when they perform "I Love the Piano" together, and *not* the exotic ballroom dancer he tried to turn her into.[19] While they do dance in this number, it is spontaneous and (apparently) unrehearsed in comparision to their previous ballroom routine. Here, they realize their workable medium as a vaudeville act which foreshadows their plot-destined romance.

In *It's Always Fair Weather* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1955), the solo number "I Like Myself,"[20] s performed on roller skates through the streets of New York City by Ted Riley (played by Gene Kelly). The number functions in several ways. Previously displeased with himself, Ted now has his girl, Jackie Leighton (played by Cyd Charisse), the successful woman he thought he would never get. Both in love and finally happy with

[19] *Easter Parade*, DVD, Chapter 14, 2006.

[20] *It's Always Fair Weather*, DVD, Chapter 23, 2006.

himself, Ted goes into this number to express this without regard to the fact that he does it on a city street with an audience of bystanders.

The penultimate number in *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978), "You're the One that I Want,"[21] performed by Sandy and Danny (played by Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta) reveals both Danny's change from "greaser" to an athlete, but the complete change Sandy undergoes with some help from the Pink Ladies, too. Through this duet, Sandy and Danny celebrate the changes they each made initially unknown to each other.

Theatrical Celebration and Finality

The final number can have a variety of functions which give closure to the narrative for both the characters and the audience. While the main title introduces and sets the tone for the narrative, the finale is the final reinforcement of plot points and meaning behind the narrative. In some cases, the protagonists are reunited (a cause for celebration), a resolution can be reached, or the number can be a gay, celebratory finale and directive to the audience.

The finales in *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944), and *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1954), celebrate the concept of home and what it means to find it. Dorothy Gale (played by Judy Garland) learns that home is not where she sings about, "Over the Rainbow." She realizes home is the family farm, and her realization is underscored by a violin melody of the song. For the Smith family, they realize home is right where they live, St. Louis. To further enforce their realization, "Meet Me in St. Louis" is reprised to underscore the final scene. In *Brigadoon*, Tommy Albright (played by Gene Kelly) discovers that home is where he believes it to be (Brigadoon), not where he is (New York City). His belief is so strong that a miracle happens and he awakens the village from its 100-year sleep to be reunited with Fiona

[21] *Grease*, DVD, Chapter 16, 2006.

Campbell (played by Cyd Charisse). However, his belief is expressed through a medley; "Waitin' for My Dearie," "Go Home to Bonnie Jean," and "The Heather on the Hill".

Even when a finale does not end the musical with a happy ending, it still gives closure to the narrative. Based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the ending of *West Side Story* (Robert Wise, 1961) is tragic; Tony, Bernardo, and Riff die, but it does have some hope. The rival gangs, Sharks and Jets, realize through Maria and the three deaths what their hatred has done, and finally put their differences aside, ironically unified when Tony's body is carried out into the night.

ACT I: MAKE A GREAT MUSICAL

Chapter 3

MGM: Hollywood's Musical Lion and the 1940s-50s

With the advent of sound and domination of the studio system, Hollywood's Golden Era soon gave birth to the movie musical. At first, "the studios were unsure [of] what to do with this new invention. Then, they hit on the idea of filming popular vaudeville acts."[22] As Frank Sinatra narrates it:

> All of this… became a thing in 1929 when silence was out and sound was the king. *The Broadway Melody of 1929* won an Oscar for "Best Picture" that year, and MGM was off and running with a new formula for success… the start of a new art form that would captivate audiences for years to come.[23]

Eight companies dominated the film industry: 'the big five'; Paramount, Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Warner Brothers, and RKO, and 'the little three; Universal, United Artists, and Columbia.[24] By the late 1930s, RKO and Warner Brothers were replaced as *the* movie musicals studios by Twentieth-Century Fox and MGM, which jointly dominated the genre until its demise.[25] Of the two new reigning movie musical studios, it is without a doubt the best were made at MGM. As narrated by Frank Sinatra:

> Now, some studios can claim they made the finest gangster films or the greatest horror movies, but when it came to musicals, MGM, they were the champions. Musicals were fantasy trips for the audiences of their day. For instance, boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy sings a song and gets girl. The plots were that simple. The musicals of the 1930s and 40s or even the 50s, may not tell you where our heads were at, but they certainly would tell you where our hearts were at.[26]

A clear advantage at MGM and vital to the success of the musicals stemmed from the studio system. According to Gene Kelly, in a 1976 interview, "the studio system had a lot of drawbacks and had a lot of advantages. The advantages were that, we were the only

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[22] Kelly, *That's Entertainment, Part III*, DVD, Chapter 3, 2004.

[23] Sinatra, *That's Entertainment!*, DVD, Chapter 3, 2004.

[24] Reay, *Music in Film*: *Soundtracks and Synergy*, 13.

[25] Engle, *Blockbusters*: *A Reference Guide to Film Genres*, 151.

[26] Sinatra, *That's Entertainment!*, DVD, Chapter 3, 2004.

repertory company, musically, that ever existed in the whole world."[27] Without a doubt, MGM had a way to acquire talent. It's been said they had "more stars than there were in the heavens." Donald O'Connor notes: "When I was at this studio, we were up to our ears in tenors… baritones… tap dancers… pianists… and they were all good."[28] As described by Frank Sinatra: "The work was hard but it was great fun, because the people you worked with knew what they were doing."[29] These creative talents, from everyone in front of the camera to those behind the scenes, were all responsible and contributed to a uniquely indigenous art form: the American film musical.

The Arthur Freed Unit

MGM was the home to three musical producers, Arthur Freed, Jack Cummings, and Joe Pasternak. Each producer made his own kind of musical, and while they were all successful and shared the quality of enthusiasm, the absolute best were produced by Freed, head of MGM's legendary Freed Unit, its "Class Unit," and called by the Pasternak Unit, the "Royal Family."[30] According to Angela Lansbury: "The Arthur Freed Unit was really a musical unit that was devoted to developing great musicals for MGM. It was manned by some of the most illustrious people in our business."[31] Ann Sothern notes: "That was a little country of people that really knew what they were doing, and musically, they were perfect."[32]

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[27] Kelly, *Musicals Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, Chapter 11, 2002.

[28] O'Connor, *That's Entertainment!*, DVD, Chapter 17, 2004.

[29] Sinatra, *That's Entertainment!*, DVD, Chapter 3, 2004.

[30] Fordin, *Musicals Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit at MGM*, DVD, Chapter 11, 2002.

[31] Lansbury, *Treasures from the Vault*: *The Masters Behind the Musicals*, DVD, 2009.

[32] Sothern, *Treasures from the Vault*: *The Masters Behind the Musicals*, DVD, 2009.

According to Hugh Fordin, Freed was the one responsible for the evolution of the film musical,[33] the uncontested master of the movie musical. Dancer-actress Cyd Charisse, claimed that "he changed the look of musicals, they suddenly were not old-fashioned looking anymore."[34] What set his musicals apart from those produced by his peers is that they were "slick, stylish, and 'now'-looking. His films were the most innovative. Freed and his musical assistant, Roger Edens, were instrumental in bring a great many new musical talents to the studio, in front of and behind the camera."[35]

Throughout his musicals Freed remained faithful to his roots, songwriting. His collaborator was Nacio Herb Brown, and their song catalogue consisted of many numbers written at the time of Hollywood's early musicals. When he brought talent out to Hollywood, specifically from New York, choreographer Michael Kidd said, "primarily, they were always music-oriented. He remained faithful to his primary discipline, which was songwriting."[36] Even though Freed and Brown were not the top song writers of the time, Freed had an invaluable skill which contributed to the success of his musicals. According to Irving Berlin, Freed had the ability to recognize talent:

> I must say his greatest talent was his recognition of talent. You take [his musical assistant] Roger Edens and all the other talented people he had in his unit- he didn't tell them what to do, but they did it. He was smart enough to know that they could do the job…. And he knew style.[37]

Freed had a particular interest in composers and their song catalogues. His productions which focused around this include his film musical biographical pictures; Jerome Kern, *Till the Clouds Roll By*, (Richard Whorf, 1947), and Rodgers and Hart tunes for *Words*

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[33] Sothern, *Treasures from the Vault*: *The Masters Behind the Musicals*, DVD, 2009, vii.

[34] Charisse, *Musicals Great Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit at MGM*, DVD, Chapter 1, 2002.

[35] Chaplin, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, 121.

[36] Kidd, *Musicals Great Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit at MGM*, DVD, Chapter 2, 2002.

[37] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 526.

and Music (Norman Taurog, 1948). Some of his films which focused around specific song catalogues, but were not biographical pictures per se. These include a collage of old and new Irving Berlin songs for *Easter Parade* (Charles Walters, 1948), the George and Ira Gershwin catalogue and Gershwin's tone poem for *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951), and *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952), based on the songs he co-wrote with Nacio Herb Brown.

Many of Freed's musicals were nominated for and won Academy Awards, and three musicals received the award for Best Picture: *The Broadway Melody of 1929* (Harry Beaumont, 1929), which Freed and Brown wrote the music for, *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951), and *Gigi* (Vincente Minnelli, 1958). Ironically, the musical of his which was nominated, but did not win any Oscar's is perhaps the most loved musical of all time, *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952).

At the 1952 Academy Awards, Freed received an honor which he greatly deserved. The Board of Governors of the Academy awarded him the Irving G.Thalberg Memorial Award for his achievements in the film musical. In three-time Thalberg Award winner Darryl F. Zanuck's introduction, he said of Freed:

> Turning out musicals can be a routine job. It isn't with Mr. Freed. In his hands the film musical has taken on a new scale. He has replaced mere prettiness of production with extraordinary beauty. He has brought a thorough knowledge of music and dancing to his job and learned to mix the elements of charm, humor and melody in a production which makes an Arthur Freed musical completely distinctive. His *Show Boat* and *An American in Paris* are perfect examples of creative art. It is no accident that the producer of *An American in Paris* is a connoisseur and collector of modern art. In that picture he did more to bring the French impressionists into the delighted consciousness of this country than ten thousand lectures could have done. By his achievements he has added stature to the whole industry. Arthur, will you come up, please? I am running out of superlatives.[38]

[38] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 345.

Roger Edens

A pianist Freed hired from Broadway, Roger Edens was "kind of the backbone of the Freed Unit in every department."[39] The head of the Freed Unit music department, Edens was an associative producer/vocal arranger/composer. He was an integral part and member of the Freed Unit who shaped the music of some of MGM's best musicals. Screenwriter and composer Betty Comden notes:

> We used to say; [Freed's] right-hand foot [was] Roger Edens. He was a great musician and he was very good on book... He had great taste and a marvelous visual sense, and he really was a very controlling influence…[40]

According to film historian Rudy Behlmer, when Arthur Freed saw Edens at an audition for singers at MGM:

> He didn't care too much fur the singer, but he thought 'that guy, that fellow on the piano is very good'… When he interviewed him, he realized what a great musical talent he was; he gave him the opportunity to develop. Right from the beginning, he was doing vocal arrangements…[41]

Originally a jazz musician, Edens played with some of the greatest jazz musicians and orchestras of the day; the Red Nichols Orchestra, the Dorsey Brothers, Gene Krupa, Jack Teagarden, Glenn Miller, and Harry James.[42] From here, he became the vocal arranger for Ethel Mermann, and went to Hollywood with her in the 1930s. It was his strength in the vocal arrangements for a singer Freed auditioned at the time which lead him to be hired as an integral part of the success of the Freed Unit.

Edens brilliance was brought to Freed's attention in *The Broadway Melody of 1936* (Roy Del Ruth, 1936). For the song "Broadway Rhythm" (by Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed), Edens came up with the idea how to handle the number:

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[39] Comden, *Musicals Great Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit at MGM*, DVD, Chapter 5, 2002.

[40] Comden, *Treasures from the Vault*: *The Masters Behind the Musicals*, DVD, 2009.

[41] Behlmer, *Treasures from the Vault: The Master's Behind the Musicals* DVD, 2009.

[42] Wollen, *Singin' in the Rain*, 28.

> Roger said, 'Let's have Francis Langford open and do the first chorus. Then, we'll have Buddy Epstein and his sister, Velma, do what they used to call an eccentric dance. Then we're going to have the Chorus come in and they'll do a chorus. And then we're going to have Nick Long Jr. and June Knight do kind of their dance rendition… And finally, the big finale will be Eleanor Powell.[43]

Here, Brown and Freed realized just how much Edens was a visionary in creating musical numbers and how they needed to be handled. Subsequently, this lead to Freed to rely on him more and more, and according to Behlmer: "He became indispensable… he was a major, major part of what people refer to as the Freed Unit."[44]

Vincente Minnelli

While many talented directors,including Busby Berkeley, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, George Sidney, and Charles Walters, were under contract at MGM, Vincente Minnelli was the very best. A protégé of Busby Berkeley, Minnelli directed some of MGM's most successful musicals: *Cabin in the Sky* (1943), *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), *Ziegfeld Follies* (1946), *An American in Paris* (1951), *The Band Wagon* (1953), *Brigadoon* (1954), and *Gigi* (1958).

A highly regarded Broadway set designer, Minnelli left his position as art director and producers at Radio City Music Hall to come to Hollywood,[45] and was brought to MGM by Arthur Freed. It was his artistic and visual style which revolutionized MGM's musicals. His artistry as a director was recognized in *Gigi*, which not only won nine Oscars, including "Best Picture," plus a special award for Maurice Chevalier, but Minnelli received the award "Best Director".[46]

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[43] Behlmer, *Treasures from the Vault: The Master's Behind the Musicals* DVD, 2009.

[44] Ibid, 2009.

[45] Chaplin, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, 131.

[46] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit*, 494.

Gene Kelly

One of the most versatile contract talents of the Freed unit was Gene Kelly. First recognized and approached by Freed while in the Broadway production *Time of Your Life*, to come to Hollywood, Kelly said: "I wasn't ready- yet."[47] Selected and noticed by the writer John O'Hara for the title role of the Rodgers and Hart Broadway musical *Pal Joey*, based on O'Hara's *Pal Joey* stories, Kelly received his biggest break. When *Pal Joey* opened December 25, 1940 at the Ethel Barrymore Theater, he not only became a Broadway star,[48] but he was then ready for Hollywood.

According to Kelly: 'L.B. Mayer saw me in *Pal Joey* and said, 'We'd like you to come out to M-G-M'…. I'm sure Arthur [Freed] was behind all this…'[49] Complications ensued when a telegram was misread at MGM's New York office over a screen test which Mayer deemed unnecessary, and Kelly, unaware of the misreading, but confident of his own talent, reacted and wrote a letter that essentially stated: 'I'm sorry, I won't work for you because you lied- I'd rather dance in a saloon.'[50]

Although this incident temporarily ended negotiations with MGM, David Selznick, L.B. Mayer's son-in-law, head of his own studio, offered Kelly a contract, with no screen test required. Soon after his arrival in Hollywood, his contract was signed over to MGM, a studio which made musicals, and starred opposite Judy Garland for his film debut in *For Me and My Gal* (Busby Berkeley, 1942). The show was a hit and Kelly quickly became one of Hollywood's two number one song and dance men.

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[47] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit*, 60.

[48] Ibid, 60-61.

[49] Ibid, 61.

[50] Ibid, 61.

