

Integration and the American Musical: From Musical Theatre to Performance Studies

By

James Bradley Rogers

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Rhetoric

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Shannon Jackson, Chair

Professor Linda Williams

Professor Shannon Steen

Fall 2010

COPYRIGHT 2010
JAMES BRADLEY ROGERS

Abstract

Integration and the American Musical: From Musical Theatre to Performance Studies

by

James Bradley Rogers

Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Shannon Jackson, Chair

In this dissertation, I challenge the discourse of “integration” that has long served as the foundation of musical theatre historiography. Integration ostensibly refers to an artful melding of the various components of the musical, such that the dances, songs, and dialogue appear fluid and continuous, of a whole. Most histories of the musical claim that the Kern-Hammerstein musical *Show Boat* was the first piece to adumbrate integration, and that the 1943 Rodgers & Hammerstein musical *Oklahoma!* fully realized this promise of integration. I argue that this commonly held view ignores the fundamental impossibility of the musical to speak from a single voice, given the shift between the dialogic and musical registers. My dissertation illuminates how certain components or conventions of performance—divas, dancers, and the relationship of musicals to film and opera—have helped to consolidate this fictive sense of integration. This analysis also shows how the dominant narrative of musical theatre historiography—and our subsequent understandings of musical theatre—have been intimately suffused with the politics of gender, race, class, and nation.

In my examination of *Show Boat*, I analyze contemporaneous reviews, arguing that the integration of the stage production of *Show Boat* is inextricably tied to the simultaneous development of talking pictures. As it was used to describe *Show Boat*, the logic of integration can be understood as the theatrical appropriation of the racially-inflected cinematic phenomenon of synchronization. In the case of *Oklahoma!*, the discourse of integration seems to be an attempt to mute the power of the diva, emphasizing instead the concepts of “ensemble” and “text.” A close reading of Wagner shows how he adopts the same attitude toward the diva, revealing unexpected parallels between the “integrated musical” and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. I also explore how dance has been central to discussions of integration: I argue that scholars were unable to take dance seriously—or to claim that it was “integrated”—until the subject matter of dance became serious itself. Only when *Oklahoma!* choreographer Agnes de Mille began to imbue choreography with dark, somber themes did critics conclude that the interludes of dance were integrated. This attitude towards dance also allowed scholars to claim, retrospectively and quite incorrectly, that *The Black Crook* was nothing more than a burlesque or a “girlie” show.

Thus, these claims of integration are not claims about the formal features of the genre; instead, they represent attempts by critics to smooth over the inevitable gaps between dialogue, song, and dance. The motivations for these attempts are manifold and complex: in some cases, such claims of integration endow the musical with the sense of being “art”; in others, these claims diminish the power of the female performer; in yet others, they respond to the growing threat of film to live entertainment. In almost none of these cases, though, does integration refer to the poetics of the form.

Having spent the first four chapters arguing that we have long misapplied the term “integration,” I conclude the dissertation by claiming that there *is* such a thing as an integrated musical. *Ballet Ballads* and *The Golden Apple*, two works by Jerome Moross, John Latouche, and Hanya Holm, are through-sung and through-choreographed; at the time of their production, virtually all of the contemporaneous critics recognized these pieces as being unique syntheses of music, dance, and action. Though they have some operatic qualities, they avoid recitative, instead linking Broadway-style songs with pantomime, thus remaining solidly within the tradition of musical theatre. By attempting to unite the arts without sequestering dialogue, music, and dance to discrete episodes, these pieces challenge our understanding of integration and require us to rethink the principles upon which we have understood the historical development of musical theatre.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The inevitably arduous task of writing a dissertation has been largely an unexpected joy. For this blessing I must thank my stellar committee: Shannon Jackson, Linda Williams, and Shannon Steen. Shannon Jackson provided wonderful counsel and encouraged my project from the very start. She also found time to discuss my writing style and my approach to organization—something for which I am very grateful. In Linda Williams I found a great champion of my work, and an interlocutor who approached my project with an open mind and a generous spirit. Shannon Steen shared her love of musical theatre with me, and her critical insight and wonderful sense of humor have proven invaluable.

I extend thanks as well to the Berkeley's Center for Race & Gender, the Townsend Center for the Humanities, and the Department of Rhetoric for their help in funding my research. Susanna Moross Tarjan provided materials without which the last chapter could not have been written.

Had I not met Suzanne Cusick ten years ago, this dissertation would not exist; she alone set me on the academic path whose endpoint you now behold, and for that and so much more I am endlessly grateful. Fred Maus, too, deserves thanks for his unflagging mentorship. Others at the University of Virginia remain as influential as ever: Rita Felski, an exemplary teacher whom I admire deeply, as well as Jennifer Wicke, who showed me the joys of the English language. At Berkeley, Richard Taruskin instilled within me a sense of the nobility of scholarship; to participate in his seminar was the highlight of my graduate study. Victoria Kahn, Bennie Leonard, and Jonathan Flatley, too, were kindred spirits along the way. Lynn DeLaurette has been a true guiding light.

Maxine Fredericksen has proven to be a wonderful comrade without whom my time in Dwinelle Hall would have been a much lonelier experience. I thank Timmy Yuen, Allen Young, Benjamin Morgan, and Abigail Fox for their love and friendship. Timmy earns special gratitude for having sat through so many 42nd Street Moon productions with me. (*Hic haec hoc.*) Marianne Constable, Irene Chien, and Nima Bassiri helped me through the very last stages of the dissertation. My family—Mike and Jackie Rogers, James and Vera Rogers, Jan Rogers, Frances Blaisdell, and Jeannie Blaisdell—have been lifelong supporters, always encouraging me and taking great pride in my work. So too has Dolores Eanes; an electric memory from my childhood involves holding her dissertation in my hands, and now I have my own. My mother deserves special attention for having read to me so diligently when I was a child. I thank my grandmother as well for having helped me go to New York to conduct research.

And I must recognize two very special people: John Mason Kirby, who has opened up his home to me and given me a place to think, and grow, and live. So much of this dissertation gestated in conversation with him, and just as much of it I wrote while sitting at his kitchen table. Last, Brian Knecht has made my final year of graduate study the happiest of my life.

To all of these wonderful people, I offer thanks, humbly and eagerly.

**THE DISCOURSE OF INTEGRATION AND THE PROBLEM OF CONTEXT:
RETHINKING MUSICAL PERFORMANCE THEORY**

Auslander: Musical Persona Non Grata

In his 2009 *Mainly On Directing*, playwright and director Arthur Laurents writes of a complicated moment during the tryout of *Gypsy* in 1959 starring Ethel Merman. Oscar Hammerstein, visiting Philadelphia as a favor to his protégé (and *Gypsy* lyricist) Stephen Sondheim, took great issue with the final moments of “Rose’s Turn.” According to Laurents, *Gypsy* is so designed that Rose is on stage alone after a number ends only once in the entire evening. Thus there is only one place for the star to receive her applause and bow in direct response to the audience—at the end of Rose’s Turn. As written, however, just as Rose finishes and starts her bow, Louise comes on applauding, thus killing the audience’s hand before it can start and getting the final scene under way. This was exactly what we all wanted. Oscar, however, felt Ethel Merman wasn’t getting the applause the audience had been waiting all night to give her; and because they had been waiting in vain, they were frustrated and didn’t listen to the last scene.¹

Laurents writes that the creators heeded Hammerstein’s advice, allowing Ethel Merman to take her bows. As Laurents phrased it, pitting the character of Rose against that of Ethel, “Rose left the stage while Ethel Merman took her bow. Bows. Endless. She brought the house down and the show went out the window.”² Laurents, though, was determined to rescue this moment from the clutching talons of the diva, and he got his chance fourteen years later when Angela Lansbury, whom he hailed as being not “just a musical star but a superb actress and a courageous one,” starred in a London revival.³ Laurents reasoned that the challenge of the number was in trying to communicate that Rose’s strip, unlike Louise’s, is “by a desperate, crazed middle-aged woman who doesn’t actually strip because it’s all taking place in the only place she *could* strip: in her recognition-hungry head.”⁴ For Laurents, the challenge of staging the number is to show how the applause is in her head. As imagined by Laurents,

The stage is ablaze with ROSE in huge lights. There’s a huge spotlight on Rose as she bows to thunderous applause, even cheers...And bows again. The spot goes with her as she moves to one side and bows again. Then the ROSE lights begin to drop out. She bows again. Now the ROSE lights are gone and the stage light is diminishing. Still, she bows again. Only her spot is left now; the applause is dying out. Her spot is reduced to a dim glow. A worklight comes on; the applause peters out, then ends—but not for Rose: she still hears it. She takes a slow, deep, regal bow to deathly silence—and at that moment the audience gets it: there never was any applause for Rose; it was all in her head.⁵

¹ Arthur Laurents, *Mainly On Directing: Gypsy, West Side Story, and Other Musicals* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 32.

² *Ibid.*, 33

³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

Describing Angela Lansbury's performance of his direction, Laurents writes that "[b]y the time all the ROSE lights were gone and she was taking the last bow in a dim spot, she made the by-now-unsettled audience aware something was awry; just what, they weren't sure. And then, as she took that last deep bow, she *smiled* to no applause—to a dead silence." He concludes by noting that "[s]he was acknowledging what wasn't there. It was frightening, chilling; it brought an audible gasp from the audience. They got it." This moment, which Laurents describes with great fondness and awe, is a complex one, and any attempt to account for it must consider the relationship between narrative and spectacle—as well as Laurents' disdain for Ethel Merman's spectacular moment of performance. Is the 1974 audience applauding for Angela Lansbury? For Rose the stripper? For Rose the mother? Does the audience 'exist' in the theatre? In the imagined burlesque house? In Rose's head?

These different levels of performance find some analogue in Philip Auslander's recent and influential account of musical performance. In his "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto," Auslander adapts the work of popular music scholar Simon Frith to suggest that there are three layers of performance which may be active in a musical performance.⁶ Auslander summarizes Frith's contribution by noting that

Frith helpfully identifies three different strata in popular musicians' performances, all of which may be present simultaneously. Frith proposes that we hear pop singers as 'personally expressive,' that is, as singing in their own persons, from their own experience. But two other layers are imposed on that one because popular musicians are 'involved in a process of *double enactment*: they enact both a star personality (their image) and a song personality, the role that each lyric requires, and the pop star's art is to keep both acts in play at once.⁷

Auslander subtly reworks Frith's model to suggest three layers which may be in play during a musical performance: "the real person (the performer as human being), the performance persona (which corresponds to Frith's star personality or image) and the character (Frith's song personality)."⁸ Auslander elaborates this theory of a "musical persona" in his widely read *Drama Review* article "Musical Personae."⁹

Given that the dilemma of "Rose's Turn" focuses on the question of whether these layers interact (and if so, how), it seems to be a perfect case study for Auslander's theories. Indeed, one might reasonably expect that Auslander's work would enable scholars to discuss the complicated relations between these various registers of performance and to articulate the particular fascination that this moment held for Laurents. Indeed, though much of Auslander's writing focuses on pop music, he seems to imagine his theory as a supple and widely applicable methodology: he generously proposes that he "intend[s] the concept of a musical persona to apply in principle to a wide variety of musicians, perhaps to all musicians. My examples here will be drawn primarily from contemporary rock, jazz, and classical music, the practices with which I am most familiar, but I suspect that what I say here could be extended to other cultural contexts and musical practices."¹⁰ To be sure, Auslander even remarks that he "suggested in an

⁶ See Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁷ Philip Auslander, "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 14:1 (2004): 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹ Philip Auslander, "Musical Personae," *TDR: The Drama Review* 50:1 (Spring 2006): 100-119.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

early essay, and will reiterate here, that all kinds of musicians (i.e., singers, instrumentalists, conductors) in all genres (i.e., classical, jazz, rock, etc.) enact personae in their performances.”¹¹ In one footnote, Auslander goes so far as to write that “the purview of the present essay is not restricted to popular music and I wish here to provide a more general theoretical framework for thinking about music as performance.”¹² However, despite these inclusive gestures, Auslander goes on to exclude one genre of music from his theories: he remarks in another footnote that “my analysis here encompasses nondramatic musical performances and does not address genres such as opera and musical theatre.”¹³

Why must Auslander explicitly exclude musical theatre from the purview of his theories? His omission of musical theatre seems even more peculiar given his complaints about the reticence of performance studies to deal with musical performances. In “Performance Analysis and Popular Music,” he writes that “the absence of music from the array of subjects considered by performance scholars seems odd – musicians are performers, after all, and it would be eminently reasonable to discuss them as such.”¹⁴ Auslander then goes on to chastise musicologists as well for being “traditionally uninterested” in performance, and he later complains that scholars in communications and cultural studies are impeded by their “generally impressionistic and synoptic” remarks on musical performance.¹⁵ Auslander summarizes his survey of scholarship by identifying what he calls “the disciplinary dilemma”: scholars who are interested in music generally don’t address performance, while those who deal with performance rarely consider music.¹⁶ In trying to discern why performance theorists might have been reluctant to discuss musical performances, Auslander writes that “theatre studies generally stakes out its territory in such a way as to exclude music, and scholars in performance studies seem unfortunately to have inherited this unwillingness to deal with musical forms.”¹⁷ “Even opera,” Auslander writes, “a musical form that obviously avails itself of the same means of expression as the theatre, is traditionally omitted from the theatre historical discourse. Vera Mowry Roberts, with whom I studied theatre history, argues in her introductory textbook that the history of opera and the history of theatre are separate narratives” since the composer is thought to be the central figure in the production.¹⁸ Having looked suspiciously at theatre historians for shunning musical theatre and opera, Auslander goes on to similarly exclude these very genres from his own theory of musical performance. Why?

The exclusion of musical theatre seems especially peculiar since musical theatre performers must demonstratively enact Auslander’s three levels of performance. However, I believe that Auslander evades discussing musical theatre not because its performers cannot be explained using his tri-partite division. On the contrary, they would exemplify it. However,

¹¹ Ibid., 102.

¹² Ibid., 102.

¹³ Ibid., 102n4.

¹⁴ Auslander, “Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto,” 1.

¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3. As a sidenote, I might caution the reader that two articles which might seem to address this same problem do not; their titles are deeply misleading. The articles are Charles Keil, “Call and Response: Applied Sociomusicology and Performance Studies,” *Ethnomusicology* 42:2 (Spring/Summer 1998): 303-312; and Jonathan Dunsby, “Musical Performance Studies as a ‘Discipline’,” in Dunsby, *Performing Music: Shared Concerns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17-28.

¹⁷ Auslander, “Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto,” 1.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1-2.

musical theatre complicates Auslander's broader understanding of the relationship between music and context. Indeed, Auslander's hesitation to include musical theatre seems to stem from a broader problem with theorizing musical context, with relating musical sounds to the broader circumstances in which they occur and which they may structure. We can see this problem of 'context' by comparing two comments made by Auslander in the very same article. He first remarks that "music is more continuous with ordinary life than the other arts."¹⁹ In the same article, however, he observes that "like most aesthetic performances, formal [musical] performances are bracketed...they are set apart from the flow of ordinary life by means of signs that indicate their special status."²⁰ (To be fair to Auslander, he seems to recognize this dilemma and frames it as such.) This problem of context, though, is endemic to musical theatre studies, where debates about context are framed in terms of the purported integration of spectacular musical episodes within the surrounding scenes of dramatic dialogue. This chapter aims, in part, to show that the disciplines of performance studies, musical theatre studies, musicology, and ethnomusicology share similar issues when relating musical performance to a broader context. After having examined how these disciplines frame their objects of study, I will propose one way of addressing the problem of 'context' in musical theatre scholarship, suggesting that performance studies—rather than diminishing the centrality of musical theatre to its queries—should take musical theatre seriously. Just as performance studies adopted a theatre-based dramaturgical approach to understanding human meaning-making, I would encourage scholars of musical performance to look to musical theatre as one source for understanding the more general dynamics of musical performance.