In the documentary *That's Entertainment!* (Jack Haley Jr., 1974), Fred Astaire narrates:

> From the start, Gene was constantly experimenting… he was determined to broaden the horizons of the film musical, and in doing so, he became one of the most versatile and original performers the movies have ever known…. More than any other star, I think, Gene Kelly became the symbol of the MGM musical in the 1950s…. The finale to the Broadway Ballet from *Singin' in the Rain* seems to exemplify the genius of Gene Kelly: actor, singer, dancer, choreographer, and director…. He's one of those rare talents who really understands what the movie musical is all about.[51]

In his autobiography, Saul Chaplin recounts an instance in *Cover Girl* (Charles Vidor, 1944) regarding Kelly's ability to take the multiple elements which integrate the musical number into the story. The number in question is the reprise to "Put Me to the Test," performed by Kelly and Phil Silvers.

> He laid out everything he thought might affect the number: the set, the other characters, the method of shooting, the plot to where the number occurs, his and Phil's attitude- everything. I recall thinking to myself 'This is impossible. I can't write anything that has to take all of those elements into consideration.' I contributed very little to the discussion and was getting more and more concerned when Gene suddenly said, 'Look- make Phil as funny as you can and don't worry about me. I'll take care of myself.'… I worked with Gene many times since then, and his attitude has never changed. He was always concerned with the entire project and was indeed able to take care of himself.[52]

Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly: Stylistic Differences

Although Fred Astaire, Kelly's generation counterpart, typically portrayed a professional performer, Kelly most often portrayed the complete opposite: an everyday character with the ability to utilize song and dance as a means of expression. It is his portrayal of and his style as a performer which makes his characters much more accessible to the audience.

[51] Astaire, *That's Entertainment!*, DVD, Chapter 21, 23, 2004.

[52] Chaplin, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, 52.

Of their stylistic differences, Kelly described it as: "Fred represents the aristocracy when he dances, and I represent the proletariat."[53] Unlike the contained movements of Astaire, Kelly favored a more open style, and he not only integrated song, music, and dance to tell a definite story as an event itself, but integrated it into the narrative as well. Whereas Fred Astaire was the first to photograph the full figure of the dancer, Kelly freed up the camera so that it could dance with the musical number.

Fred Astaire's style remained closer to ballroom and seemed to float across the screen, while Kelly went for "dramatic dancing," and described his style as "an American style."[54] As Kelly said of choreographer Robert Alton:

> Bob Alton was a very underrated choreographer.... he was the first fellow who really knew that what I was doing dancewise was different; he recognized it and said, 'Go ahead and do it.' He was a great help to me and always encouraged me very much. My form of dancing? I wouldn't know what to call it; it's certainly hybrid…. I've borrowed from the modern dance, from the classical, and certainly from the American folk dance- tap dancing- jitterbugging. But I have tried to develop a style which is indigenous to the environment in which I was reared- the classical ballet is completely foreign to that.[55]

MGM's Music Department: The Masters Behind the Music

In addition to producers who really knew how to produce musical pictures, artistic directors, and versatile talent, the talent of MGM's music department was a significant factor which makes the musicals what they are. In the documentary *That's Entertainment!* (Jack Haley Jr., 1974) Peter Lawford narrates: "The films we made here had a certain style. A look that was unmistakable… somehow, you could always tell it was an MGM musical."[56] A major contributor to this style comes from the music. In the words of André Previn: When

[53] Kelly, *Gene Kelly: Anatomy of a Dancer*, DVD, Chapter 8, 2002.

[54] Ibid, Chapter 3, 2002.

[55] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit*, 238.

[56] Lawford, *That's Entertainment!*, DVD, Chapter 8, 2004.

you think of David Raksin, Alex North, Alex Courage, Conrad Salinger, and Lennie Hayton, those were really brilliantly gifted people.[57]

Johnny Green

When Johnny Green was appointed as general music director at MGM studios, he "put together a music department like none that ever existed."[58] In 1944, he made the unpopular decision to replace half the orchestra with some of the world's finest musicians. Green went on to revolutionize the placement and use of microphones in order to create a richer sound than any heard previously on film.[59]

These changes among others had a major impact on the sound and quality of the music in *An American in Paris*, specifically in the ballet sequence. An increase in size from 50 to 72 players, the MGM Studio Orchestra was now the MGM Symphony Orchestra, a name change which gave a certain prestige to it, with its expansion done primarily for its use in the ballet.[60] Essentially, Green was the conductor responsible in bringing about a new sound to MGM.[61]

According to Hugh Fordin:

> The first thing he did was to replace the mixer on the recording stage with a man equipped with a trained ear and musical knowledge. Next he reseated the orchestra, backing it against the long wall of the rectangular stage and ordered vitally necessary acoustic adjustments. Green also restructured the orchestra by getting new talent to unseat old-time, second-rate players. With this general rejuvenation Green brought around a new M-G-M sound, of which the track for the *An American in Paris* ballet is a prime example. As a conductor's performance, this recording is regarded as one of the finest ever made.[62]

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[57] Previn, *Treasures from the Vault*: *The Masters Behind the Musicals*, DVD, 2009.

[58] Ibid, 2009.

[59] Stewart, *Treasures from the Vault*: *The Masters Behind the Musicals*, DVD, 2009.

[60] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris*, CD Liner Notes, #, 1996.

[61] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 324.

[62] Ibid, 324.

Saul Chaplin

Saul Chaplin acted as music supervisor on some of MGM's best musicals, including *On the Town* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1949), *Summer Stock* (Charles Walters, 1950), *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (Stanley Donen, 1954), *Three Little Words* (Richard Thorp, 1950), *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951), *Kiss Me Kate* (George Sidney, 1953), *High Society* (Charles Walters, 1956), *Les Girls* (George Cuckor, 1957), and *West Side Story* (Robert Wise, 1961).[63] Chaplin relates the process at MGM as follows:

> You start from the beginning. Somebody writes a song, the musical supervisor (which I was most of the time) or arranger has to decide how it's going to be sung after the producer or director has decided who will sing it. Then the orchestra has to play it, so the arranger has to be the one who puts down the notes for what each instrument is going to play. And the musical director is the one who has charge of the instrumentation, what the general sound will be, and who has charge of how it's sung and everything else. The supervisor is above the musical director, [because] he's in charge of the entire pattern. The composer writes the post-scoring, but the music supervisor and director is the one who decides how it'll be. The other thing, at the end of the movie, the music supervisor sits in with the dubbing mixer that combines all these tracks.[64]

During preproduction for *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952), Chaplin became the assistant-associate director to Jack Cummings. This was brought about when Cummings complained to Dore Schary, then head of MGM, that "Freed had Roger Edens, that Pasternack had an able assistant (Irving Aaronson), but that he had no one. He requested that I be assigned to him as an assistant-associate on a permanent basis, and Schary agreed."[65] The catch with this promotion and more authority was that Chaplin had to leave the Freed Unit. Although, with the Cummings Unit, Chaplin experienced musical success with *Lovely to Look At* (Mervyn LeRoy, 195x), *Three Little Words* (Richard Thorp, 1950),

[63] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 253-254.

[64] Chaplin, *Treasures from the Vault: The Masters Behind the Musicals*, DVD, 2009.

[65] Chaplin, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, 144.

Kiss Me Kate (George Sidney, 1953), and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (Stanley Donen, 1954).

Conrad Salinger

One of f Hollywood's greatest orchestrators of the day, was MGM's chief orchestrator, Conrad Salinger, who treated orchestration like painting. He knew about timbre, which instruments blended well together, and how to get the most out of the mood for a scene. Like MGM's best musicals, his arrangements are undateable and timeless. A sample of his orchestrations include: *Meet Me in St. Louis*, (Vincente Minnelli, 1944), *Words and Music* (Norman Taurog, 1948), *Easter Parade* (Charles Walters, 1948), *On the Town* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1949), *Show Boat* (George Sidney, 1951), *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951), *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952), *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1953), *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1954), and *Gigi* (Vincente Minnelli, 1958).

According to Saul Chaplin, "among musicians, there is a thing known as the MGM sound in musicals and that's Connie Salinger… the way he treated strings and woodwinds, he's responsible for that."[66] In an interview with Michael Feltenstein, Chaplin remarked:

> He knew how to do "what" with *anything*, and I don't know how he knew. Everybody tried to imitate him, and nobody could and nobody understood why that was. But he had something, I don't know, I can't tell you. I've been asked that so many times, and it's one of those things. There's never been anybody like him.[67]

Hugh Martin notes:

> What an artist he was. He was our number one orchestrator. When it came to a ballad, nobody could make MGM starts sound sweeter and lusher than Connie Salinger…. With Connie, you didn't have to leave a bunch of instructions on what you wanted here, or when the oboes came in, or anything. He could tell me more than I could tell him. He would get the feeling of the movie and read the script. He was a theater man… a beautiful artist.

[66] Chaplin, *Treasures from the Vault: The Masters Behind the Musicals*, DVD, 2009.

[67] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris*, Liner Notes, 37, 1996.

> When you listen to his work, it stands out in bowed relief. That music and his treatment of it does not date.[68]

The talents of the Freed Unit, MGM's Music Department, and countless others were vital to the success of the Freed Unit musicals, which has often been hailed as the best of the best at MGM: These men and women were more than stars, musicians, entertainers, and creative individuals. They were artists.

[68] Martin, *Treasures from the Vault: The Master's Behind the Musicals*, DVD, 2009.

ACT II: AN AMERICAN IN PARIS IS HERE TO STAY

Chapter 4

An American in Paris: From Symphonic Hall to Celluloid

Of MGM's musicals from the 1950s, *An American in Paris* won not only six Oscar's from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science, including ones for "Best Picture and "Best Scoring of a Musical" for Johnny Green and Saul Chaplin, but special recognition was also received by producer Arthur Freed and actor Gene Kelly. Freed was honored with the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award.[69] The same night, most notably for his contributions towards the *An American in Paris* Ballet, Kelly was unanimously selected and received his Honorary Oscar:

> In appreciation for his contributions to the creation and improvement of the motion picture musical film; not only because of his extreme versatility as an actor, singer, director, and dancer, but because of his specific and brilliant achievements in the art of choreography on film…[70]

An American in Paris is considered a significant part of American culture, especially in the entertainment and musical genre of the Hollywood film musical, and it was selected to be preserved in the National Film Registry, Library of Congress, in 1993.

The idea to use George Gershwin's tone poem, *An American in Paris* as the setting for a movie stems from Freed's interest of building film projects around the song portfolios of particular composers, but to produce a "biography" utilizing selected numbers from the George and Ira Gershwin song catalogue was not considered by Freed; Warner Brothers, MGM's biggest competitor at the time, had already produced the romanticized biographical picture *Rhapsody in Blue* (Irving Rapper, 1945) based on Gershwin's life and career.

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[69] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris*, CD Liner Notes, 23, 1996.

[70] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit*, 344.

On the evening of November 21, 1949, over a Saturday evening game of billiards, Ira agreed to sell the rights to *An American in Paris* under one condition: that all the music come exclusively from the Gershwin catalogue.[71] This stipulation not only enabled MGM to acquire the use of the Gershwin song catalogue, but Ira Gershwin would remain an active participant in the project, adding new lyrics if requested.[72] What Freed envisioned to do with Gershwin's symphonic tone poem, *An American in Paris*, was to set it to an original screenplay written by Alan Jay Lerner, and highlight it with musical numbers set to popular songs from the Gershwin song catalogue. The tone poem was to be as the music for a cinematic ballet, the artistic highlight of the film.

To direct the film, Freed chose Vincente Minnelli. An ardent Francophile, Minnelli's natural affinity for the project was supported even more by his personal friendship with the Gershwins dating back to the 1930s. Moreover, Minnelli had been one of Freed's prized directors for several years, though he had not directed a musical since *The Pirate* of 1948.

In order to write the screenplay, Freed approached Alan Jay Lerner, a member of the Lerner and Loewe music collaboration team which had already met success on Broadway with *Brigadoon* (later adapted to a film musical by the Freed Unit and directed by Vincent Minnelli). With the main elements of the concept in place; the use of Gershwin's tone poem for the ballet, access to the Gershwin song catalogue, and Kelly portraying the American in Paris, it was up to Lerner to weave these elements together into a cohesive scenario for the cinematic audience.

[71] Tucci, *Gene Kelly: Anatomy of a Dancer*, DVD, Chapter 13, 2002.

[72] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris*, CD Liner Notes, 4, 1996.

Also fascinated with the project and the Parisian milieu was Gene Kelly, who was selected by Freed to play the romantic lead and painting protagonist, Jerry Mulligan. Kelly was certain that this project, one with a major ballet as its centerpiece, would be a worthy next step following his landmark achievements as star, co-choreographer, and co-director of Freed's musical project, *On the Town* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, from 1949).[73]

To develop story ideas, Lerner considered Gershwin's impetus to compose *An American in Paris*; which is an impressionistic musical expression of Gershwin's Parisian living experiences in the 1920s. During his tenure in Paris, Gershwin studied musical composition, as well as painting. As a result, Lerner decided to make the protagonist a painter, a concept which greatly fit with director Minnelli and Kelly's mutual appreciation of the great Parisian artists of the 1800s. The film would be a love story, in which Gershwin's music and songs would be utilized to express the essence of its characters. Set against a Paris represented by French and Dutch (Van Gogh) impressionist painters, the artistic climax of the piece would be the *An American in Paris* ballet.

Set in post-World War II France, *An American in Paris* is the tale of Jerry Mulligan, (played by Gene Kelly), an ex-GI and painter living in Paris, France, the art center of the world and modern utopia; an ideal environment for sensitive romantics. A love triangle ensues between Jerry, Lise, (played by Leslie Caron), and French musical star Henri Baurel, (portrayed actor Georges Guetary), with both men unknowingly falling for the same girl. To complicate matters, Jerry's art patron, Milo Roberts, (played by Nina Foch), is an American art enthusiast and heiress who resides in Paris, is attracted to Jerry for more than his abilities as a painter; financing his career and supplying a studio for him to work in. This results in Jerry giving Milo his rather reluctant attention. It is Jerry's, relationship with

[73] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris*, CD Liner Notes, 5, 1996.

Lise which gives him the needed burst of creative energy and inspiration to paint enough canvases for his first show, although Milo thinks otherwise and that she is his inspiration.

Musical supervision on *An American in Paris*, was the responsibility of Johnny Green and Saul Chaplin. Not only was Green a talented conductor, composer, and arranger, he was also the head of MGM's massive music department at the time, and had a prior association with the Gershwins as a music copyist for their *Rosalie* in 1927.[74] In addition to being one of the major guiding forces behind the film and its music, Green had been a one-time Gershwin student.[75] Chaplin was vital in adapting the vocal music, adapting the paired ballet themes and paintings to fit with the order that the paintings would appear in the ballet sequence.

After a collaborative effort with Johnny Green for MGM's *Summer Stock* (Charles Walters, 1950), Chaplin received a call from Green saying, 'We're going to be doing *An American in Paris*!'[76] The only aspect of the film known at this time was that all the music would be from the Gershwin catalogue and that the famous tone poem would be used for the ballet. In selecting numbers for routines and others which would be assembled into the score, attention given to the music was crucial. Chaplin, Minnelli, and Kelly met periodically at Ira's to go over the songs to be considered for the film.