Further Thoughts About Auslander

Because of the widespread influence of Auslander's analysis, it seems worthwhile to examine in more detail some of the limitations of his concepts. In his *Drama Review* article "Musical Personae," Auslander engages music theorist Nicholas Cook's 2001 review essay on music and performance, taking issue with Cook's discussion of the verb "to perform."²¹ In his essay, Cook argues that "in truth the idea that performance is essentially reproduction, and consequently a subordinate if not actually redundant activity, is built into our very language...the basic grammar of performance is that you perform *something*, you give a performance 'of something.'²² Cook suggests that musicologists can circumvent their greatest impediment to thinking about performance—the intransigent presence of the musical "work"—by beginning to think of the musical work as a "script." Cook writes that "[t]o emphasize the irreducibly social dimension of musical performance is not to deny the role of the composer's work, but it does have implications for what sort of a thing we think the work is." Cook goes on to suggest that the term 'text' (with its connotations of a New Critical autonomy and structuralism) is perhaps less helpful than a more distinctively theatrical word, 'script.' Whereas to think of a Mozart quartet as a 'text' is to construe it as a half-sonic, half-ideal object reproduced in performance, to think of it as a 'script' is to see it as choreographing a series of real-time, social interactions between players: a series of mutual acts of listening and communal gestures that enact a particular

¹⁹ Auslander, "Musical Personae," 105.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

²¹ Auslander, "Musical Personae," 100-101.

²² *Qtd.* in Auslander, "Musical Personae," 100-101.

vision of human society, the communication of which to the audience is one of the special characteristics of chamber music... ”²³

Cook’s position is admirable, and when one reads elegant works like Elisabeth Le Guin’s “One Says That One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep,” it is hard to dispute that this method, when developed ethnographically in the hands of an astute performer and writer, can yield profoundly insightful and sensitive meditations on musical performance.²⁴ However, Cook ventures where performance theorists would cringe, writing that “analyzing music as performance does not necessarily mean analyzing specific performances or recordings at all,” and claiming that we can make speculative observations about “prompts to the enaction of social relationships in the real time of performance.” This, of course, is a pretty deficient concept of “performance,” and Auslander rightfully picks up on it.

Revisiting Cook’s discussion of the transitivity of “to perform,” Auslander proposes an alternate object for the verb, one that he feels will circumvent the usual fetishization of the composer and his work: he suggests that what musicians are performing is their “musical persona.” Auslander writes that

When we hear a musician play, the source of the sound is a version of that person constructed for the specific purpose of playing music under particular circumstances. Musical performance may be defined... as *a person’s representation of self within a discursive domain of music*. I posit that in musical performance, this representation of self is the direct object of the verb *to perform*. What musicians perform first and foremost is not music, but their own identities as musicians, their musical personae.²⁵

I have several concerns with this notion of a ‘musical persona.’ Most crucially, Auslander’s concept of a persona depends on the existence of the social category of the “musician,” the existence of which demands that there be others recognized as non-musicians. Not all cultures have so undemocratically relegated their “unmusical” brethren to the sidelines, where they must often pay money to listen to others perform music. In some cultures, musicmaking, of course, is more widely practiced, with less stark hierarchies among and between performers and listeners. And even in American culture, the notion of a persona may be far more helpful for dealing with, say, the hip-hop industry than it is for addressing how an amateur bluegrass jam session is working.²⁶ Indeed, the asymmetrical nature of musicmaking in our culture seems to be more suited to being interrogated by a theory of musical performance than to serving as the foundation for such a theory.

Also, the concept of a “musical persona” renders musical performance a venue principally for the cultivation of a personality. As Auslander writes, “in some instances, musical

²³ Qtd. in Auslander, “Musical Personae,” 100.

²⁴ See Elisabeth LeGuin, “One Says That One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep: *Sensible, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini’s Chamber Music*,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55 (Summer 2002): 207-254. See also LeGuin’s *Boccherini’s Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and Suzanne G. Cusick, “On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex,” in *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music*, ed. Elaine Barkin & Lydia Hamessley (Zurich: Carciofoli, 1999); and Suzanne G. Cusick, “Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem,” *Perspectives of New Music* 32:1 (Winter 1994): 8-27.

²⁵ Auslander, “Musical Personae,” 102. See also Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

²⁶ See John Blacking, *How Musical Is Man?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973).

personae are closely analogous to movie star personages: in performances by flamboyant rock stars, opera singers, and conductors, among others, our perception of the music is mediated by our concept of the performer as personage.”²⁷ Auslander goes on to note that “even self-effacing musicians, such as the relatively anonymous members of a symphony orchestra or the invisible players in a Broadway pit band, perform musical personae. In these two instances, the musicians’ very obscurity is a defining characteristic of the personae they perform in those discursive domains.”²⁸ There is no doubt that any descriptive account of musical practice must take into account the behavior of the musician, but elevating this behavior and treating it as the principal focus of musical performance diminishes the complexity of that performance and constricts our ability to understand its richness. It also seems relatively limited, as the notion of a musical persona is far more amenable to analyses of rock music than it is to an ethnography, say, of an amateur chamber ensemble or to a study of folk music—wherein the emphasis upon interpersonal dynamics, to the exclusion of diva-like theatrics, can be rendered only negatively.

These are merely some of the reasons that I feel we should approach Auslander’s musical performance theories with some trepidation. However, I applaud Auslander’s interest in a musical performance theory, a rich subfield whose fertile grounds have already been explored by a few musicologists and ethnomusicologists. Strikingly, while many of these musicologists and ethnomusicologists have produced fascinating insights into the dynamics of musical performances, they too have often run into problems when addressing the relationship of performance to ‘context.’

Ethnomusicological Approaches to Context

Ethnomusicologists have been engaged with performances since the inception of the field. Given that many ethnomusicologists study “non-literate” traditions, they were far less likely to be bound up with the ill-advised conceit of the musical “work.” What’s more, many ethnomusicologists did not have the ostensible luxury of studying their music from the comfort of a bound volume; their studies began with field observations of performances – or, even more ideally, participation in performance.²⁹ In the early days of ethnomusicology, there was an eager study of musics theretofore unknown to researchers – but these musics were often taken up as sonic novelties; there exist troves of recordings of peculiar music, entirely untethered from its origin with no notes or suggestions of its context.³⁰ Such recordings, of course, have little significance because they maintain few traces of the moment of performance.

As the field matured, however, the problems attending this model of musical discovery and documentation became all too obvious. As Norma McLeod noted in 1980 in a forum on the ethnography of musical performance, “Our major denial up to the present has been the isolation of music from its context, with subsequent loss of information about the interrelationship between form and performance. Anthropologists have been guilty of the reverse: they have analyzed occasions for music to the exclusion of the music.”³¹ In the 1970’s, ethnomusicologists

²⁷ Auslander, “Musical Personae,” 102.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁹ For an early admonition about participation, see Mantle Hood, “The Challenge of ‘Bi-Musicality,’” *Ethnomusicology* 4:2 (May 1960): 55-59.

³⁰ See Norma McLeod, “Ethnomusicological Research and Anthropology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 3 (1974): 99-115.

³¹ Norma McLeod and Marcia Herndon, ed., *The Ethnography of Musical Performance*, (Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1980), 386. See also John Blacking, “Ethnography of Musical Performance” in Dan

increasingly began to think about the concept of performance. Norma McLeod made the foundations of the ethnomusicological discipline quite clear in her pithy assertion that “performance [is] all we have as basic datum.” Thus, in ethnomusicological discourse, the explicit consideration of “performance” represented not so much a paradigm shift, as it did in musicology, but instead a fundamental conceptualizing of the underpinnings of the discipline. Such scholarship was necessarily imbued with the kind of metadiscursive concerns and the metadisciplinary wranglings that help illuminate the assumptions and values of a field. Questioning the methods of ethnomusicology, McLeod goes on to ask, “Do we know what an ethnography of musical performance should be? We do know that music is culturally produced, created, and evaluated. We have moved beyond the idea that music can be ripped out of its context at will. This leaves us, however, with the problem of context.”³²

While musicological debates about performance were framed by the “work,” ethnomusicological debates were framed far more productively by the notion of “context.” Influenced by the work of anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski and John Firth, who had argued that cultural meanings did not exist outside the context of creation, ethnomusicologists were attempting to understand how sound and context synergized to produce a meaningful, significant experience.³³ Thus, one of the most vexing problems for ethnomusicologists was how to determine how music might—or might not—be performing the identities, values, and selves that ethnographers could more readily observe in other aspects of social endeavor. This paradigm insisted that anyone grappling with musical performance must begin to think about the identities and values that musicians are performing, and that a theory of musical performance must begin to account for the role of musical sounds in that performance.

One of ethnomusicology’s great accomplishments was to insist that musical performance was in no way a supplementary aspect of culture, but instead a central one invested with the semiotic richness which anthropologists accord all manner of human activity. As John Blacking put it in his landmark 1973 treatise *How Musical Is Man*, “Ethnomusicology’s claim to be a new method of analyzing music and musical history must rest on an assumption not yet generally accepted, namely, that because music is humanly organized sound, there ought to be a relationship between patterns of human organization and the patterns of sound produced as a result of human interaction.”³⁴

However, while ethnomusicologists may have made great strides in showing how musical performance had a direct relationship to the patterns of human organization, their methods remained tied to semiotic decoding. The perils of this method—of deciphering extramusical

Heartz and Bonnie C. Wade, ed., *Report on the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley* (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1988), 383-401. For an early work on performance, see the work of David P. McAllester.

³² McLeod, 386.

³³ Of course, though this question became far more common in the 1970’s, it had a distinguished pedigree. As early as 1940, Charles Seeger was asking “What is the relation of music to other elements in our culture and to that culture as a whole?” Twenty years later, Leonard Meyer would question how “initial descriptive data must ultimately be explained in terms of the mental behavior, needs, habits, and cultures out of which it has arisen.” Alfred Behague posed the question, “Does the musical event determine the form of a song or simply condition it?...Do we have suitable analytic procedures to establish convincingly this relationship between the social context of a piece and its internal structure?” And in 1980, Anthony Seeger concisely asked, “Is there evidence of a relationship between musical sounds and context; and how do we discover it?” These quotations come from Norma McLeod and Marcia Herndon’s exemplary book.

³⁴ Blacking, 26.

information from musical sounds—are delineated quite clearly in a number of Blacking’s formulations. Blacking’s focus on the re-presentation of extramusical relationships becomes explicitly problematic when he writes that “we can no longer study music as a thing in itself when research in ethnomusicology makes it clear that musical things are not always strictly musical, and that the expression of tonal relationships in patterns of sound may be secondary to extramusical relationships which the tones represent.”³⁵ The verb ‘represent’ is telling: essentially, Blacking is arguing that music serves merely to present, in sound, things which can be discerned elsewhere. In his baldest phrasing, Blacking claims that “[m]usic, therefore, confirms what is already present in society and culture, and it adds nothing new except patterns of sound.”³⁶ This exemplifies the predicament of much ethnomusicological writing on performance: such writing suggests, admirably, that music is an integral, meaningful component of social and cultural existence. However, it does so only by insisting that music, when deciphered, merely reflects what is already legible.

Writing about the ways in which listeners decode music, Blacking asks, “Granted that music cannot express anything extramusical unless the experience already exists in the mind of the listener, can it communicate anything at all to unprepared or unreceptive minds?”³⁷ Later, he observes that “music can express social attitudes and cognitive processes, but it is useful and effective only when it is heard by the prepared and receptive ears of people who have shared, or can share in some way, the cultural and individual experiences of its creators.”³⁸ Though talking about listeners, Blacking could easily extend this insight to a discussion about ethnomusicologists themselves: the music can be made to “say” whatever we like; so long as one is “receptive” to hearing something in music, it can be heard in that manner.

The complications attending this ethnomusicological trope of correspondence³⁹ manifest themselves in one of the most recent and influential books on musical performance, Christopher Small’s 1998 *Musicking*.⁴⁰ Focusing intensely and squarely on performance, Small’s book broke down the concept of the work with greater force than had any previous musicological work. The concept of the musical work had long governed musicological inquiry: whether dealing with composer biography, style criticism, or hermeneutic investigations, the object of investigation was always the unchanging entity of the musical work. The centrality of this reified “work” went unchallenged for many years, though it received two forceful critiques in the 1980’s. Richard Taruskin’s pathbreaking *Text and Act* emphasized the contingencies inherent in the moment of performance—contingencies which precluded the existence of an inert, reified “work.”⁴¹ In addition, the concept of the “work” also came under attack in the work of Lydia

³⁵ Ibid., 25.

³⁶ Ibid., 54.

³⁷ Ibid., 45.

³⁸ Ibid., 54.

³⁹ For especially egregious examples of this trope of correspondence, see Alan Lomax, *Folk Song Style and Culture* (Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1968).

⁴⁰ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Wesleyan: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

⁴¹ Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Other early scholarship on musical performance involved work on improvisation: see, for example, Terence J. O’Grady, “Interpretive Freedom and the Composer-Performer Relationship,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 14:2 (April 1980): 55-67; and Philip Alperson, “On Musical Improvisation,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (1984): 17-29; and Bruno Nettl, “Introduction: An Art

Goehr, who historicized the concept and demonstrated its relationship to Romantic aesthetics.⁴² Whereas music had theretofore been considered a functional craft, the development in the 19th century of the category of the “aesthetic” demanded a lasting, enduring product – hence, the concept of the musical work. Other musicologists, including Suzanne Cusick, William Weber, and Jose Bowen also attempted to disrupt the unjust hegemony of the “work.”⁴³ No longer was eminent musicologist Carl Dahlhaus’ famous dictum—that the subject matter of musicology was works, not events—true.⁴⁴ It was certainly not the case after Christopher Small’s *Musicking* became widely accepted and celebrated.

Though Small still used the term “work,” he diminished its centrality, arguing that “performance does not exist in order to perform musical works, but rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform... The fundamental nature and meaning of music lie not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action, in what people do.”⁴⁵ He concluded that “it is only by understanding what people do as they take part in a musical act that we can hope to understand its nature and the function it fulfills in human life.”⁴⁶

Small coins the term “musicking” to describe the object of his study, arguing that we must study musical activity and not musical works. As Small observes, “it is not enough to ask ‘What is the nature or the meaning of this work of music?... Using the concept of musicking as human encounter, we can ask the wider and more interesting question: ‘What does it mean when this performance (of this work) takes place at this time, in this place, with these participants?’”⁴⁷ Essentially applying ethnomusicological methods to a classical music concert, Small analyzes the nature of meaning-making that takes place at a concert.⁴⁸ Scutinizing the venue, the event,

Neglected in Scholarship,” in Nettl, *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁴² Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). See also Harry White’s somewhat irrelevant reply, “‘If It’s Baroque, Don’t Fix It’: Reflections on Lydia Goehr’s ‘Work-Concept’ and the Historical Integrity of Musical Composition,” *Acta Musicologica* 69:1 (1997): 94-104.

⁴³ See Jose Bowen, “The History of Remembered Innovations: Tradition and Its Role in the Relationship Between Musical Works and Their Performances,” *Journal of Musicology* 11:2 (Spring 1993): 139-173; William Weber, “Mass Culture and the Reshaping of European Musical Taste, 1770-1870,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 8 (1977): 5-21; William Weber, “The Contemporaneity of Eighteenth-Century Musical Taste,” *Musical Quarterly* 70:2 (1984): 175-194. See also J. Peter Burkholder, “Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years,” *Journal of Musicology* 2 (1983): 115-134.