Before meeting with Ira Gershwin they all unknowingly picked the same ballad for the love song: "Love is Here to Stay." It was the last song George Gershwin composed.[77] While it was originally meant for *The Goldwyn Follies* (Samuel Goldwyn, 1938), "Love is

[74] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris* , CD Liner Notes, 6, 1996.

[75] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris* , CD Liner Notes, 26, 1996.

[76] Ibid, 26, 1996.

[77] Chaplin, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, 132.

Here to Stay" became popular as a result of *An American in Paris*.[78] Other standards chosen for inclusion in the film included: "I Got Rhythm," "Embraceable You," "S'Wonderful," and Vincente's favorite, "I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise."[79]

[78] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris*, CD Liner Notes, 27, 1996.

[79] Chaplin, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, 132.

Chapter 5

Lovers by the Seine

Throughout the narrative of *An American in Paris*, the protagonists, Lise and Jerry, are connected by one of two themes; a popular ballad, "Love is Here to Stay," and a "blues" theme which they dance to in the *An American in Paris* Ballet sequence. It is to these two themes their relationship develops.

The first time we hear the first of their love themes, "Love is Here to Stay," occurs when Lise and Jerry dance at the Café Flodair. In a medley of Gershwin tunes played by the house jazz ensemble, the Benny Carter Orchestra two short snippets of their theme are heard. The "A" section is heard twice: first when Jerry goes over to Lise's table and invites her to dance, it is heard in its entirety and the opening lines when Jerry sings to her while they dance. While they make their way onto the dance floor, the entire "B" section is heard under their dialogue. The minute the music stops, Jerry and Lise stop dancing and we do not hear this tune again in this café scene. While it is unknown to the characters that they are destined to be together, the music sets up and emphasizes this key plot point for the audience, which comes to fruition in the end.

The end of the café scene is not the end of this theme and its association for Jerry. While he's in the car with his benefactress, Milo, he sings the refrain of "Love is Here to Stay". It's clear he's thinking about Lise and not the company his evening started out with, Milo. The following morning, Jerry hums the same melody when he calls Lise at the perfume shop for a date, only to be rejected. Right after Jerry's unsuccessful phone call, the main theme of the symphonic poem is heard without any dialogue. Before their nighttime musical number on the banks of the Seine, Jerry again sings the refrain to Lise and she hums it in the midst of their dialogue. After their dance by the Seine, this theme is heard while Jerry paints Lise's portrait, both by the Seine and in his studio. When it's heard in his studio,

it interrupts the painting medley montage, “Tra-La-La” and “Love is Here to Stay”; only to be interrupted when Milo arrives. Milo’s arrival not only interrupts Jerry and Lise’s theme, but the work Jerry’s doing on Lise’s portrait which he hides with another painting in progress.

The Music is Very Clear

Musically, “Love is Here to Stay,” foreshadows the romance between Jerry and Lise. This song is one of two forms of thematic material associated with these two characters. The other theme which hints at and weaves its way into its eventual prominence is their ballet theme, the so-called “blues” theme.

Section	Measures	Detail
A	1-8	Two two-measure phrases, repeated Cadence in measure 4, thwarted in measure 8
B	9-16	Circle-of-fourths, descending-thirds sequence, doesn’t cadence
A	17-24	“It’s very clear” replaced with “But, oh my dear,” same music
B’	25-32	Technological objects replaced with geographical, same musical shape Refrain is added at the end

Table 1. Musical form of “Love is Here to Stay”

Figure 1. Excerpt from “Love is Here to Stay,” No. 1. Music by George Gershwin. Lyrics by Ira Gershwin

Even though the pick-up measure to the “A” section begins with a C7 (V^7 in F major), the expected arrival on I is thwarted with a move to a G9 (II) chord. This thwarted arrival is a feature of this song, and forms a strong relation between harmony and lyrics. Four measures after the start of the “A” section and on the word “stay,” the tonic arrives. While the fourth line has a similar musical shape to the second, there are two alterations which thwart the expected tonic chord.

Both the first and second half of the “A” section have a similar melodic shape. In the first instance, while the fifth and seventh measures are identical in melodic pitch to the first and third, this is not the case for the alternating measures. Rather, the F in measures two and four are raised a third in measures six and eight. The other alteration is that the desired tonic chord is changed and a bVII—(V/ii) is used, which sets up the harmony for the “B” section. (Figure 1)

Figure 2. Excerpt from “Love is Here to Stay,” No. 2. Music by George Gershwin. Lyrics by Ira Gershwin

The “B” section is characterized by a circle-of-fifths, descending-thirds sequence and secondary dominants. The only time a tonic chord appears, it does not function as one. While the $I^{\triangle 7}$ is a resting point, it occurs in the middle of the text, and the forward motion of the lyrics which thwart this tonic chord as a strong resting point. Here, it functions as a secondary dominant ($V^{\triangle 7}$/IV) which moves swiftly to its resolution, a IV Major 7. Throughout the “B” section, while there are no functional tonic chords or cadences, but there is a sequence. At the close of the “B” section, measures 14-15, the harmoniy break away from the sequence and resolution of the G7 (V7/V) in measure 14 is delayed until measure 16, which is the return of the “A” section. (Figure 2)

There is a strong relationship between the end of the sequence and its timing with Ira’s lyrics. The sequence is present until the word “go,” where it ends and is gone. Musically, the B section’s sequence represents the advancement and changes in technological devices; the radio, telephone, and movies. However, while the description of the devices and its musical association end, the phrase does not cadence on a tonic, but a minor ii^7 chord. Yet, if a strong cadence was used here, there would be no need for the following two verses, nor would the eventual arrival of the tonic be as significant as it is.

But, oh my dear,
Our love is here to stay;
Together we're
Going a long, long way.

The return of the “A” section is identical to its initial appearance, down to the bVII substitution for the tonic to lead into a truncated circle-of-fifths, descending-thirds sequence. The refrain is stated within the first two lines, the latter half of the verse supports the thesis. From here, the music goes into a coda, the truncated reinforcement and restatement of the first three verses.

In time the Rockies may crumble,
Gibraltar may tumble,
They're only made of clay,
But our love is here to stay

After the second instance of the sequential passage, there is a two-measure break from the sequence, which is commented on musically and lyrically. Like its accompanying lyrics, "they're only made of clay," also a comment on the previous two lines of text, these two measures are harmonically "unstable," an $bVII^7$-II^7-IV-vi^o (Eb9-D7-Bb-Ddim) chord coloration. At the same time, the harmony is the musical impression of the lyrics. Centered around the fifth, to anticipate the arrival of the tonic, the mediant and subdominant form harmonic counterpoints to the erodable topography. The harmony, construction, and treatment of "Love is Here to Stay" prove that this not "just another popular song," and, as with nearly all songs of this period, it is a narrative in itself.

The Scene by the Seine

At night and away from the masses of Paris, Jerry and Lise do their musical number on the banks of the Seine. Placement of the scene at night and in the shadows further enforces the secrecy in which they keep their relationship from their respective other; Milo for Jerry, Henri for Lise. In a later scene, it is clear that Lise wants to keep it a secret when she exclaims to Jerry, "Oh! Jerry, we have so little time together. Can't we have our own special world and not talk about anything that happens when we're apart?"[80] The secluded area allows Jerry and Lise to move freely, uninhibited by a crowded dance floor as when they first danced together. Moreover, they isolate themselves from the mainstream of Paris, and this further enforces the clandestine nature of their relationship. Even when Jerry works on Lise's portrait, he does so in an isolated area, be it by the Seine or alone in his studio.

[80] *An American in Paris*, DVD, Chapter 24, 1999.

For the number to be integrated into the film, there should be a way to segue into the musical number to make it appear as though it occurs naturally, spontaneously, and part of the developing drama. The segue in this scene begins with two aural cues; first Jerry sings the same two lines he sang at the nightclub to Lise, then she hums the same two lines soon after. These cues are both signals and reminders to the audience that music plays an integral role in the advancement of the plot and romantic development of the protagonists.

Shot	Shot Type	Action	Section of Music	Lyric/Instrumental Detail*
1	Mid-range	Lise to camera Lise stops Lise out of shot	A	"clear", music starts "stay" "year"
2	Close-up	Lise turns, leans against wall, looks at Jerry	A B	Last line, "day" 1st line
3	Mid-range Panning Close-up	Jerry on Seine bank, sings Jerry gets up, slowly walks to Lise Jerry against wall, next to Lise Jerry in front of Lise	B A Coda	2nd line "But" "way" "clay"
4	Crane	Dance #1 Jerry stops Lise (hand) Pirouette #1 Pirouette #2	ABA, instrumental	 "stay", "year" "together" "passing fancy"
5	Crane pulls away from action	Dance #2 Kiss Jerry and Lise walk away from camera, arm in arm	A, Coda, instrumental	 "love" "stay", violin line remains

*The orchestra plays the melody throughout the dance break.
Table 2. *Love is Here to Stay*, Scene

To allow for continuity from the previous shot focused on Jerry and Lise sitting on the bank of the Seine, Jerry does not begin to sing to Lise until *after* she gets up and slowly walks towards the camera. Until the musical number, aside from the aforesaid aural cues, there is no music in this scene until Jerry starts to sing. For three beats, he sings *a capella* and music is not heard until he sings "clear", as the strings make a smooth, gradual entrance to accompany Jerry's lyrics.

When he sings “stay,” Lise, the camera, and musical line pause on the word; the cadence point of the four-measure musical phrase and all the musical information needed to construct the “A” section of the music. On “stay,” Lise smiles towards the camera, but Jerry cannot see this and does not know that he is closer to winning her over. Both the pause of the camera, action, and Lise’s reaction in the scene enforces this musical sense of arrival and further enforces what Jerry is saying through music. The action that does continue to maintain continuity and the flow of the musical line is accomplished via Jerry’s lyrics. (Table 2)

The next shot, akin to a prolonged cut, allows the audience to see Lise’s reaction as Jerry finishes the first verse; Jerry continues to sing and leads both the audience and Lise into the “B” section of the music and the third shot. Key regarding Lise’s reaction is the way it is captured by the camera, and that it is the first time Jerry sees her smile in the musical number. (Table 2)

The third shot slowly pans across the scene as Jerry walks toward Lise, moving in tandem with the action and music. Interesting to note while Jerry sings to convince Lise that he’s correct, this takes place during the most harmonically complex section of the music, the secondary-dominant and descending-thirds sequence. The concluding line of this return of the “A” section has the camera, lyrics, and action choreographed together in such a way to further enforce Jerry’s thesis. Jerry does not sing “Together we’re going a long, long way,” until he leans against the wall and next to Lise. This is the first instance in the musical number where they are next to each other and either do not try to vividly move away from the other. (Table 2)

It is in the midst of the continuing movement of the close-up towards Lise and Jerry that the coda begins, a summary and restatement of Jerry's thesis. The first three lines of the coda are similar in their intent to the "B" section, but natural objects versus technological advances are the comparative material used.

When the camera arrives at a close-up of Jerry and Lise, Jerry's relatively minute actions occur with the music. In time with a harp glissando, (the instrument used to subtly draw attention to key moments in this scene), Jerry puts his hand on the wall and moves out of the shadow as he sings the line, "Our love is here to stay,"; the pause in any motion but the instrumental to maintain continuity into the next shot and the audiences attention, gracefully orchestrated in such a way that visually and aurally Jerry's thesis is confirmed. The meticulous attention and acute movements raise a particular consciousness which suggests that movement will eventually dominate as a kinesthetic interpretation of the music, emotions, and the scene. (Table 2)

The fourth shot signals the start of the dance sequence, an enforcement of Jerry's thesis, in which the development of the choreography determined by the progression of the music. This shot encompasses the majority of the dance number, a visual interpretation of the four verses and the music. In contrast to the first half of the musical number, the strength of the orchestra increases as it now functions as both melody and harmony for the dance, with the dance being Lise and Jerry's apparently spontaneous interpretation of the music. (Table 2)

The largest motions in this shot occur in a series of balletic leaps and pirouettes when the orchestra is at its fullest, notably the prominence and color of the strings and the action occur during the instrumental equivalent of the fourth verse. While Jerry is sure of himself and what he has stated, Lise is not yet convinced, made evident in how she is a bit hesitant to dance with him. Their paired choreography reflects Lise's slowly diminishing uncertainty;

their action literally circling around the issue. Still, while Lise follows Jerry's lead and the camera follows their actions, the timing and pacing of these movements is determined by the music. The strings gradually open and it is not until the music has expanded that Lise displays her first instance of trust with Jerry, enforced by the close-up from the camera, and aurally represented through the music. After the instrumental equivalent of the word "stay," Lise tries to leave Jerry and walks toward the camera, but she fails to do so; he grabs her hand to stop her in an instance when the camera stops its action as well. At the same time, continuity is maintained by the musical line. That is the only form of motion while the camera and action are paused. (Table 2)

When the dance sequence arrives at the "B" section of the music (as stated previously, the most harmonically complex), Lise's trust towards Jerry has grown exponentially, and it continues to grow throughout this section of the dance. During the dance sequence, the orchestral color develops, though it remains restrained to set up for later instances of musical contrast. For the first time, Chaplin moves the orchestration away from the sole use of the strings and trumpet heard at the start of the "B" section. This trumpet solo is prominently heard above the strings until the instrumental equivalent of the first half of verse three, the first verse in the "B" section. (Table 2)

Immediately afterwards, at the start of the next line, the orchestration reverts back to strings only. For the remainder of the shot, a return of the "A" section, the orchestration returns primarily to the strings. A marked change in this return to the "A" section is the prominence of the harp glissando heard as Jerry and Lise spin together, their action a kinesthetic interpretation of this glissando and bisecting the instrumental verse. Furthermore, the orchestration reverts back to the strings and only the strings after the spin and for the conclusion of the main portion of the dance sequence. (Table 2)

To conclude this section of the dance, a reprise of the musical number leads into the fifth shot. While Jerry and Lise dance to the fourth instrumental verse, the last line is altered, but the sole horn line maintains the continuity during this change and into the following shot. Here, the clarity and sustained horn line emphasize the lyrical equivalent of this line, “It’s very clear,” as Jerry and Lise pause momentarily and turn to face each other. But the attention of the audience is maintained by Jerry taking a step forward and Lise accepts his invitation to dance at the start of the final shot. (Table 2)

The last shot, preceded by a harp glissando and a subtle key change up a step, Jerry and Lise turn towards each other. This shot is a truncated version of the dance break and further enforcement of Jerry’s thesis. The first half of the shot, the “A” section of the verse, Jerry and Lise dance in closed position, as they did earlier in the dance, however they remain together through the end of the verse. The point at which they separate, between the “A” section and the coda sets up a series of pirouettes they do parallel to each other. This moment is the instance of the largest visual action and fullest orchestration of the musical number. Unlike their action which circles around each other and the issue at hand, the camera is very static; as though the action is taking place on the stage of a ballet and not outside of one. At the same time, this static camera action sets up the final dramatic moments of the scene. (Table 2)

For the final climax and closing of the number, danced to the instrumental coda, Jerry and Lise turn towards each other at the start of the last phrase, the musical “but” of a single violin. When Lise steps towards Jerry and kisses him on the musical “love,” this is the visual sign that shows she trusts and believes him and a cue which not only brings them together, but keeps them together to the end of the musical number. This action is perfectly timed with a harp glissando that weaves its way into the orchestration and follows through as they walk towards the bridge and away from the camera, tracking backwards simultaneously.