⁴⁴ See Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J.B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁴⁵ Small, 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁸ Small historicizes the notion of a “concert” itself, noting that the modern concert is an invention of the 19th century, born out of the emergence of the industrial middle class. Examining the venue of the concert hall, Small writes that the auditorium structures a set of human relationships that emphasizes the autonomy and privacy of the individual. The silent, passive qualities of the audience bespeak the consumerist nature of the spectacle. As an ensemble, the modern symphony orchestra grew out of consumerist attitudes, since the occupation of the “performer” made sense only once “listening” became recognized as a phenomenon unto itself, detached from more interactive, participatory modes of musicmaking. The figure of the conductor, too, receives Small’s scrutiny: According to Small, the conductor “may not be needed for the performance, viewed narrowly as the simple realization of the

the ensemble, and the positions of “conductor,” “composer,” and “work,” Small argues that all these elements conspire to squelch the improvisatory freedoms accorded performers in earlier times. Far from the days when performers were almost always composing, and composers almost always performing, the modern symphony concert purports to offer static, unchanging, reified sounds to listeners who, according to Small, seek to be assured that their (dominant) social position is stable.

Small concludes that “the whole event that is a symphony concert as it takes place today might have been designed and indeed was designed, even if not consciously, as an instrument for the reassurance of the industrial middle and upper classes, for the presentation to themselves of their values and their sense of ideal relationships, and for persuading those who take part that their values, their concepts of relationship, are true and will last.”⁴⁹ In that same paragraph, however, Small falls into the same hermeneutic trap as did the ethnomusicologists, writing that “there also appears to be, if not a congruence, then at least a close relationship between these relationships between people as they encounter one another in the concert hall, on the one hand, and between the sound relationships as they are brought into existence by the musicians, on the other.”⁵⁰ Herein lies the complication regarding the musical evidence: Small’s musical analysis quite simply reflects, or re-presents, that which he has already discerned through historical studies and ethnographic investigations. He writes, for instance, that classical music “is a drama, representing the struggle to overcome or at least contain something, some element, that disturbs the initial order and concluding with a great scene of celebration signifying that what had to be overcome has been overcome.” Small ultimately claims that the event of the classical music concert is a kind of “bedtime story” for adults, wherein the sound of the final cadence assures the permanence of order and clarity. The system of tonality upon which classical music is based, then, is situated alongside the other claims Small makes about the concert event.

This exemplifies the rhetorical problem in using musical sounds as evidence for arguments: the music must inevitably re-present the relationships which scholars have already discerned elsewhere, from more readily legible sources. The supple musical evidence is then marshaled (and often contorted) so as to confirm that which the ethnographer has already noted in other realms of activity. This, of course, is but one approach to musical performance, but it is certainly the dominant one, and its relationship to musical evidence remains precarious. The ethnomusicological method similarly remains largely tied to musical analysis and insists on linking ethnographic description with conventional semiotic analyses of musical sounds.⁵¹

Musical Narratology and Context

While the semiotic method was an admirable attempt at discerning the significance of musical performance, another branch of musicological and music-theoretical inquiry came closer yet to addressing ‘context.’ In much of his early work, Edward T. Cone advocated musical analysis as a precursor to performance. By better understanding the structural relationship of a

composer’s notations in sound but he may well be necessary for the social event that is a modern symphony concert...” (86) The conductor, in his account, subordinates the individual to the power of a dominant figure who will resolve any conflict.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 193.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 193.

⁵¹ An admirable exception is Michelle Kisliuk’s *Seize the Dance!* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and her related work on the Baaka pygmies. For an interesting critique, see V. Kofi Agawu, *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

piece, Cone argued, the performer could bring forth a more coherent interpretation of the musical work. In his 1974 *The Composer's Voice*, Cone begins with a similar premise, writing that “the performer, far from being an imperfect intermediary between composer and listener, an inaccurate translator of musical thought, is a living personification of that spokesman – of the mind whose experience the music is.”⁵² Cone then goes on to elaborate this notion, arguing that every piece presents us with a drama of characters and experiences, all organized by an encompassing musical intelligence. Much like the implied spectator of a painting, this musical intelligence, or musical persona, organizes a musical world that we, as listeners, are invited to share.

For Cone, listeners—no less than performers—identify with this musical persona: “What I have in mind,” Cone wrote, “is an active participation in the life of the music by following its progress, attentively and imaginatively, through the course of one’s own thoughts, and by adapting the tempo and direction of one’s own psychic energies to the tempo and direction of the music.”⁵³ Later, he clarifies that “one who achieves full identification with the complete persona of any complex work must not only participate in the fortunes of each complement persona, character, and leading agent, but also experience, vividly and intimately, the course of events produced by their relationships.”⁵⁴ The same demands of identification which Cone makes of listeners and performers are imposed upon the historian as well: “The critic of any work of art should aim toward helping his reader to make personal contact with that work and to experience it in ways that the critic considers relevant to its comprehension. It follows that he cannot criticize a work that he has not vividly experienced himself.”⁵⁵ For Cone, this kind of vivid experience is necessarily a kind of identification, insisting as he does on the encompassing, bath-like qualities of musical sound. To experience music is to identify in the moment of performance with the unified musical world which we all share.

Arguing, then, that all music is the projection of a musical persona with which we must identify, Cone concludes that “a composition represents a human action, and only in a context of wider human activity is its content revealed.”⁵⁶ Cone is reaching beyond the sense that composition is a human action and arguing instead a much more anthropomorphic proposition: that the dramatic qualities of music create characters whose interactions represents human actions, actions which of course signify. For Cone, our store of personal experiences can provide ‘context,’ as he phrases it, for musical compositions, serving as a vehicle for the content. Every piece of music, for Cone, involves a relationship between context and sound, not unlike the relationship between words and music in a song. Cone muses that each listener’s context represents a portion of the entire “expressive potential” of the piece. As Cone writes,

The total content of a complex and profound composition is thus probably beyond the comprehension of any individual listener; it is a potential context matching the entire expressive potential. If the context a hearer adduces is related to the composition analogically, through isomorphic resemblance to its gestures and their structural patterns...then that context will contribute legitimately and appropriately to the total potential...Here, finally, is where the total potential content of any musical work is located: in the relationship among all its contexts

⁵² Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

and in the illumination thrown on that relationship by the musical structure that unites them.⁵⁷

Thus, for Cone, the narrative possibilities engendered by the structure of the music represent the “context” of any musical work. In engaging with the sonic world constructed by a piece, listeners map past experiences onto the music, thereby providing “context.”

Cone’s forceful intervention into music criticism had a number of far-reaching effects. First, it calls into serious question the plausibility of strictly formalist criticism. The contours of stylistic form and convention, he argues, grew originally out of an expressive need. As Cone deftly formulates it, “the formalist is justified in demanding a purely musical context for music only if he recognizes that (above all for the musician) the musical context and the human context are inextricably intertwined.”⁵⁸ Similarly, Cone breaks down the distinction between absolute and programmatic music: All music, he argued, had both an absolute dimension of formal sonic beauty as well as a narrative or dramatic component. This latter proposition ultimately spawned a subfield of musical narratology, with scholars attempting to understand how Cone’s meditations, fused with the insights of literary narratology, could reveal new horizons of musical understanding.⁵⁹ Musicologists and music theorists eagerly pursued claims of musical narrative,

⁵⁷ Ibid., 171.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁵⁹ Music historian Anthony Newcomb was one of the earliest and most influential scholars of musical narrative, particularly in a series of articles on Schumann. In some of this work, Newcomb attempts to use narrative archetypes to help us understand how contemporaneous listeners might have understood some of Schumann’s music as representing “suffering followed by redemption” or, in another case, a “spiral or circular quest.” One of the disadvantages of Newcomb’s approach is that he views the narrative dimension as being invoked by digressions from convention, prompting listeners to attempt to understand the actions of the agents in patterns which they may know from other contexts. Newcomb rarely addresses the narrative component of more conventional pieces. See Anthony Newcomb, “Narrative Archetypes and Mahler’s 9th Symphony,” in S. Scher, ed., *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 118-136; “Action and Agency in Mahler’s 9th Symphony, 2nd Movement,” in Jenefer Robinson, ed., *Music & Meaning* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 131-153; “Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies,” *Nineteenth Century Music* 11:2 (Fall 1987): 164-174; and “Once More ‘Between Absolute and Program Music’: Schumann’s Second Symphony,” *Nineteenth Century Music* 7:3 (April 1984): 233-250.