Another harp glissando is heard, the musical fulfillment of their relationship and musical "kiss", and a solo violin cadences to end the music and action of this musical number.

Chapter 6

An American in Paris: From Tone Poem to Ballet

According to music arranger Saul Chaplin, the idea for the artistic climax of *An American in Paris*, the ballet, was dreamed up by Vincente Minnelli, Gene Kelly, and costume designer, Irene Sharaff.[81] As a plot for the ballet, it was envisioned as a reprise of Jerry with Lise's relationship throughout the movie, however the ballet would be performed against an idealistic Paris with a backdrop as seen through the eyes of French and Dutch impressionist painters, with each painter given a locale suitable to them: Dufy for the Place de la Concorde; Manet for the flower market; Utrillo for a Paris street; Rousseau for the fair, Van Gogh for the Place de l'Opéra; Toulouse-Lautrec for the Moulin Rouge.[82] It's a reflective ballet of loss and recollection for Jerry of his relationship with Lise and his impression of Paris through his relationship with Lise, presented to the cinematic audience as an artistic triumph through a vividly colored spectacle of music and dance.

While the *raison d'être* to make *An American in Paris* a film musical in the first place was to set a ballet to Gershwin's tone poem, the *pièce de résistance* was almost cut from the picture! Before rehearsals started, a budget sheet was prepared and sent to the New York office, and when it reached Nicholas Schenck's desk, trouble with the ballet's fate began. Uproar broke out between Schenck, Louis B. Mayer, and Dore Schary. The New York office had yet to see the picture, and according to Hugh Fordin:

> As far as New York was concerned, the picture was complete and could be released as is. So far the picture had cost $1,948,848, ands the first budget for the ballet was estimated at $419,664 (exclusive of costumes)…. Freed never wavered. His stand was as adamant as the one he had taken when "Over the Rainbow" was to be eliminated from *The Wizard of Oz*. It was Mayer who backed Freed and influenced Schary to come over to his side.[83]

[81] Chaplin, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, 137.

[82] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 319.

[83] Ibid, 321.

Convinced that the ballet was needed to make the picture stand out above others, Schary told Schenk, "this picture is going to be great because of the ballet- or it'll be nothing. Without the ballet it's just a cute and nice musical. So that's what we're gambling on."[84] This demonstrates how much Schary trusted Freed and the *An American in Paris* team to create an artistic product, regardless of the expense. According to Schary,

> I remained firm on my approval. You can only operate in that kind of job if you're willing to back up the people you trust. And *then* you have some problems. But I felt so strongly about Gene, a brilliant talent, and Minnelli, so gifted, and [costume designer] Irene, there's nobody quite like that, and Freed had impeccable taste.[85]

With the needed approvals in place, Freed and his creative team were able to produce a great musical finale and Chaplin set about to adapt Gershwin's tone poem for the ballet. When production closed on January 8, 1951, *An American in Paris* came in at a cost of $2,723, 903 (which included $542,000 for the ballet and a bonus of $12,500 for Kelly).[86] The investment and time spent on *An American in Paris* more than returned its expenses. After its release at the Los Angeles premiere, on November 9, 1951, *An American in Paris* grossed over $8,005,000.[87]

Would Gershwin Approve?

It was Leonard Bernstein who once said: "There are enough themes in *An American in Paris* for two symphonies."[88] Bernstein's remark made Chaplin consider: 'If there are that many themes, let's find a theme for each of the painters, and when you hear that music it will identify that painting…. So we started at the beginning, and that sounds like Dufy

[84] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 321.

[85] Ibid, 321.

[86] Ibid, 328.

[87] Ibid, 331.

[88] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris*, CD Liner Notes, 30, 1996.

[humming]: It's gay and it's Parisian.'[89] The result would be a combination of a three-dimensional art form (dance) and the most abstract of the arts (music) in a two-dimensional medium (film), with the music corresponding to the painting.

Once a theme was adapted to a painting, for the most part, it was not used with any other.[90] However, since Gershwin kept returning to the walking theme, matched to the Dufy painting, this music could not be used in the transition passages between the paintings, which resulted in new transitional passages being written between themes.

This was an issue for Chaplin, "primarily one of guilt,"[91] who regarded Gershwin as a composer of the same status as Beethoven, "and you don't go around changing Beethoven, nor do you go around changing Gershwin."[92]

> I had great trepidations about repositioning and adapting Gershwin's themes. I regard his serious music with the same respect I feel for the music of any other important classical composer. I identify with him even more, because his roots are in jazz, which I was brought up with and understand…. I felt his music should be played the way he wrote it. And yet there was I, about to tamper with it. Every time I made a change, I was haunted: Would Gershwin approve?[93]

Due to the adaptation of Gershwin's concert piece to the cinema ballet and popularity of *An American in Paris*, both the movie and concert piece, there was a widespread misconception among the general public. The belief was that the ballet was Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, and that the concert piece is wrong, unaware that the preexisting tone poem was altered and adapted for the fantasy ballet for the movie. According to an interview with Chaplin:

> What I feel guilty about to this day is that a whole generation of people have grown up who think that's Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, and they only think of it as a ballet, and when they hear the original concert piece, they think the original concert piece is wrong. That makes me feel very guilty. I'm very proud to say (and this is really an odd statement from

[89] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris*, CD Liner Notes, 30, 1996.

[90] There is an exception: the music associated with the soldiers.

[91] Chaplin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit at MGM*, DVD, Chapter 13, 2002.

[92] Ibid, Chapter 13, 2002.

[93] Chaplin, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, 138.

> somebody who writes music, I'm proud to say that my version has never been played in concert anywhere. So that's terrific! I mean that's great for me, because I don't want it to- it's only meant to be on the screen![94]

Chaplin continues:

> [In retrospect], all I can say is that I never worked on any score that I had more respect for, and that I did so carefully. I was careful and I was worried. I was careful because I wanted to make sure it came out to the best of my ability, to see if I could match the master. And worried that I might be doing something wrong. The fact that the picture's been so popular, I guess, should give one a certain amount of solace and it does. And I'm very proud to have been connected with it. Of course, there were so many people connected with it, but I owe most of my allegiance not only to Ira Gershwin, whom I got to know and love, but also to Johnny Green with whom I collaborated.[95]

The MGM Studio Orchestra became the MGM Symphony Orchestra when it was expanded in size from the 50-piece studio orchestra to 72 musicians for the ballet, and it was considered one of the top ensembles in the country.[96] As far as Chaplin is concerned, "in the world, nobody has ever sounded better than this. It's an American piece, played by Americans who know how to play jazz.[97] What gave Chaplin solace over repositioning and adapting of Gershwin's concert piece to a cinematic ballet. According to Chaplin: "One thing I know Gershwin would have absolutely adored is the blues section, because we had a man named Uan Rasey play the trumpet and he played that blues like I never heard it before or since. It really was from the gut.[98]

It is this, Rasey's approach to the music, which makes it work so well with the visuals to truly create a work of art. According to Rasey:

> I played it very straight the first time. Gene was the guy in control of the music and he said 'No, make it sexy and sensuous,' so I played what I thought was sensuous and sexy, not burlesque, [but] a sense of sexiness to it. That was my interpretation of being sexy. Gene

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[94] Feltenstein, *An American in Paris*, CD Liner Notes, 30, 1996.

[95] Ibid, 37, 1996.

[96] Ibid, 31, 1996.

[97] Ibid, 31, 1996.

[98] Chaplin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit at MGM*, DVD, Chapter 13, 2002.

> was overjoyed, very happy, a wonderful guy. He came back and said 'Thank you so much…. You made the whole thing happen.'[99]

Of all the seventeen-and-a-half minutes of Gershwin's tone poem adapted for the imaginary cinematic ballet sequence, only sixteen measures of Chaplin's adaptation were eventually deleted. It was a section he was proudest of in which he claimed, "I was sure I had captured exactly what Gershwin would have done. It was a variation on the blues theme that I felt he could have written".[100]

The Music: Is it Blue?

In the ballet, the "blues" theme is associated with Jerry and Lise. Once the ballet begins, the theme of their popular ballad, "Love is Here to Stay," which established their relationship and refers to it throughout the film, is no longer used. Upon the apparent conclusion of the ballet and Jerry's return to reality, a fragmented version of the "blues" theme is heard when Henri realizes Lise's love for Jerry and brings her back to him. Reunited, their ballet theme transcends the ballet from fantasy to "reality". Jerry and Lise embrace and the camera tilts upwards to reveal Paris under a night sky and superimposed end credits. It is here, in this cinematic reality, which the fantasy ballet ends to fulfill its condition as a reprise of the narrative. However, this condition is fulfilled with the use of Jerry and Lise's ballet theme to conclude the narrative.

[99] Rasey, *'S Wonderful*: *The Making of An American in Paris*, DVD, 2008.

[100] Chaplin, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, 138.

Rehearsal Number	Tempo	Division	Number of Measures	Instrumentation
Four measures after 45	*Andante*	Introduction A A’	4 4 4	Bassoon, low brass, strings accompaniment. Solo trumpet meldoy
46	*Poco rubato*	B	4	Solo trumpet melody, stings and saxophone accompaniment
47-49: CUT	---	---	---	---
One before 47 + Two before 50		Transition	3	Strings
50	*Ritardando*	Transition from Bb to G A	4 4	Strings Solo trumpet, winds, strings
51	*Deciso ma legato*	A’ B (first half)	4 2	Solo trumpet, strings Winds, strings
52	*Ritardando*	B (second half)	2	Winds, strings

Table 3. Musical form of The “Blues” theme

Figure 3. Excerpt from *An American in Paris*, Trumpet melody, music by George Gershwin.

While the thematic material is referred to as the “blues” section, to label it as such has to be done so with caution. The blues note, b3 (concert Db), appears in the melody, and it follows the phrase structure for twelve-bar blues; three four-measure phrases in an A, A’, B pattern. This melody is centered around the fifth scale degree; F in the first half, and D after

the key change from Bb to G. Based on the characteristics of the melody, this section of the ballet is a “blues” section. (Figure 3) However, the “blues” melody is set over major harmony.

Figure 4. Excerpt from *An American in Paris*, Harmony. Music by George Gershwin.

In contrast to the “blues” melody, the harmony material does *not* function in the same way as a “standard” blues harmonic progression; I-IV-V-I development over twelve measures. Instead Gershwin creates a complex two-measure harmonic sequence which he repeats. While the upper strings descend step-wise, the cello and bass lines ascend in the same manner. The resultant chord progression under the blues theme is: Bb-Fø^{7}-Cm^{7}-Gm^{7}-Ebm^{6}-F^{13}. (Figure 4)

The break from the circle-of-fourths occurs towards the end of the quasi-double-time feel in the second measure of the phrase; a pattern Gershwin maintains with the A and A’ sections, however this feel does not occur with the “B” section of the melody. This is also the point of the greatest amount of visual movement as Jerry and Lise spin clockwise. Moreover, it is with the instances of expansion in musical movement, be it the ‘blues” melody or quasi-double-time harmony, that the visual action develops. After the transition

from Bb to G to a smooth 4/4, this quasi-double-time feel and spin done to it disappears from the scene.

Unlike the complex harmony used with the "A" and "A'" material (four measures each), the "B" material (also four measures) has a much simpler harmony with its own internal complexity. While the harmony does move through a functional progression, Gershwin delays the arrival of the dominant with a cadential $^{6}_{4}$, which sets up the welcomed arrival of the V^{7} right before the tonic two beats later.

In contrast to the harmony in "Love is Here to Stay," and due to the fact that Gershwin's ballet is a concert piece, the ballet harmony is much more complex. As with "Love is Here to Stay," it is over the complex harmony and musical development that the movement and Jerry and Lise's relationship develops. Together, these elements meld to form the artistry of the scene whose expansion is determined by the structural "development" of the music.

Like the two musical themes associated with Lise and Jerry and the movement back and forth between them to the point that the ballet theme dominates from the start of the ballet to the end, there is a similar situation in the ballet. Before the transition, the blues melody is played by the solo trumpet and accompanied by the strings and winds. Afterwards the strings, winds, and trumpet play the theme in unison until the cadence begins two measures before rehearsal 52. This gradual orchestral expansion is the musical representation of the development of Jerry and Lise's relationship. It is in this unison passage that the dominant presence of the brass is gone. This not only allows for a smooth finish to this section of the ballet, but makes the brass-voiced opening statement to the next section of the ballet, the Van Gogh-Toulouse Lautrec montage, the strong contrast that it is.

Dance on a Fountain

Shot	Shot Type	Smoke	View	Location on Fountain*	Action	Music
1	Crane	Yellow	Silhouette		Jerry extends hand, moves next to Lise	4-measure introduction, bassoon
2	Crane	Yellow	Silhouette, post costume change	Back (right)	Lise picked up, sway	Trumpet- "A"
	Crane, still Crane, moves	Blue	Lit	Front (right), travel to center, Lise travel to back	Clockwise spin x-dip	Trumpet- B
		Red	Lit	Lise- back (left) Jerry- front (left)	Lise runs to Jerry	Violin
		White	Front left	Front (left)	Lift	Violin- transition
3	Crane	Red	Back, left	Back (left)		Trumpet- A
		White	Lit	Travel from back to front (left)	Jerry carries Lise to front	Trumpet- A'
		Red	Lit	Front (left)	Sweep	Violin- B
4	Crane	White	Silhouette	Front (left)	Jerry in front of Lise, arms raise	Cadence

*First shot- continuation from previous scene
Table 4. *The "Blues,"* Scene

In addition to the artistic vision and director Minnelli's style, there was another element which contributes to the cinematic vision of the ballet, the camera. According to Kelly:

> If the camera is to make any contribution to dance, the focal point must be the pure background, giving the spectator an undistorted and all-encompassing view of the dancer and background. To accomplish this end, the camera must be made to move with the dancer, so that the lens becomes the eye of the spectator, *your* eye. Minnelli, Sharaff, Chaplin, and I worked in close harmony; none of us made a move without the other. In short, we really tried to make a *ballet*, not just merely a dance, not a series of beautiful, moving tableaux, but an emotional whole, consisting of the combined arts which spell ballet, whether on the screen or the stage.[101]

However, the movements, angles, editing, shots and visual interpretations (dance) are determined by the music which they are set to, even after adaptations are made to it.

[101] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 331.

The ballet sequence consists of four shots, and in order to give the sequence the illusion of streamlined continuity, it is the changes in the background which are visual cues for the audience. Still, these changes are determined by the music. Each color change of the fog is timed with the arrival of the thematic material. (Table 4) These were inspired by the music. According to John Alton, Minnelli's cameraman:

> The secret of the ballet's photography was the *fumata* (smoky) quality, which changed all the colors to pastel…. I was inspired, like everybody else on the picture, by the electrical force Gershwin's music generated. In my case this showed itself in the way I used light….[102]

While the yellow fog is transition material from the previous scene, Rousseau's fair, the other three colors, blue, red, and white, probably were not selected by chance; it is no mere coincidence that the colors of both the French flag (blue, white, and red) and American flag (red, white, and blue) are similar and reliefs in their order of stated appearance. (Table 4)

Figure 5. Excerpt from *An American in Paris*. Music by George Gershwin.

The first shot, a mid-range continuation from the previous tracking shot, reveals the silhouette of Jerry and Lise in front of a dense yellow fog. The action is dependent on gradual development of the music. When Jerry offers his hand to Lise, he not only bisects the introduction, but it's the start of a major visual cue for the audience at the most musically active point in the introduction. The quasi-double-time feel is introduced in the second measure of the introduction, six measures after rehearsal 45. (Figure 5)

[102] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 327.