Drawing principally on philosophical theories of narrative, Karol Berger makes some of the most eloquent and sophisticated claims regarding narrative capabilities of music, arguing that “through the gates of quotation and allusion the narrator’s preterite enters musical discourse, separating the ‘now’ of the immediately heard instrumental voice from the anterior ‘now’ of the mediated voice.” (425) The prevalence of repetition in music requires the vigilance and sensitivity of the critic to distinguish “truly interesting cases... from the ubiquitous and hence rather trivial practices of repetition, recapitulation, and elaboration].” (427) Elsewhere, he persuasively argues that “not all musical forms must be truly temporal,” meaning that some (i.e., lyric) forms of music do not possess “the kind of form in the constitution of which time plays the essential role, because the parts of the whole succeed one another in a determined order and their succession is governed by the relationships of causing and resulting.” (469) The musical lyric, on the other hand, “is guided by the paradoxical, and never completely realizable, ambition to neutralize time, to render it irrelevant.” (469) Berger affirmed that such narrative pieces can present “characters,” and in so affirming, he also affirms some of Cone’s notions of musical agents, uniting them with philosophical approaches to temporality. See Berger’s “Diegesis and Mimesis: The Poetic Modes and the Matter of Artistic Presentation” *Journal of Musicology* 12:4 (Fall 1994): 407-433, and “Narrative and Lyric: Fundamental Poetic Forms of Composition” in Nancy Kovaleff Baker and

with some arguing that certain literary archetypes provided the ‘key’ for understanding certain compositions. Others argued about the means by which the narrative voice could be constructed musically. This kind of philosophical engagement on the part of musicologists had a salutary effect on the field, emphasizing the role of listeners in constructing narratives in the moment of audition.

Meanwhile, other musicologists and music theorists vehemently rejected such claims. The most prominent of these critics included Jean-Jacques Nattiez, who felt that the use of “narrative” in regards to music represented nothing more than an all too elastic conceptual metaphor, one that could not withstand critical scrutiny. As Nattiez wrote, “in itself, and as opposed to a great many linguistic utterances, music is not a narrative...any description of its formal structures in terms of narrativity is nothing but superfluous metaphor. But if one is tempted to do it, it is because music shares with literary narrative the fact that, within it, objects succeed one another....”⁶⁰

While musical narratology did eventually recede in significance, Fred Maus has ably demonstrated how it promoted a new kind of music scholarship that should be of great interest to scholars of musical performance. In a recent review essay, Maus eloquently reconsiders narratology and draws attention to the ways in which musical narratology, for all of its limitations, was crucial to bringing to musicology a certain awareness of the contingency of performance and of the ways in which musical performance invites the listener to “participate” in music in a way that resists standard formal analysis. Considering three essays by scholars who have used narrative concepts to explore music, Maus makes a forceful argument for the ongoing relevance of musical narratology. One of Maus’ examples is Susan McClary’s analysis of a Mozart concerto, in which she suggests that “the solo part enters in a way that seems to reject the motto, and it also ‘strikes out against the placidity of the group.’”⁶¹ As Maus perceptively observes, “the elements—transcendental ideals, social order, and subjective alienation—that shape McClary’s account of the Mozart movement also structure her depiction of herself and her present surroundings. McClary writes in order to dissent from the conventional contemporary understanding of Mozart, striking out against the placidity with which contemporary audiences receive Mozart’s works.”⁶² Examining Anthony Newcomb’s “Once More Between Absolute Music and Program Music: Schumann’s Second Symphony,” Maus notes another intertwining of the critic and his material: Newcomb “claims that musical scholars have forgotten a

Barbara Russano Hanning, ed., *Musical Humanism and Its Legacy: Essays in Honor of Claude V. Palisca* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1992), 451-470, two exemplary explorations of musical narrative.

Other important works are Edward T. Cone’s “Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story—or a Brahms Intermezzo,” *Georgia Review* 31:3 (1977): 554-574; and “Schubert’s Promissory Note: An Essay in Musical Hermeneutics,” *Nineteenth Century Music* 5:3 (Spring 1982): 233-241; Leo Treitler’s “Mozart and the Idea of Absolute Music,” in Treitler, *Music and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Lawrence Kramer’s “Musical Narratology: A Theoretical Outline,” *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 141-162; Fred Maus, “Music as Narrative,” *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 1-34, an accessible introduction to many of these issues; Carolyn Abbate’s *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); and Jean-Jacques Nattiez’ “Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 115 (1990): 240-257.

⁶⁰ Nattiez, 257.

⁶¹ Fred Maus, “Classical Instrumental Music and Narrative,” in James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz, ed., *A Companion to Narrative Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 471.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 474.

humanizing mode of interpretation, commonplace in the nineteenth century, replacing it with a more mechanistic analysis of structure. To illustrate, he tells of a finale that initially disavows certain emotional states and then abandons conventional structural patterns in order to reconnect with them.”⁶³ After making a similar point regarding an essay by theorist Marion Guck, Maus writes that “one could say that these essays reveal the individualized personal involvement that is central to musical meaning and provides content to musical narratives.”⁶⁴ Here, Maus recuperates narratology (and a nascent form of performative writing), almost paraphrasing Cone’s observations about the relationship of “personal context” to musical content experienced in the context of an individual performance.

However, Maus’ lucid formulations simultaneously reveal the trouble with musical narratology as a field of knowledge: it is a profoundly personal affair that insists upon the way in which a listener’s engagement with a musical performance may be in some sense a performance of their own (sometimes exceedingly personal) identity. For many, this personal quality is a context that is too individualized, rendering musical meaning that is significant, but not broadly so.

The consequences of this dimension of musical narratology is nowhere more present than in the work of Carolyn Abbate, who began her career as one of the most sophisticated scholars working on the question of musical narrative. Reacting against the semiotic impulses of musical hermeneutics, Abbate ultimately suggested that these accounts of musical narrative were no different from studies which purported to decipher musical meaning. One might claim that she reacted against musical narratology by taking its assumptions to their extreme, proposing a theory of musical engagement that amplified its individual, sensuous dimensions, while diminishing its hermeneutic component.

In her much-discussed article “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?,” Abbate argues that musicology missed an opportunity to consider musical performance when it underwent a paradigm shift following the publication of Joseph Kerman’s landmark 1985 book *Musicology*, a volume lauded for its insistence that musicology focus on hermeneutic “criticism” and move away from positivist, composer-centered studies of works and styles.⁶⁵ Abbate argues that while Kerman’s approach was certainly an improvement over the musicological past, it nonetheless retained musicology’s total ignorance of performances. As Abbate writes, “while musicology’s business involves reflecting upon musical works, describing their configurations either in technical terms or as signs, this is, I decided, almost impossible and generally uninteresting as long as real music is present--while one is caught up in its temporal wake and its physical demands or effects.”⁶⁶ Abbate urges musicologists to turn “away from musical works as abstractions to be scrutinized for supra-audible meanings, or saluted in prose descriptions, and tur[n] towards events,” cautioning that music scholars must be careful not to turn “performances or performers into yet another captured text to be examined for import via a performance science.”⁶⁷ For Abbate, any attempt to reify musical works or to decode a work’s “meaning” represents an attempt to tame the sensuous, immediate, drastic dimensions of musical performance. This drastic quality of musical performance renders musical performance a distinct experience, dramatically set apart from the rest of human meaning-making. In resisting

⁶³ Ibid., 474.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 475.