The second shot begins after Jerry lifts Lise, and while this shot also shows their silhouettes against the same background, it is needed because it reveals their costume change. In addition, this shot is the "real" start of their *pas de deux*; on the fountain in the Place de la Concorde where the first met against the backdrop of a Dufy watercolor. Their movement is a visual interpretation of the music; whenever the trumpet scoops up at the start of the thematic material, they change direction. Their movement is the visual expression of the quasi-double-time feel of the music. (Table 4)

When the fog changes from yellow to blue, it occurs just before the "A'" section begins. When the "B" section comes in, there's a tempo change, *poco rubato*, and the movement reflects this to preserve the artistic professionalism of the scene. Despite the fact that Gershwin's themes were moved around to accompany the order of sequences for the ballet, the movement in each sequence is lead by the preexisting music, not vice versa. (Table 4)

Figure 6. Excerpt from *An American in Paris*, X-Dip. Music by George Gershwin.

When Jerry and Lise are centered at the front of the fountain, their dip is determined by the music. The strings transition is reflected visually; from their diagonal movement opposite each other to moment their arms arc upwards and lead to their rise upward and movement into the next shot. Their movement to the music is to that of the string player who moves their bow across their instrument to this passage; a smooth, long, graceful line. (Figure 6)

Figure 7. Excerpt from *An American in Paris*, Lift. Music by George Gershwin.

At the start of the transition from Bb to G, when Lise runs to Jerry for a lift, it occurs when there's a *crescendo* and the least amount of linear movement in the melody. When Jerry lifts her, it's at the point where the violin melody ascends; when she's lowered, the line descends and moves seamlessly to set up the next shot, determined by the music and its arrival to G. (Figure 7)

The third shot begins at the back of the fountain amidst an alternating red and white smoky backdrop. While the music swells, the visual action is limited to more intimate movements around the fountain's statues. Once the fullness of the orchestra is at its zenith and the solo trumpet plays the "A" and "A'" theme, only then does the movement really open up to reflect the music. The final sweep Jerry and Lise do, preceded by a timpani roll, sets up this final musical and visual climax of this section of the ballet to the "B" theme. Their movement is orchestrated with the strings, a kinesthetic orchestration of the music. It's an example of the artistry and integrity maintained by the film makers when they allow the music to lead their actions. (Table 4)

The last shot of the scene has a similar function to the first shot. It's a continuity shot which transports Jerry and Lise to the next section of the ballet, the Van Gogh and Toulouse- Lautrec collage. (Table 4)

While they dance, no establishing shot reveals the space which the dance in. At the same time, all the action takes place on the fountain initially seen in the opening shot of the Dufy sequence. Like the music and unlike the other ballet settings, the action and music in this sequence are greatly contained. Similar to their dance by the Seine, no one else is dancing nor in this section of the ballet.

Chapter 7

Thematic Duality and Duel-ity

Unlike scenes between Jerry and Milo, it is only the scenes between Jerry and Lise which are associated with one of their two themes; “Love is Here to Stay” and the “blues” section of the ballet. Whenever Milo and Jerry are in a scene together, the music reflects their thoughts, but not the nature of their relationship. While the “blues” theme was heard once before after Jerry’s phone call, it is not until the series of farewell sequences that the duality of the two themes firmly arises to prominence.

In their first farewell scene by the Seine, the “A” section of “Love is Here to Stay” is heard again in the strings, but not until after Lise tells Jerry she will marry to Henri. Prior to this, the underscore is “’S Wonderful,” the number just performed by Henri and Jerry both unaware they’re duet is inspired by the same girl, Lise. When Lise explains her obligation to Henri, their song underscores their dialogue. However, when Jerry reveals his secret and leaves, his obligation to Milo, their “blues” theme from the ballet is heard, the second theme associated with Jerry and Lise. This is the only instance in which the “blues” theme is underscored under dialogue. All other instances in which it is used it; post-phone call at the café, the ballet, and ending, it is done so *without* dialogue. When their other theme is used, the only time there’s no dialogue is in the painting montage.

When Jerry and Lise meet unexpectedly at the Art Students Ball, their popular song love theme is heard at their second farewell on a balcony with the ball in the background. What makes this theme standout even more is that it cuts out the “I Got Rhythm” underscore the minute Lise is on the balcony with Jerry. The use of the theme here enforces Jerry’s comment, however Lise is doubtful:

> Jerry: You'll always be standing next to me, Lise.
> Lise: Maybe not always. Paris has ways of making people forget.
> Jerry: Paris? No, not this city. It's too real and too beautiful to let you forget anything…. t reaches in, opens you wide, and you stay that way. I know…[103]

Just before they embrace for what both believe to be the last time, their ballet theme eases its way into the underscore, and slowly works its way in to overtake the popular song love theme, and does so when they embrace. The final instance their "Love is Here to Stay" theme is heard, is when Jerry and Lise look at each other as she and Henri are driven away, and the ripped sketch of Paris Jerry made is blown back together in the street to ease into the ballet.

To transition the ballet into the reality of the narrative, their "blues" theme is heard when Henri comes to terms with Lise's love for Jerry and brings her back to the ball, back to Jerry. Lise gives Henri a farewell kiss, then run towards Jerry (who also runs down the steps) and the lovers are reunited under the night sky of Paris, the same time of day when their relationship began.

[103] *An American in Paris*, DVD, Chapter 30, 1999.

ACT III: SINGIN’ IN THE RAIN, WHAT A GLORIOUS FEELIN’

Chapter 8

Singin' in the Rain is Now a Musical!

Singin' in the Rain has been hailed as one of the greatest Hollywood musicals of all time[104]. In 1989, the United States Library of Congress, deemed the film to be "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant," and was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry. In 2006, on the American Film Institute's (AFI's) 100 Years of Musicals, it ranked #1, and was ranked on AFI's 100 Years… 100 Movies as the fifth best movie on the list.

Set in the late 1920s, *Singin' in the Rain* tells the romanticized tale about Hollywood's transition from "silent" films to "talkies," condensed with the rise of the film musical. In the midst of the story of this transitional phase in Hollywood, a love triangle ensues between Lina Lamont, (played by Jean Hagen), Kathy Seldon, (played by Debbie Reynolds), and Don Lockwood, (played by Gene Kelly). It is through Don's relationship with Kathy in which he is able to realize music and dance as his true means of expression, not acting as an actor in silent and talking pictures.

With the song of the same name as the basis for the title, screenplay writers Betty Comden and Adolph Green knew that there had to be a scene with raining and singing.

> Somewhere around four that afternoon, after some prodding from us, he [Freed] let it be known with a proud but shy chuckle that we had been assigned to write an original story and screenplay using songs from the extensive catalogue of lyricist Arthur Freed (the same) and composer Nacio Herb Brown….. Whatever came out of our creative hoppers, or out of two hopping made creators, was to be called *Singin' In The Rain*…. We knew one thing about the story. There would have to be some scene where there would be rain, and the leading man… would be singin' in it.[105]

1 Internet Movie Database, "Singing in the Rain", www.imbd.com [accessed March 17, 2009]

[105] *Singin in the Rain*, CD Liner Notes, 11, 2002.

The idea to set the movie musical during the transitional years between "silent" films and "talkies" stemmed from the music catalogue the Comden and Green writing team had to work with, the Freed/Brown song catalogue. Since the songs were written during the years of the earliest musicals, it made sense to the writers to script the film in the rough transitional phase between "silent" films and "talkies".

> Many of these songs had been written by Freed and Brown for the earliest musical pictures made, between 1929 and 1931, during the painful transition from silent to sound, and it occurred to us that, rather than try to use them in a sophisticated, contemporary story, or a gay-nineties extravaganza, they would bloom at their happiest in something that took place in the very period in which they had been written. With this decision made we began to feel the ground beneath our feet at last.[106]

[106] *Singin in the Rain*, CD Liner Notes, 11, 2002.

Chapter 9

You Were Meant for Me

This scene is the first instance where Don tries to express his song and dance persona. At this point, the first act of the film, it's too early for him to reveal his musical persona unless he takes us to the heightened cinematic world. Don is unable to tell Kathy how he feels in public, he takes her to an empty sound stage and into an artificial setting, where he describes it and builds it for her and audience in an isolated area. While he sets up the needed artificial world, the dramatic score accompanies the action, from the flute glissandos as each set of colored lights are turned on, the "stardust", to the strings that accompany the wind machine and the summer breeze created. To perform this number on the backlots of Hollywood would be contradictory to their previous conversation:

> Don: Kathy, I'm trying to say something to you, but I… I'm such a ham. I guess I'm not able to without the proper setting.
> Kathy: What do you mean?
> Don: Well, come here… *This* is the proper setting [Enters soundstage]
> Kathy: Why, it's just an empty stage
> Don: At first glance yes, but wait a second… a beautiful sunset… mist from the distant mountains… colored lights in a garden… My lady is standing on her balcony in a rose trellis garden… flooded with moonlight… we add five million kilowatts of stardust… a soft summer breeze… and… You sure look lovely in the moonlight, Kathy.
> Kathy: Now that you have the "proper setting," can you say it?
> Don: I'll try… [Sings "You Were Meant for Me"][107]

While the sound stage is "just a sound stage" to Kathy, for Don, it's the place where he can envision the world he needs to tell Kathy how he feels about her. While Kathy stands in the imagined balcony, Don sings "You Were Meant for Me,"[108] in an attempt to try to describe how he feels about her, leading into a dance to establish their relationship through a dance duet.

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[107] *Singin' in the Rain*, DVD, Chapter 16, 2002.

[108] This is a Freed/Brown song from *The Broadway Melody of 1929* (Harry Beaumont, 1929) (Fordin, #).

For Don, the use of music and dance is a means to describe the most complex of emotions, which at this particular point, he is unable to do so in words. Additionally, the use of song and dance is Don's most comfortable mode and means of expression in speaking sincerely versus dialogue alone.

This scene is the first real glimpse the audience gets of an untainted image of Don's song-and-dance persona. Unlike the images in the opening montage which run contrary to Don's stylized tale about his rise to stardom from his days of a young vaudevillian tap dancer; Don tells one story, but the music and image tell another. Here, despite the fact that Don has to take Kathy to a heightened cinematic world, both the image of himself Don presents to Kathy and the image presented to the cinematic audience are the same. This allows for the visual and aural elements from two very abstract art forms to come together in a cinematic expression. The use of music, song, and dance to establish Don and Kathy's relationship reinforces the concept that musical expression is based in interpersonal contact and romantic love.

This is What I'd Sing to You

Life was a song
You came along
I've laid awake the whole night through
If I ever dared
To think you cared
This is what I'd say to you

The song is divided into an introduction, two verses, a bridge, and a refrain. The introduction is a restatement of the previous conversation between Don and Kathy, but set to music. The third line is a specific reference to Don's comment just before he tries to express his feelings to Kathy, "'Course, I must admit I was pretty much upset by them. So

upset that I haven't been able to think about anything but you ever since."[109] Here, Don uses music and lyrics to say what he cannot with words and privileges song over speech.

You were meant for me
And I was meant for you

The first verse begins with a chiasmus of the first two lines, an immediate statement and restatement of Don's thoughts. The words "you" and "me" from the first line are reversed to "I" and "you" in the second. While the statement is simple, direct, and its altered rephrasing make it memorable, it is more powerful when set to music. The musical shape of the verse is given in the first line, a four-measure phrase immediately repeated. The poetic technique of this verse however, is not retained in the second verse, a musical description of what Kathy is to Don.

Natured patterned you
And when she was done
You were all the sweet things
Rolled up in one

The bridge is the point of lyrical and musical expansion. When Don sings the bridge, he retains Kathy's attention. When he climbs the ladder during the first two lines, his action bisects the verse, and he stops on the word "done". While this action takes place, the camera slowly moves the focus of the audience to see the action from Kathy's eyes, with this viewpoint complete by the word "done," but continues to a close-up between the end of this line and the start of the next.

You're like a plaintive melody
That never lets me free

When Don and Kathy descend the ladder, gradually and to the music, the second verse, the camera descends vertically, still from Kathy's view, but shifts back to a horizontal plane to show both figures circle around the ladder; neither Don nor Kathy area able to set themselves free from the other. Their movement and attention on each other reflects this;

[109] *Singin' in the Rain*, DVD, Chapter 15, 2002.

Don sings to Kathy while he moves around, and Kathy focuses her gaze on him while she circles around the ladder with him. At the same time, both of them are still connected to the balcony/ladder, be it by hand or a lean against it. They are in the same space, the camera moves with them, and the actions fills the space. This reinforces Don's earlier point made in dialogue to Kathy; he has not been able to do anything but think about Kathy since he met her.

But I'm content
The angels must have sent you
And they meant you just for me

The remainder and majority of the refrain, is a combined summary of the bridge and a final restatement of Don's idea; Kathy is meant for him, and by *ipso factor*, he is meant for her. The simplicity of the refrain fits with simplicity of the song. It expresses a complex emotion, love. The music does not change keys, and the meaning is stated and defended in the same verse. It's almost impossible for the music to get any simpler to express a complex idea.

Dance with Me

Beyond the establishment of Don and Kathy's relationship, the music and its form determine the shots and movement of the camera. With Don and Kathy dancing on the soundstage, it is the musical structure which leads the camera and choreography. While the camera focuses on the aspects of the musical number which the director desires to capture and stress, it is the music and its structure which determine the length and focus of the shots.

Shot	Shot Type	Action	Music*
1	close-up	Kathy's view, Don sings	introduction- 1st line
2	Crane close-up, follows action	Kathy's view, Don sings Don at bottom of ladder, camera stops Don climbs ladder Don and Kathy circle around ladder, stop when on opposite sides Don crosses in front, next to Kathy (left)	the song 1st verse bridge 2nd verse "And they meant you just for me"
3	crane	Dance sequence #1	1st verse, bridge
4	crane	Dance sequence #2	2nd verse
5	close-up to crane tracking (backwards)	 Don lifts Kathy, spins with her Don sings on ladder, last line	refrain 1st verse, cadence evaded refrain

*Dance sequence is instrumental
Table 5. *You Were Meant for Me*, Scene

While Don sings "You Were Meant for Me," the action is captured in one shot and continues to focus on Don and Kathy. When the dance sequence starts, the new shot is a cue to that something different is about to start; Don and Kathy dance. The three shots of the dance sequence are determined by the instrumental verses, however the cut to the next shot occurs three beats just before or after each verse begins, thus making it appear more natural than to have the next shot and verse occur simultaneously. (Table 5) In addition, the natural feel of the cuts from one shot to the next avoid interrupting the continuity of the line of the music and dance.

In the dance sequence, the action doubles as both verse and a kinesthetic expression of the lyrics. The number is now a vehicle for the audience to be taken into another layer of the cinematic world. Here, the continual movement of the dance sequence, determined by the musical line will retain the attention of the audience. The dance sequence is an instrumental rendition of song sans the introduction, with the first verse instrumentally repeated before Don sings the refrain. The dance, an active element, visually establishes

their relationship, and is a kinesthetic enforcement of what Don said musically. Like the simple economics of the music, their dance is an economical one as well.