⁶⁵ Carolyn Abbate, “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?” *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Spring 2004): 505-536.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 511.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 509.

such meaning, music stands apart, detached from context, and impervious to the ordinary economy of signification.

Abbate's revolutionary understanding of 'context' calls into question some of the most longstanding attitudes of the field, and brings renewed interest to the relationship of performance to musical meaning. There is an uncertainty, and in some sophisticated work an ambivalence, with regard to how music should be understood in relation to its context.⁶⁸ This is precisely the kind of ambivalence towards the relationship of music and context that pervades Auslander's discussion. Any attempt at understanding the complex nature of musical performance must somehow address this conundrum of context.

Musical Theatre: Context and the Discourse of Integration

This ambivalence regarding context is strikingly similar to recent debates and methods within musical theatre studies. Within that field, however, the debates around "context" are modulated into debates around "integration." An integrated musical is thought to unify the various elements—plot, song, dance, spectacle—of the musical into a coherent whole. (The relevance of the term 'context' to this debate is stated explicitly by Richard Kislán in his popular *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theatre*, when he claims that "with a few notable exceptions...an unequivocal concern for 'context' (the book) in musical comedy production was not common practice before *Oklahoma!*."⁶⁹) As Richard Rodgers, one of the foremost proponents of integration, phrased it, "when a show works perfectly, it's because the individual parts complement each other and fit together. No single element overshadows any other...[*Oklahoma!* was] a work created by many that gave the impression of having been created by one."⁷⁰ His writing partner, Oscar Hammerstein II, proposed that the book and music could be unified when those responsible for these components "weld their two crafts and two kinds of talent into a single expression. This is the great secret of the well-integrated musical play. It is not so much a method as a state of mind, or rather a state for two minds, an attitude of unity."⁷¹ This principle has dominated musical theatre criticism since at least the development of *Show Boat* in 1927 and musical theatre historiography since the publication of the first major history, the 1950 Cecil Smith survey *Musical Comedy in America*.

For example, in his recent and influential *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, musicologist Raymond Knapp delineates the course of his study and sketches the components of the musical theatre by writing that he is "interested in the tradition of theatrical presentation that evolves by the third decade of the twentieth century into the semblance of an original, integrated art work intended for a specifically American audience, involving both naturalistic spoken drama and some combination of singing and dancing."⁷² He exemplifies the critical orthodoxy when he writes, for example, that the huge success of *Oklahoma!* "ushered in the age of the 'integrated musical,' in which all the elements involved in

⁶⁸ For a sense of Abbate's ambivalence, see Abbate, 514.

⁶⁹ Richard Kislán, *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theatre* (New York: Applause, 1995), 139-140.

⁷⁰ Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1975), 227.

⁷¹ qtd. in Scott Miller, *The Musical as Drama: A Study of the Principles and Conventions Behind Musical Shows from Kern to Sondheim* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1.

⁷² Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 15.

a musical—music, drama, song, dance, scenery, costumes, etc.—contribute to a single integrated whole.”⁷³

In contemporary accounts of musical theatre, scholars often demonstrate the “integrated” quality of musical theatre works by insisting that the songs are sonic encodings of the drama—just as ethnomusicologists often insist that musical events are sonic re-presentations of extramusical phenomena. In the past three or four years, however, a few scholars have begun to question whether the musical is or even could be “integrated.”⁷⁴ As literary scholar Scott Miller notes in his recent *The Musical as Drama*, “the American musical has been accompanied by a theory easily believed so long as it remains unexamined. The theory is that of the ‘integrated musical,’ according to which all elements of a show—plot, character, song, dance, orchestration, and setting—should blend together into a unity, a seamless whole.”⁷⁵ However, Miller writes,

When a musical is working well, I feel the crackle of difference, not the smoothness of unity, even when the numbers dovetail with the book. It takes things different from one another to be thought of as integrated in the first place, and I find that the musical depends more on the differences that make the close fit interesting than on the suppression of difference in a seamless whole. *Difference* can be felt between the book and the numbers, between the songs and dances, between dance and spoken dialogue—and these are the elements that integration is supposed to have unified.⁷⁶

Miller’s approach points to the peculiar nature of trying to argue that alternating scenes of dialogue and music could appear seamless, and to the way in which such a discourse ignores the pleasurable awkwardness of the musical’s rhythm. Knapp’s approach, the older and more dominant methodology, seeks to decode the musical moments in order to suggest that music is a dramatic force, mirroring the developments of the plot. He argues, for example, that the title song of *Oklahoma!* “attempts to capture, in music and on stage, the spatial expanse of the territory’s ‘wide open spaces.’ The opening of each of the main phrases of the song’s AABA chorus—in which each “A” is double the traditional length of eight bars—creates the signature expansive effect of the song, a single note held for more than three bars on a single syllable, growing to the breaking point.”⁷⁷ Exemplifying the re-presentative element of his argument, Knapp suggests that

the device adds an audible dimension to the description given in the final words of the preceding verse, which links expansive geography to an interior landscape of endurance and optimism...this initial effect of expansiveness is systematically augmented in various ways, and its basis in landscape clarified by the relatively

⁷³ Ibid., 123

⁷⁴ In addition to Miller, Ann Ommen van der Merwe also questions the ideology of integration in her *The Ziegfeld Follies: A History in Song*, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009). Margaret Knapp was an early dissenter from the hegemony of integration; see Knapp, “Integration of Elements as a Viable Standard for Judging Musical Theatre,” in *Focus on Popular Theatre in America*, ed. Henry F. Salerno (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1978). See also Bruce Kirle, *Unfinished Show Business: Broadway Musicals as Works-in-Process*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006). Kirle questions the *hegemony* of the integrated work, although he does not question the utility of the distinction.

⁷⁵ Miller, 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁷ Knapp, 132.

short bridge, according to which Oklahoma is land that engulfs its people, but cannot be owned by them in the conventional sense...⁷⁸

Similarly, Knapp's account of *West Side Story* proposes that "Bernstein's Webern-like manipulations of basic cells may be heard to locate the show on the intractably mean streets of the modern city."⁷⁹

This kind of analysis is musicologically sophisticated but reveals far less about how spectators might perceive musical moments as being related to or detached from the broader dramatic presentation. This becomes apparent when Knapp later discusses the potential allusions in *West Side Story*'s "Somewhere," arguing that

the opening of 'Somewhere' recalls both a passage in the tender, other-worldly middle movement of Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concert, and a bass-line in Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*... While both are appropriate for a projection of a 'better place' beyond the here and now, the Tchaikovsky reference is at the same time the more obviously appropriate and the more obscure, since his bass-line hardly registers beneath the harp and soaring violin line above.⁸⁰

Discovering potential eccentric allusions may elevate the composers of these popular works, but it does precious little to discuss how audiences might be perceiving the work as integrated or not.

Often, this approach devolves into mere analytical description that, through examining the musical in terms which are better suited to so-called art music, might seem to 'elevate' the genre. In his discussion of "The Farmer and The Cowhand," Knapp argues that "after Aunt Eller halts the fight midway through the song, its structure is reconstituted as a more pleasing whole, AB-DE-DEE-C; here, the subdominant "DE" sections address two of the show's central themes in turn: Oklahoma becoming a state...and equality."⁸¹ A similar problem dominates Joseph Swain's much-cited *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey*. Examining "People Will Say We're In Love," a song from *Oklahoma!*, Swain uses musical analysis to argue that "[w]hat is remarkable in *Oklahoma!* is that [Rodgers] succeeds in retaining a folk song flavor in many of the numbers while refusing the frequent cadences that such a flavor might suggest."⁸² Much of Swain's work is necessarily description, rather than argument:

Any firm sense of conclusion, however, is dispelled by the harmony and descending bass line; the chord at that point is vi, not I, and the cadence is deceptive. The tension in the song is therefore maintained, and thereafter increased as the bass line becomes chromatic, and as the last phrase sustains a prolonged dominant harmony under the repeated Bs of the melody. There is no strong cadence at all until the very end of the refrain. This sort of melodic

⁷⁸ Ibid., 132. Writing of a moment in *West Side Story*, Knapp uncharacteristically posits that the music may express something at least vaguely unsuggested: "By thus recreating the basic three-note cell within one layered sonority (a gesture recalling the modernist Stravinsky as well as Webern), Bernstein insists on the harsh realities that pervade the show while at the same time reaching aspirationally for something better."