At the conclusion of the dance sequence, a visual act which furthers Don's thesis, the refrain is repeated as a final restatement of what Don set out to prove to Kathy through the means of song and dance. During the last line of the refrain, the camera pulls back away from Don and Kathy. This action reinforces the lyric; Kathy is meant for Don and only Don, not the audience. Yet, the visuals, timing, angles, and editing are determined by the structure of the music.

Like the musical number set to the ballad "Love is Here to Stay," from *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951), the purpose of the dance is to visually and kinesthetically establish their relationship as simply and effectively as possible. Recall Don's remark to Kathy: "I'm trying to say something to you, but… I guess I'm not able to without the proper setting."[110] In addition, our male protagonist does not tell his heroine he loves her, but he *sings* it. Although, the plot-destined lovers dance to establish and their relationship, their movement is determined by the structure of the music.

[110] *Singin' in the Rain*, DVD, Chapter 16, 2002.

Chapter 10

The Joys of Singin' in the Rain

The song, "Singin' in the Rain," made its debut in MGM's first musical and Academy Award winner for "Best Picture", *The Hollywood Revue of 1929* (Charles Reisner, 1929)[111], performed by Cliff Edwards, also known as "Ukulele Ike", The Brox Sisters and An All Star Cast in the finale set against a Noah's Ark backdrop in the rain. *The Hollywood Revue of 1929* was the first "all talking, all singing, all dancing" movie ever made.[112] The song became MGM's anthem over the years, and it was also performed in the 1930s by Jimmy Durante, and in 1940 by Judy Garland in the movie musical *Little Nelly Kelly* (Norman Taurog, 1940).[113]

The importance of this song is to the movie is marked is several ways, especially its placement. Not only is the first verse performed by the three leads, but it's used to introduce them to the audience, and it's raining. Later, a brief, but audible snippet of the introduction is heard when the leads enter the doomed movie premier while it's raining: the start of the only scenes with rain in them and it doesn't rain again in the film after the Kelly solo. When the music is heard again, the refrain is voiced in the brass over the end credits, in front of a billboard promoting Don and Kathy's next picture, *Singin' in the Rain*. Above all, this song title is the name and basis for this MGM musical.

This scene is set up by two previous key incidents which free the Kelly character from acting as an actor to the character's song and dance musical persona introduced to us in the opening montage. Unlike the previous scene, the "proper setting" is not needed, nor does

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[111] Internet Movie Database, "Singin' in the Rain", www.imdb.com [accessed December 17, 2008]

[112] Sinatra, *That's Entertainment!*, DVD, Chapter 2, 2004

[113] Ibid, Scene 2, 2004.

the fantasy world have to be built for the audience. Rather, Don is able to perform the musical number in the cinematic reality of the street scene.

> In *Singin' in the Rain*… he's now in love with the girl, he likes the girl, he doesn't know if she likes him… and they're not yet formally in a relationship…. And as they say goodnight, they got their plan, they're gonna pitch it in the morning, she gives him a kiss; and just when you think it [can't] get any better than it is, he goes la de da da... 'I'm singin' in the rain' because he is floating on cloud nine. They've got a great plan and the girl loves him. So, love and friendship and companions have triumphed over seemingly impossible odds. Now they've just got to do it.[114]

In this scene, the Kelly character does not have to take us to a heightened cinematic world to perform the musical number. Liberated by the heroine, he is able to freely sing and dance in the street. Even the time of day is unimportant, though it is interesting that this scene takes place in the middle of the night. As a result, Don is able to move around uninhibited and without being judged or scrutinized by a crowd of bystanders. Even though the performance is set in the rain, an element often associated with sadness, this emotion is not expressed in the musical number. On the contrary, the song and dance is one of joy and love.

In contrast to the heightened nature of "You Were Meant for Me," "Singin' in the Rain" and its setting appears to take the musical number out of the artificial world Don set up on a soundstage and into his private world. While this scene is set outdoors, unlike the former musical number, it is still a stylized fantastical space which Don explores through the musical number. While the audience is able to access Don's private world, Kathy is excluded; they parted for the night at her door which she closed on the half cadence of an instrumental "All I Do is Dream of You," which cut off the instrumental "you" and replaced it with an instrumental version of the new introduction to "Singin' in the Rain."

[114] Luhrman, *Singin' in the Rain*, DVD, Commentary, Chapter 25, 2002.

Aside from the opening credits, featuring Don, Kathy, and Cosmo singing the title number, this is the first time a musical motive of the title song, be it a lyrical line or worked into the dramatic score. Here, the placement of the song in the drama tells the audience to make the association of the title song with the two romantic leads, Don and Kathy.

The Music in the Rain

The first two pitches dictate the entire range of the song, an octave. Here, the limited range and simplicity of the music work to the advantage of the scene. The simplicity of the music not only enables Don's expression to be easily understood by the cinematic audience, but reminds them of the humble roots of Don's character. In addition, the musical simplicity and its center around the fifth scale degree, D, gives the music a more care-free atmosphere.

Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4
A (\) I	A (\) V^7	B (/) I	A (\) V^7
B (/)	A (\)	B (/)	A (\)
B (/)	A (\)	B (/)	A (\) V^7
A (\) V^7	C (--) I^6	A (\) V^7	C (--) I

Table 6. Musical form of "Singin' in the Rain"

Figure 8. Excerpt from “Singin’ in the Rain,” music by Nacio Herb Brown, lyrics by Arthur Freed.

[A] [B]

Figure 9. Excerpt from “Singin’ in the Rain,” music by Nacio Herb Brown, lyrics by Arthur Freed.

F# [C]

The main shapes of the music are given in the first two lines; a descending (A) and an ascending (B) sequence, two measures each, both of which are pentatonic (Figure 8). Aside from the horizontal motion of the cadential passages (C), indicated by the only instances of F#, the leading tone (Figure 9), the verses are forms of permutations and minor variations based on lines A and B. In the permutations and variants there are more instances of A (nine times) than B (five times); A, the rainfall, and B, the splashes upward when the droplets hit the ground. (Table 6) Both the pentatonic nature and shape of the music contribute to and accent the care-free quality of the music.

The lyrics are simple in their wording and the way they tell their own story. The variety of chords used is minimal; a series of I-V-I progressions, with the fifth as the musical center. The simplicity of the chord progression and musical content is effective to the scene, its emotional expression, and the casual situation of the scene. It is the economical simplicity of these elements which make the scene memorable. (Table 6)

In order to ease into the musical number, Roger Edens added a simple introduction to the opening of Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown's tune.

> *Doodedoo do doode*
> *Doodedoo dodee* (2 times)

This new material was needed to ease into the transition from Don saying farewell to Kathy (the bridge) and the new verse to not only transition into the musical number, but to move on from the half cadence on the door closing before the start of the first shot of the musical number. Like the action in the coming musical number, the transition and new verse are kept simple, and the music is the aural cue to tell the audience they are about to watch a musical number.

> Kelly and Donen were always very strong on how do you get the transition from the dialogue to the number so that it isn't just ok, 'now we do a number' and that taking Debbie Reynolds character, Kathy, home, and you know obviously they're in love, and then he goes…he starts down the street, and of course, now he's so happy…. That beautiful vamp Roger Edens

introduced… which is not part of the original song, which gets him into singing in the rain, which gets him into 'I'm dancin''[115]

I'm singin in the rain
Just singin' in the rain
What a glorious feelin'
I'm happy again

A harp glissando and close-up of Don, when he closes his umbrella and puts it over his shoulder, indicates the start of the first verse. Right away, he expresses his idea and immediately repeats it. The simplicity of his action and its repetition makes his statement direct and memorable. In addition, it allows Don to state his actions for the first half of the musical number and one of the main concepts of the scene. In his biography, Kelly discussed the idea behind the musical number as: "It's got to be raining and I'm going to be singing. I'm going to have a glorious feeling and I'm going to be happy again. "[116] While the appropriateness of the musical number at this moment relies on placement, it is the lyrics which dictate the use of this song at the end of the second act to integrate the number into the narrative.

I'm laughing at clouds
So dark up above
The sun's in my heart
And I'm ready for love

Ironic to the second line of the second verse is the fact that Don has jumped up onto the lamppost and looks at the light, making the area directly above him anything but dark. As already indicated by the timing of the "Good Mornin'" number, we know that Don is literally singing in the rain in the middle of the night. There is the possible argument that the strings are mimicking Don's action as he jumps off the lamppost.

Let the stormy clouds chase
Everyone from the place
Come on with the rain

[115] Behlmer, *Singin' in the Rain*, DVD, Commentary, Chapter 15, 2002.

[116] Hirschorn, *Gene Kelly*, 186.

I've a smile on my face

At the end of the second line, Don stops moving as does the music. What does continue to move is the camera to a head shot while he continues to get rained on and smiles. His smile is vital and its action is determined by the fourth line of the verse, "I've a smile on my face." There is no better action to highlight this line than for Don to smile and the camera to zoom in to capture it.

I walk down the lane
With a happy refrain
Just singin'
Singin' in the rain

The musical shape of the fourth verse is similar to the second verse; however the cadential phrase in this one, ends on a I chord. In addition, the melody also ends on the first scale degree, the tonic. Lyrically, the fourth verse is a summary of the first three verses and restatement of Don's opening idea, singing in the rain. This restatement, akin to a chorus, reaffirms what Don does. The sparse orchestration accompanying the lyrics is rather fitting, a musical reflection of the relatively limited action. Even the muted brass heard just before the start of the added verse reflects the restraint of the action.

Dancin' in the rain
Dee-ah dee-ah dee-ah

I'm happy again

I'm singin' and dancin' in the rain

In order to ease into and justify for the apparent spontaneity of the dance break, a new verse was written and an alteration to the refrain integrate the dance into the musical number and enforce Don's emotional joy. As a result, the Freed-Brown song was adapted to fit the situation and the dancer, Gene Kelly. As Kelly discussed it in his biography:

> I was running through the lyrics of the song to see if they suggested anything other than the obvious, when at the end of the [refrain], I suddenly added the word 'dancin' to the lyric- so that it now ran 'I'm singin' and *dancin*' in the rain'. Instead of just singing the number, I'd

> dance it as well. Suddenly the mist began to clear, because a dance tagged onto a song suggested a positive and joyous emotion.[117]

While the original refrain is "I'm singin', just singin' in the rain," after the "dancin'" verse, the refrain is altered to "I'm singin' and dancin' in the rain," which combines both originally stated ideas. This alteration serves to combine both theses and to integrate both the song and dance sections of the musical number into the narrative, because "unless you're in a ballet, you can't just begin to dance. You have to state your 'thesis' in a song first and then go into the dance."[118] At the end of the dance break and as a justification for his behavior to the policeman, the lyric becomes a reversal, "I'm dancin' and singin' in the rain," the final reiteration of the two ideas Don expressed throughout the scene.

In addition to the new verse to transition the Kelly character into the dance routine, a visual cue is added as well. While it may be interpreted as either a *hommage* or an attempt at humor, Don strums his umbrella like a ukulele when he sings the last two lines of the refrain before going into his solo dance performance.[119] Here, the camera zooms to a close-up of Don as he strums his umbrella immediately before going into his dance routine in the rain.

While the musical shape of this verse is identical to the first verse of the song, the text of the second and third line is either nonsense syllables or omitted completely. The carefree use of nonsense syllables reflect what Don is unable to describe with words. As Don states in the first line of the verse, "dancin' in the rain," he begins to dance in the rain to defend his thesis, though the development of this portion of the musical number, like they lyrical section, slowly expands to its explosive musical and dance climax. The text of the third line is omitted completely when Don dances in front of the pharmacy display; his action overtakes

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[117] Cohan, *Hollywood Musicals*: *The Film Reader*, 168.

[118] Wollen, *Singin' in the Rain*, 26.

[119] In Cliff Edwards's performance of "Singin' in the Rain" in *The Hollywood Revue of 1929* (Charles Resiner, 1929), he strums a ukulele while he sings in the rain. (Musicals Greatest Musicals DVD, Chapter #)

the use of words and music. It is at this point which movement (the dance) begins to be the dominant component of the scene.

Once the Kelly character dances, there are no lyrics until the end of the dance sequence. Here, the choreography becomes visual representation enough to suffice for both expression and action to work in harmony with the music. A practical issue is that it is difficult to sing and dance simultaneously.

When Don sings, the kinesthetic action is limited to him walking down the street, a relatively static motion. At the same time, this static action heightens his jump onto the lamppost and draws even more attention to this vertical move. This makes it even more memorable than if this action occurred in the dance sequence. This vertical action is a statement made to tell the audience to pay attention to the action in this scene and climactic plot point.

The dance functions as not only a visual interpretation of the music, but also expresses the two most recent climactic plot points: (1) Don being in love with Kathy, (2) and the doomed sound film, *The Dueling Cavalier*, can be turned into a musical, *The Dancing Cavalier*. In addition, the musical number is an expansion of Don's screen persona; he can now use music and dance to express himself on film.

What makes the harmony between the music and action work together so well in a visual sense, is the knowledge of the directing team, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, a team which also directed MGM's Freed Unit musicals *On the Town* (1949) and *It's Always Fair Weather* (1955), both came from a dance background and spent time on Broadway, where they created a very unique directing team. With Kelly also acting in all three Kelly/Donen co-directed films, one man was always in front of the camera, Kelly, and one behind the camera filming the dancer, Donen. Both men were very careful and particular about the timing and how to capture the dance on film without interrupting the line of the dance or

music. It is the meticulous attention paid to both the musical structure and timing which makes the number and camera work together; a trait which greatly contributed to the success of Kelly's alter-ego number in Columbia's *Cover Girl* (Charles Vidor, 1944).

> It was instinctive with me how to photograph a dancer because I appreciated the movement of the dance. As a dancer, you immediately realize the best spot from which to see what they are doing. Everything has to be worked out down to the tiniest detail. The rehearsal was done on dry land, on a wooden floor in a rehearsal hall. The puddles in the street were all falsely built because that is where he was going to be at that particular moment. We chipped out the pavement and the sidewalk and made puddles for him to splash in.[120]

In addition to the instinct needed to shoot a musical number the directing team has to understand of the music and its structure, important factors in the fluidity and apparent ease of shooting to the cinematic audience. In this sequence, the choreography between the dancing figure(s), camera, and music have to be considered as a unit. They have to work with each other to capture and express the movement and its relation to the music. In this particular scene, the smooth lines of the camera reflect the flow and shape of the character of the music, while the dancer gives a kinesthetic reinterpretation of the music. Even if the scene were to be watched by the viewer on mute, the rhythm, timing of the movement and interaction with the environment is still determined by the music.

[120] Donen, *Musicals Great Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit at MGM*, DVD, Chapter 15, 2002.

The Scene in the Rain

Shot	Shot Type	Music	Action
1	Tracking to close-up	Introduction	Don walks down street, umbrella open Don stops walking, shrugs, closes umbrella
2	Crane Close-up	1st verse 2nd verse	Don walks down street, sings in rain Don on lamppost "love"
3	Crane stops Head shot	3rd verse 3rd line "smile"	Wave to strangers Eagle Don smiles
4	Crane	4th verse Dance sequence-introduction "I'm happy again"	Don walking, swinging umbrella Eagle pose as before Eagle again to display, bows, strums umbrella like a ukulele
5	Crane	Dance sequence	Tosses, kicks, catches umbrella,
6	Crane Close-up	Verse 3, 4	Drain pipe #1- creeps around Drain pipe #2- water hits Don in face, purposely stands under pipe
7	Crane, establishing shot	1st verse,	Don in the street
8	Crane (backwards)	"I'm happy again 4th verse	Tightrope on curb Water kicked over curb
9	Crane	4th verse, brass 4th line interrupted, horn continues	Don jumps in large puddle, splashes and kicks water everywhere Don notices policeman
10	Crane Pulls back and upwards	instrumental rain, winds	Don sing to the policeman "I'm dancin' and singin' in the rain Don walks down street, gives umbrella to stranger, waves to policeman

Table 7. *Singin' in the Rain*, Scene

The introductory shot begins the minute Kathy leaves and Don literally waves the taxi away, with this action timed with the string line of the dramatic score. While the musical line and motion of Don's hands move together and may appear to be a weak mimicry gesture, it is better interpreted as a visual cue that something bigger is going to happen to the point where motion will overtake the musicality of the scene. However, it is too early in the number for Don to start dancing if the musical number is to be integrated into the drama. Once Don finishes the introduction, both he and the camera stop the minute he turns himself

to be parallel to the street. In addition, the musical suspends itself momentarily with a horn line; an action to take note of when it later returns. Don looks up, extends his left hand to catch the rain drops, a visual cue and sign for the camera to start moving in to a close-up to catch Don closing his umbrella and carrying it over his right shoulder. (Table 7)

The second shot is a crane shot, which also catches the bystander Don previously waved to while he sang the introduction. This new visual perspective tells the audience that something new is about to happen, and cut is timed right with the beginning of the first verse; a major visual cue for the audience of the time, one already familiar with this song, that Don is about to start to sing in the rain. As Don starts the third line, "what a glorious feeilin,' he waves his left hand, but his action bisects the verse. Even though Don continues to walk down the street and sing, these apparent casual motions are timed with the music in such a way that even though they are ordinary actions and nothing fancy, the instances in which they occur rely on the music. All these hand gestures lead up to the start of the second stanza and the vertical action of Don jumping up onto the lamp post for the first two lines (four measures) of the second verse. (Table 7)

At the start of the third verse, the camera cuts to another crane shot. At the same instant, the french horns enter; the "storm clouds" to "chase" away a couple which has entered the shot and momentarily obstructs Don from the audience. As said couple exits the scene, Don waves to them, and it's the dramatic effect of his gesture as the music and scene both continue their gradual development in leading up to the explosiveness of the dance sequence. Again, the cinematic audience gets a visual cue that movement will eventually become the dominant vision of the scene. Yet, this eventual visual domination is determined by the development and structure of the music. (Table 7)

When Don sings the last two lines, "Come on with the rain, I've a smile on my face," he poses in an eagle[121], removes his hat, looks up to sky, the camera action and music pause and stop here just long enough for the audience to realize that what he's doing is real and not acting about being in love as he has to do with Lina for his internal audience. When the action during this verse continues, the camera begins to move in for a head shot on the words "come on," and stops when Don sings "smile" and literally has a smile on his face. What makes this standout even more is that the music is absent until the start of the fourth line, adding suspense and dramatic emphasis to the scene. At the same time, the camera continues its line of movement, maintaining the element of fluidity in the scene for the cinematic audience. (Table 7)

A cut which changes the angle of the crane shot marks the start of the fourth shot. As Don walks down the street, however he swings his umbrella as he sings in the rain and restates his action for the cinematic audience against an instrumental rain in the winds akin to the introduction. Unlike the other verses, this is the only one not bisected by any visual action. (Table 7)

The one possibly troubling aspect between the lyrics and music may be in the muted trumpets that play the instrumental rain under the word "rain" when Don walks past the pharmacy display which will soon be utilized. On the other hand, this trumpet cue sets up and allows for continuity between the lyrical and dance sections of the scene. This musical cue is meant for the cinematic audience, calling to their attention that something in the number is about to change. Unlike the other verses, this is the only one not bisected by any visual action. If this verse was visually bisected, it would interrupt the restatement of Don's thesis, the obvious of the refrain and title of the song, "singin' in the rain."

[121] *For Me and My Gal*, DVD, Chapter 21, 2006.

When Don gets to the fourth line of the verse, he does the eagle[122] pose again; the same move he previously did in the last two lines of the third verse, and even removes his hat, which stops his line of movement. When the crane shot is briefly stilled to set up the stage-like sidewalk in front of the pharmacy display, Don uses the environment as a theatrical prop. He interacts with it as though he were on a stage, emphasized by the sudden static movement of the camera the first time this has happened in this scene. As with the previous instance of the same spread-eagle pose, the music cuts out until Don sings the word "happy", with the brass echoing "happy again" to smoothly reenter the scene and lead into the second instrumental verse. (Table 7)

Halfway through the instrumental equivalent of the refrain and introductory part of the dance sequence, Don turns halfway around and pauses in his movement. Here, he notices the pharmacy display for the first time and does an eagle to the display, which marks the start of his interaction with it and allows him to continue to interact with his environment. The pause in the action is not only for Don, but for the cinematic audience to take note that the next instrumental verse is about to start, and that something in the dance number is going to change. What maintains the fluidity of the number is the music; the instrumental verse which Don dances to. The change from his previous action in front of the display is that he notices and interacts with the female cutout in the display. This action is the visual cue for the start of the dance sequence. (Table 7)

Comprised of four shots, the dance sequence can be divided into three episodes, each half as long as the previous, but exponentially increasing in liberties taken with the camera and vocal intensity of the orchestra so as to reflect the visual image in the music and camera angle.

[122] *For Me and My Gal*, DVD, Chapter 21, 2006.

The first episode begins with the fifth shot. It consists of sixteen lines, thirty-two measures, identical in texture to when Don was signing, however the build in instrumental texture with the addition of the winds, a flute and oboe to "sing" the melody. Once Don begins to dance, the camera is allowed a limited amount of mobility, mostly in mid-range and close-up horizontal shots of Don's dance up and down the sidewalk. While Don dances, he kicks his umbrella in the air, and the music changes to move with this action, specifically the strings. This action is also timed with the lyrics, the umbrella spinning above him on the word "above." When Don runs his umbrella along and cast-iron fence, the action is not only seen, but heard and mimicked in the strings. Again, we have an instance where the preexisting music is altered to fit the context of the scene. At the same time, when Don runs his umbrella along the cast-iron fence, his tap dance in the rain aside, this is one of the few instances of audible action. (Table 7)

In the first part of the dance sequence, the sixth shot begins with a close-up at the instrumental equivalent of the third verse, visually noted when Don opens his umbrella to the camera. Soon after, the camera quickly pans to a mid-range shot, which allows the audience to be spectators to the action. Here, the action begins to develop, but remains relatively constrained compared to what is soon to come. The horn line previously heard at the start of the third line, and possibly associated with the storm clouds, becomes more prominent, also a sign of the growth, albeit limited, of Don's actions and camera mobility. This gradual growth in the dance sequence is a reminder of the gradual development of the first half of the musical number and the development of the song. It's dramatic, but not overly dramatic to the point in which it would be a shock to the cinematic audience.

The calculation and timing in the extended growth of the dance sequence is determined by the music. Don's actions follow the music, the camera follows Don's actions, and the cinematic audience follows the camera lens. Signaling the exponential growth of

the dance sequence, Don stands underneath the drain pipe, completely unconcerned that he gets splashed with water throughout the close-up. He has a smile of sheer joy and delight on his face the entire time. This is in contrast to the previous shot with the drain pipe, which Don did a pirouette to the harp line, then crept around the drain pipe and continued to dance up the street with his umbrella open. (Table 7)

The second episode, the seventh shot, a mid-range which leads into a crane shot, is half the length of the first, instrumental verses one and four, and vertically increases in orchestral dynamics. At this point, the camera dances with Don, it moves vertically and horizontally with him as he dances counter-clockwise through the street to a brass-dominated accompaniment as the instrumental equivalent of the third verse. (Table 7)

It is with this musically explosive action that the establishing shot is finally presented, the street seen in view for the first and only time. This expansion and revelation of space is a reflection the expanded music. At the same time, Don's actions expand; he jumps towards the camera, circles counter-clockwise through the street and swings his umbrella simultaneously. Even though preexisting music is altered to fit the musical number and integrate the dance sequence into the scene, the alterations and their expansion are limited by the structure of the music..

As an element of orchestral contrast to the opening of this shot, the brass is replaced by the winds, while Don dances tightrope-walker style along the curb, with his comparatively smaller action mimicking the musical line. This step ends with the end of the third instrumental verse, coinciding with Don's arrival at what will be revealed as a very large puddle. In addition, when the third instrumental ends, the winds drop out and the orchestration goes right back to the strings. Don interacts with the puddle, splashing water as he walks along the curb. These splashes are the visual representation of the string line with the action and music choreographed to each other. As Don splashes the water, the

camera continues to follow him, dancing with him and the music while Don dances/splashes to the music. While preexisting music is altered to fit the situation, the actions and their mimicry appear to be spontaneous to the audience.

In the third episode, marked by the ninth shot of the number, the brass dominate the orchestra as Don splashes around and jumps in a large puddle with spray from the water flying everywhere, the camera follows him as he follows the lead of the music, the instrumental fourth verse. At this point, Don is completely oblivious of anyone watching until the verse ends and he finally notices the policeman watching him. (Table 7)

As soon as Don senses the policeman, the music suddenly diminishes to a sole horn, the element maintaining continuity between the cut to a mid-range shot from over the policeman's shoulder to make him look larger than life. Don looks at the policeman, a questioning and authoritative figure from outside of his private world, and has to defend his actions, saying 'I'm dancin' and singin' in the rain' as he walks away to the final strains of music, a recollection of the introduction to the musical number and final restatement of what he was doing in the street in the middle of the night, singing and dancing in the rain. (Table 7)

While Don states, restates, and weakly defends his thesis in the first verse, the song could theoretically end. However, it is the harmonic structure of the music which justifies the need for four verses. Lyrically, a stronger defense is needed, and it is through the need for the music to move to a strong cadence which makes this possible.

Since the first verse ends on a half-cadence, the song cannot end with a strongly defended declamation. In the second verse, while the harmony ends on a I^6 chord with G in the bass, the melody ends a sixth above on E. Even though the harmony ends on the tonic, the melody still has to be resolved. It is this need for melodic resolution which justifies the

continuation of the music. In the third verse, a new idea is introduced in via lyric, and like the first verse, it does not end on a tonic chord, but a half-cadence. The fourth verse, a restatement of Don's intentions finally moves to a strong tonic with both the melody and harmony ending with a prolonged tonic, a two-measure I-I^6-I progression, and the added verse aside, a final restatement of the refrain. (Table 6)

While the need for the dance sequence to continue is to defend the altered verse and refrain: "I'm singin' and dancin' in the rain." Here, when the music is for the sequence, the harmonic language of the music is still taken into consideration. Even though the music is first danced to in its entirety in the dance sequence, the orchestra has not yet been given its opportunity to expand and develop to its full potential. In addition, the establishing shot has not occurred yet, an action determined by the development of the music. This opportunity arises when Don purposely stands under the downspout; complete with a huge smile on his face all while he gets splashed on at the end of the first half of the dance sequence and a mark for the end of the second act of the musical number. (Table 7)

Through the establishing shot and its transition to the next one, a new visual element is introduced, the puddles which Don splashes in, and this visual element has to be utilized. However, its integration into the scene is still determined by the musical development, down to the tightrope walk along the curb as Don kicks the water; a visual expression of the flute line. Granted, the eighth shot ends with the fourth verse, but the music needs to end with a stronger musical climax and allow the brass to develop the refrain material, the only section of the orchestra which has not done so.

Necessitated by the need for the brass line to develop, the final repetition of the fourth verse in the dance sequence allows both the music and action to take up the visual space of the camera and Don to jump around a large puddle with carefree abandon. His common sense gone, he acts like a child let loose in the rain to stomp around in puddles on the

sidewalk. Still, his actions are determined by the development of the music and reflect the bold statement of the refrain by the brass. Yet, this final restatement and carefree expression is interrupted by the arrival of the cop. However, the solo horn continues until the instrumental rain returns, with this return used to maintain continuity between the cuts of the ninth and tenth shots of the scene. At the same time, it's a musical moment for Don to gather his thoughts and explain his actions to the cop as plainly and concisely as possible.

Even though the policeman interferes with Don's rain dance, Don still smiles at him as he gives his chiasmus lyrical explanation: "I'm dancin' and singin' in the rain." The puddle splashing now at a halt, Don walks away, hands his umbrella off to a stranger, turns back to wave and smile at the cop, and continues to merrily walk down the lane. As he does so, these actions are accompanied to the musical line which diminishes to the pentatonic instrumental rain via solo mallet percussion and ends with a tonic chord in the strings to bring the stated, defended, and visually expressed musical number and its music to a close.

It is the combination of simple and contrasting elements which makes this number so memorable. Set in the middle of the night and the act of Don smiling, singing, and dancing in the rain, creates a strong image. It is the combination of the primary ideas and elements; a solo musical number set at night and in the rain which makes the number universally work so well. Perhaps film historian Rudy Behlmer explains simply why it works so well:

> The amazing thing is, it's such a simple concept, and versus some of the more extravagant numbers, this is the number that has captured the imagination over the decades and has never worn out its welcome. Whether it's part of the movie or you extract as an excerpt, it works. And it works for everybody. [123]

The simple yet complex concept to follow the music is what makes the musical number fit together so well and a work of artistic professionalism.

[123] Behlmer, *Singin' in the Rain*, DVD, Commentry, Chapter 25, 2002.

END TITLE

Chapter 12

Musical Relations

While the selected musical examples from *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951) and *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952) are artistic highlights and can function as a non-verbal means of expression and a visual manifestation of the characters' psychological intent, there are several other contributing factors expressed through these actions. Even though *An American in Paris* and *Singin' in the Rain* are unique in their musical treatment, there are several aspects which simultaneously tie and contrast them. The elements which can be examined further are: (i) the interpretation of the relationship between music and film, (ii) exploration of a private space through movement, (iii) gaze and perception of the camera, and (iv) cultural references. Yet, the timing and nature of these elements can be traced to the treatment and structure of the music.

The Interpretation of the Relationship between Music and Film

Although music is a significant factor in both *An American in Paris* and *Singin' in the Rain*, the two films express and treat the culmination between music and film very differently. In order to interpret and better understand this point, it is necessary to consider the unique style of each of the directors; the stylized, artistic eye of Vincente Minnelli for *An American in Paris*, and co-directors Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen's attention to showcase the musical numbers in *Singin' in the Rain.*

In the case of Minnelli and *An American in Paris*, it is perhaps his eye as a Broadway art director which contributes to the visual perception and interpretation of the dual-fantasy

An American in Paris ballet. Here, the changes in the *fumata* backdrop of the "blues" section of the ballet act as visual cues to note changes in the music. In turn, as these changes occur just before or after a cut, it is the music which gives the illusion of a smoother, subtle, and more natural transition. As a result, while the music is a non-verbal expression of Jerry and Lise's romance, the music is not noticed for the music itself. According to film composer David Raksin, film music should not be noted for itself, and that '[i]ts great usefulness is the way in which it performs its role without intervening conscious act of perception. It is most telling when the music registers upon us in a quiet way, where we don't know it's actually happening.'[124]

In the case of *Singin' in the Rain*, it is very clear that music and dance can be crucial elements to the structure and development of the narrative. Through the musical numbers, the elements of music and dance meld to for 'a perfect medium to represent the subliminal self, festivity, and performance since it is coalescent movement, a harmony of disparate energies, directions, and contours, a movement that is elevated and extraordinary as these spheres of being are.'[125] Here, the timing of the music, its structure, and expansion are essential to the camera angles and editing. As a result, the movement and angle of the camera is limited to the movement of the characters, whose movements are limited to an applicable visual interpretation of the music. Even minute visual cues and character actions can be seen as being determined by the structure of the musical verse; when Don waves his hand in "Singin' in the Rain", he bisects the verse. Yet, the verses in "Singin' in the Rain" determine a significant amount of the action; the very first line is "I'm singin' in the rain," which makes it essential for the scene to take place in the rain.

[124] Burt, *The Art of Film Music*, 5.

[125] Dunne, *American Film Musical Themes and Forms*, 85.

Psychological Expression and Exploration of a Private Space

In both *An American in Paris* and *Singin' in the Rain*, the psychological expression of the protagonists occurs via exploration of a private space. In the case of *An American in Paris,* Jerry and Lise's private space is centered around the banks of the Seine after their "Love is Here to Stay" number, and most intently in the *An American in Paris* fantasy ballet during the "blues" sequence. As musically different as these two numbers are; "Love is Here to Stay" being a popular piece and the *An American in Paris* ballet adapted from the tone poem of the same name, they share a similar pattern of movement. In both cases, the line of the dance is circular; a metaphor for the way Jerry and Lise need to circle their relationship around their other commitments (Milo for Jerry and Henri for Lise) whom they feel indebted to for very different reasons. This circular revolution is suggested in the painting motange sequence; the "Love is Here to Stay" theme weaves around the orchestral "Tra-La-La," and is only heard when Jerry works on his portrait of Lise. On a larger scale, the "Love is Here to Stay" theme and Jerry and Lise's "blues" theme from the ballet weave in and out from the dramatic score, and after their second farewell, it is their ballet theme which not only reunites them, but transcends the ballet to reality so that it can really be interpreted as a condensed version of the film.

Even though it is possible to deduce the circular movement on the fountain for practical reasons, most notably the circular shape of the fountain, there is something else which acts as a boundary for Jerry and Lise's movements in both musical examples. In "Love is Here to Stay", Jerry and Lise have to move in a circular pattern, because their limits are the wall/stairway and the riverbank. It is possible that to add depth and to maximize the use of

their private space by the Seine that a circular line of dance is used. In the case of the fountain dance in the ballet, the water is also a boundary; however Jerry and Lise dance in it versus next to it.

While the movement in the selected musical examples from *An American in Paris* takes on a circular pattern, the movement in the musical examples from *Singin' in the Rain* is linear. Yet, each musical number has its own limits; the ladder and area of the sound stage in "You Were Meant for Me," and the sidewalk in "Singin' in the Rain".

In the musical number "You Were Meant for Me," which establishes Don and Kathy's relationship, the only time Don sings is when he and Kathy are on or in proximity of the ladder. In addition, the only circular movements of the camera occur around the ladder; when Don climbs and descends it so that it captures Kathy's perspective, and while the couple circle around the ladder as Don woos Kathy lyrically. When they dance though, their linear movement and their exploration of private space occurs in *front* of the ladder. In addition, it is only away from the ladder that the line of dance is linear. Once Don and Kathy's dance takes them back towards the ladder, Don lifts Kathy and spins her; a circular, not a lateral movement.

Like the predominant line of linear movement in "You Were Meant for Me," Don's solo, "Singin' in the Rain" follows a linear line as well. While the line of the sidewalk is one reason for this, it is necessary to recall the turn around the corner early before Don's jump on the lamppost. The turn is a metaphor for the new direction in Don's life in Hollywood; he is now about to become what Kathy dubs "a big singing star"[126] to save the doomed *The Duelling Cavalier* talkie. When the dance sequence begins, while Don's actions are a kinesthetic interpretation of the music, his line of direction appears to be limited by the shape and space around the sidewalk.

[126] *Singin' in the Rain*, DVD, Chapter 25, 2002.

The cue for the momentary departure from the linear line of movement is noted when Don stands under the downspout, and dances counterclockwise through the street to establish and explore his space. This movement is not only the sole instance in which Don moves liberally within the space, but the only time the space in which he dances is established. The minute Don gets to the sidewalk, he reverts back to a horizontal line of motion until he jumps and splashes around in the puddle at the end.

Like "You Were Meant for Me," it is only in this private location which the audience is allowed access to Don's psychological expression. On the other hand, Don's public does not see his musical side until he sings to Kathy in public at the successful premiere of *The Dancing Cavallier*. It is only when Don's musical side is exposed to the public through a film that he can musically address Kathy in public.

Gaze and Perception of the Camera

Critical to visual enhancement and perception is the gaze and projection of the camera. Yet, this can be traced to its relationship with and treatment of the musical structure. The meticulous attention to this structural element between music and film is essential, which not only aids to bring out the emotional aspect of the narrative, but gets the audience to pay attention to and participate with the characters. However, the perspective given is a subjective one. Unlike theater, where the audience is allowed some liberty on where and what they choose to look at, these parameters are altered in film to what the director feels is important and what aspect should be the intent of the gaze of the camera.

In Jerry and Lise's popular music number, "Love is Here to Stay," in *An American in Paris*, the camera forces the audience to first view the number from a blend of Lise's perspective and her reaction to Jerry's lyrics. It is only after the audience sees Lise's smile that the gaze of the camera changes to view the number from Jerry's perspective, unaware

that he has won Lise's undivided attention. When the couple dances, the gaze of the camera changes so that not only is the dance showcased, but the camera dances with Jerry and Lise.

Throughout the "blues" sequence from the *An American in Paris* ballet, the camera continues to focus on Jerry and Lise, but the perspective is more intimate than the "Love is Here to Stay" number set on the banks of the Seine. In addition, there is an added element of depth, suggested by the use of concert music and the *fumata* quality of the background. In contrast to Jerry and Lise's musical number by the Seine, which firmly established their relationship, their fantasy ballet theme reflects the depth and growth of their relationship not only musically and visually, but through the gaze of the camera as well. Unlike the "Love is Here to Stay" number, no establishing shot of the fountain or the Place de la Concorde is revealed through their duet.

In both musical examples from *Singin' in the Rain*, "You Were Meant for Me" and "Singin' in the Rain," there is the clear intent between the gaze of the camera and its relation to the musical structure to showcase and draw attention to movement: At the start of the dance sequence in "You Were Meant for Me," the camera follows Don as he leads Kathy into a dance. In "Sinigin' in the Rain," the camera moves with Don as he dances up and down the sidewalk. While part of this stems from the link between the languages of music and film, the background of the co-directors also needs to be taken into account. Before their arrival in Hollywood, both of the co-directors spent some time on Broadway; Donen was a chorus boy and Kelly danced and starred in several productions. It is naturally fitting that their camerawork focuses on the musical numbers to showcase the visual and kinesthetic interpretation of the music. Here, the attention is on the action over the depth of visuals as per *An American in Paris*, but perhaps the relative simplicity is what makes the musical numbers in *Singin' in the Rain*, notably Kelly's solo number memorable and appeal to audiences nearly sixty years later.

Cultural References

Even though pre-existing music is arranged and adapted to fit the narratives in *An American in Paris* and *Singin' in the Rain*, it is through the music and its treatment which alludes to two different cultural references; highbrow art in *An American in Paris* and the lowbrow vaudevillian in *Singin' in the Rain*. This is not to suggest that the music from *An American in Paris* should be taken more seriously than that in *Singin' in the Rain*; both musicals are highly influenced by popular song catalogues from the early-mid twentieth century. Rather, it is the way in which the music is treated that suggests a different means of appreciation for it. Recall *An American in Paris* musical arranger Saul Chaplin's comment about how he regards Gershwin with the same sacredness that he has for Beethoven. This is perhaps why he had the trepidations that he did about adapting the Gershwin catalogue for the film; most particularly the adaptation of the *An American in Paris* tone poem for the dual-fantasy ballet finale.

Another reference to a highly cultured society is the costumed Art Students Ball. Recall that Jerry told Milo "…everyone in Paris will be there."[127] The "everyone" is a reference to the cultured sect of Paris and a society which more than likely has an affinity for and can afford to patronize the arts and the beneficiaries of this sponsorship. After the scenes at the costume ball, the next major musical spectacle is the *An American in Paris* ballet; an adaptation of a concert piece for a seventeen-minute dual-fantasy ballet finale, which not only condenses the narrative into a highly artistic spectacle, but the "blues" theme; a popular music theme and the "American" in *An American in Paris* transcends the dual-fantasy into the narrative's reality when Jerry and Lise are reunited. Moreover, the

[127] *An American in Paris*, DVD, Chapter 27, 1999.

walking theme from the concert piece opened the narrative and introduced Paris, and it is fitting that Jerry and Lise's "blues" theme not only reunites them, but brings the narrative to a musical close.

In contrast to the elusions of highbrow culture via musical treatment in *An American in Paris*, the music and its treatment in *Singin' in the Rain* is the lowbrow music of the vaudevillians and their rise to make it in show business. This is clearly depicted in the kaleidoscope-like "Beautiful Girl" montage, which can be interpreted as an *hommage* to some of the earliest film footage: popular vaudeville acts. Likewise, the impetus behind the heightened *Broadway Ballet* finale is the rise of a young vaudevillian to stardom. In addition to the vaudeville recollection, nearly the entire musical score consists of songs from the time of the earliest musicals.

While there is a premiere party in after *The Royal Rascal* (the silent film within *Singin' in the Rain*), complete with well-dressed patrons and a house band, some of the guests are seen tango dancing. As a reflection of one of the popular dances from the late 1920s, the "All I Do is Dream of You" musical number, performed by the Coconut Grove dancers, is structured around the charleston. When Don and Kathy dance to "You Were Meant for Me," they use popular dance styles of the time as their means of kinesthetic expression; soft shoe, tap, and the quick-step.

Even though music can function as a non-verbal means to express the characters' psychological intent, when combined with camera angles and editing, it can also effect the perception and projection of a scene or musical number. It is through the treatment and methods used to combine the languages of music and film which make the analysis of each musical example unique. While broad generalizations can be made about the various forms of music functionality, it is the visual and aural treatment which can make each scenario different. It is through music; its treatment and kinesthetic interpretation which can have an

influence on not only what the viewer perceives, but on what the musical number can project about the characters and the narrative as well.

Conclusion

Where the Good Songs Go

In hindsight, these two musicals discussed were made at a pivotal point which coincided with the creative zenith of the film musical. A culmination of what began with fantasy escapes in the 1930s, integrated musical numbers vital to the advancement of the plot throughout the 1940s, the musicals of the 1950s reached the creative and innovative zenith of the genre. Stereophonic sound, Cinemascope, and trick photography did what could not be done on television or in the theater.

The Dream Factory in Dreamland at its Zenith

A medley of the genre at its height reveals: Judy Garland's discovery of home in *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944), and ability to encourage everyone to "Get Happy" in *Summer Stock* (Charles Walters, 1950). Fred Astaire is able to dance on the ceiling in *Royal Wedding* (Stanley Donen, 1951) and on air with Vera-Ellen in *The Belle of New York* (Charles Walters, 1952). *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951) ends with a ballet which can only be described as one of MGM's most artistic and creative masterpieces. *Invitation to the Dance* (Gene Kelly, 1957), while misunderstood at its release, fully utilizes music and dance as narrative devices *without* any dialogue and furthers the combination of live action and animation. Both *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1954) and *It's Always Fair Weather* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1955) utilize the quality of stereophonic sound and the advantages of Cinemascope to capture the scope of their musical numbers.[128]

One of the many triumphs of the 1950s, *Gigi* (Vincente Minnelli, 1958), produced by Arthur Freed, won nine Oscars, including Best Director, Best Picture, Best Song, and Best

[128] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 425.

Scoring of a Motion picture. To date, not other original Hollywood musical has done this.[129]

Time to Grow Up?

While no single factor can contribute to the downfall of the glory days of the Golden Age and its musicals, several factors lead to the apparent end of the movie musical. Both society and Hollywood grew up, there was a change in public taste, and rock and roll played a role in alterations to the movie musical to direct it to a teen audience and not confine it to an adult fantasy. The final demise of the studio system and its monopolistic control over cinemas, which supported the big budgets required to produce multiple musicals a year and the roster of contract stars, had a major impact on the funds needed to support the genre. Television was a nemesis and variety shows gave the masses the escape they needed. Changes in management to executives who were interested in profitability over art (and did not know how to create art or give it the time and patience it needed) favored business over artistic integrity. It looked as though Hollywood was about to grow up and leave its childhood behind.

Hollywood's Phoenix

With the rise of ongoing conflict in Vietnam, a bit of a resurgence occurred and the need for nostalgia was the spark needed to revive the movie musical in the 1970s; a point which many believed the movie musical to be deceased. Yet, of all movie genres, it is the one which continues to come back. In Clive Hirschorn's book *The Hollywood Musical*, he notes: "Since its birth, the musical has proved itself to be the phoenix of the film industry. Unlike perennials such as Westerns and war and crime films, it is the musical alone that

[129] Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*: *The Arthur Freed Unit*, 494.

periodically disappears, only to rise again from the ashes to prove that reports of its demise were greatly exaggerated."[130] It is the one genre, which John Russel Taylor describes: "Though the musical form has been written off again and again as played out, outdated, finished, somehow it always manages to spring back as full of life as ever."[131] Hollywood changes, society changes, and with it, the musical changes and adapts to find its place again.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, dance films emerged as a form of the musical, notably *Saturday Night Fever* (John Badham, 1977), *Flashdance* (Adrian Lane, 1983), *Footloose* (Herbert Ross, 1984), and *Dirty Dancing* (Emile Ardolino, 1987). Yet, the old form of the musical found its way to influence *The Wiz* (Sidney Lumet, 1978), *All that Jazz* (Bob Fosse, 1979), *Xanadu* (Robert Greenwald, 1980) and *Pennies from Heaven* (Herbert Ross, 1982), and *Hairspray* (John Waters, 1988). The 1990s were the period of the Disney Renaissance, with a successful animated musical in theaters every year, two of which became successful Broadway productions, *Beauty and the Beast* (1994) and *The Lion King* (1997).

While it is too early to tell what the future of movie musicals will be, the past decade has shown some renewed interest in the genre, notably with *Moulin Rouge* (Baz Luhrmann, 2001), *Chicago* (Rob Marshall, 2002), *The Phantom of the Opera* (Joel Schumacher, 2004), *Rent* (Director, 2005), *Hairspray* (Adam Shankman, 2007), *Enchanted* (Kevin Lima, 2007), and *Mamma Mia* (Phyllida Lloyd, 2008), and the to-be-released Disney animated musical, *The Princess and the Frog* (Ron Clements and Rob Edwards, 2009).

Although musicals are not made in the quantity which they were in the studio era, they are still around. Even though the times have changed and Hollywood is no longer the same place it was before, there is something which has not changed. The musical and its

[130] Hirschorn, *The Hollywood Musical*, 11.

[131] Taylor, *The Hollywood Musical*, 13.

music still matter. That being said, hopefully a greater amount of academic attention will be given to the musical and its music.

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