⁷⁹ Ibid., 211.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 211.

⁸¹ Ibid., 131

⁸² Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 90.

tension, created by repeated delay of cadence, is the strategem of the Romantic composer.⁸³

By contrast, Scott Miller, questioning the mantra of integration, examines the same song and notes that the song “does not fit the plot very well. Laurey sings ‘Don’t please my folks too much,’ but she has no folks in the book. Her parents are dead...”⁸⁴ He goes on to complain that we could go on about the patterns of repetition that give this duet its lift, but the point is that this beautifully crafted song is not well integrated into *Oklahoma!*, it does not fit its plot and character, it violates the theory of the unified musical, and no one cares. Integration is not the point. The book has been interrupted for a good song about love, giving Laurey and Curly a chance to switch into performance mode, and the musical is finding its groove.”⁸⁵

To be fair, Miller sometimes hedges his admirable and emphatic declaration of the musical’s disjunctive qualities by noting that “Sometimes the elements *are* integrated, but I still feel the difference.” And Knapp is able to see how musical moments can be fundamentally detached: he argues, for example, that “we in the audience pretend through the convention of ‘suspending disbelief’ not to notice how artificially the emotional level has suddenly shifted into a higher gear—all the while relishing the performance as such, as an event unto itself.”⁸⁶ But these two positions—either viewing the musical moments as sonic (and decodable) re-presentations of the verbal material, or viewing them as sensuous spectacles that dramatically resist such coding—remain the dominant ways of understanding musical theatre (with the former being far, far more prevalent). And these two approaches—which we might call the semiotic and the spectacular—bear a striking similarity to some of the approaches to context broached in the earlier portion of this chapter: it is unclear how best to understand the relationship of these musical spectacles to the broader context in which they are embedded. Put concisely, it is difficult to maintain a scholarly mode of analysis that treats these sensuous, spectacular moments as powerful without diminishing that power by attempting to endow them with unnecessary semiotic ends.

Returning to Arthur Laurents’ anecdote regarding Ethel Merman, Angela Lansbury, and the “Rose’s Turn” dilemma, it is interesting to note how Laurents is grappling, in his own way, with the “context” of the spectacular moment of performance within the broader narrative. According to Laurents, Merman’s old-time vaudevillian bow meant that “Rose left the stage while Ethel Merman took her bow. Bows. Endless. She brought the house down and the show went out the window.” Surely Laurents protests too much. The number was, after all, explicitly called a “turn,” invoking the vaudevillian mode of performance, a mode that would demand the very kind of bow that Merman was taking. But Laurents clearly resented the recognition of this moment of performance, and when he directed the show fifteen years later, he was anxious to find a way to squelch this recognition, or at least to trouble it.

Laurents’ disdain for indulging the audience’s desire to applaud, their desire to acknowledge that they have just witnessed a bravura star turn, is born of the same desire that motivates those who claim that the musical is integrated. For many critics, as for Laurents, a sophisticated musical theatre must never possess—or, at least, admit to—these ostensibly awkward shifts between narrative and performance. My dissertation insists upon the ruptures, insists upon the fact that musicals contain alternating scenes of dramatic dialogue and musical

⁸³ Ibid., 91

⁸⁴ Miller, 40.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁶ Knapp, 12-13.

spectacle. My goal is to understand how, given the undeniable alternation of the form (with its inevitable disjunctions), scholars and critics have repeatedly declared the musical to be ‘integrated.’ While I clearly sympathize with Miller’s assumptions, I will attempt to take seriously the tenacity with which scholars have argued that the musical is integrated and to discern what integration might have meant for those who advocated it. One of the factors which has allowed this ill-fitting discourse to take hold is that many of its proponents argue their case using only formal textual analysis. As Bruce Kirle has argued, this method is deeply problematic, since musicals, with their confluence of many performers and modes of performing, are bound up with a seemingly infinite number of contingencies and possibilities in performance.⁸⁷ The same, though, could be said of virtually any performance, and Abbate rightfully reminds us that hermeneutic examinations of texts do very little to illuminate the dynamics of musical performance. My goal will be to examine how certain components or conventions of performance—divas, dancers, and the relationship of musicals to film and opera—have helped to consolidate this fictive sense of integration. By a close examination of some allegedly primal moments of integration, I hope to do nothing less than to dismantle this most disingenuous and obfuscating rhetoric.

In the next three chapters, I examine three shows generally agreed upon as three of the most revolutionary moments in musical theatre, each invested with particular weight in the history of musical theatre. I begin with *Show Boat*, the 1927 Kern-Hammerstein musical whose relevance for this study can be seen in John Bush Jones’ pithy formulation that “...*Show Boat* was the first large-scale, successful integrated musical on Broadway.”⁸⁸ Through a close reading of contemporaneous reviews, I show how the integration of the stage production of *Show Boat* is inextricably tied to the simultaneous development of talking pictures. As it was used to describe *Show Boat*, the logic of integration can be understood as the theatrical appropriation of the racially-inflected cinematic phenomenon of synchronization.

In chapter 3, I examine the show that, as we have seen, is almost universally cited as heralding the maturity of the integrated musical form: *Oklahoma!*⁸⁹ As Gerald Mast put it in

⁸⁷ See Kirle, chapter 1, “Celebrating Incompleteness.”

⁸⁸ John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003), 76. David H. Lewis also remarks that “*Show Boat* advanced in broad strokes a movement already in motion towards the musical play whose songs were an integral part of the action,” in his *Broadway Musicals: A Hundred Year History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002), 22.

⁸⁹ Gerald Mast writes, “Specifically, Rodgers and Hammerstein set new goals for the America musical play...*Oklahoma!*...was a revolutionary manifesto that banished *Junemoon* musicomedie as it raised the integrated musical to the seat of power and influence. The concept of an integrated musical deserves our attention. Many twentieth-century musicals aimed for and achieved an homogenous synthesis of dramatic, theatrical, and performance components. The Princess Theatre shows, the Romberg operettas, and the best of Rodgers and Hart held the stage on that merit. Integration implies more than synthesis, however; it implies the successfully coordinated ability of all elements of a musical show to push the story forward out of proportion to the individual weight of each element. Not only does every element fit perfectly into an integrated show, each functions dramatically to propel the book forward,” in *Can’t Help Singin’: The American Musical on Stage and Screen* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1987), 146-147. In *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre*, Andrew Lamb argues that “[w]hat Kern and Gershwin had experimented with as far back as the 1920’s—a piece that was not just a collection of catchy numbers, but a fusion of drama, song, and dance—became a reality in 1943,” (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 258. John Kenrick similarly writes that “Throughout [*Oklahoma!*], every word, number, and

his chapter on Rodgers & Hammerstein, Hammerstein “envisioned a totally unified American music drama in which songs define the characters and drive the narrative, translating Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* into American theatre tastes and cultural terms.”⁹⁰ In this chapter, I show how the ostensible integration of *Oklahoma!* is dependent on diminishing the power of the diva, emphasizing instead the concepts of “ensemble” and “text” over that of the star performer. A close reading of Wagner shows how he, too, performs this very same attitude toward the diva, forging unexpected parallels between the “integrated musical” and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

The widespread embrace of integration in the wake of *Oklahoma!* cast a long historiographic shadow, with writers and critics newly embarrassed by the frivolity that constituted musical theatre in its early days. As Bruce Kirle notes, for example, of the 1946 revision of *Show Boat*,

Kim’s act 2 specialty in 1927 was a reprise of “Why Do I Love You,” in which Norma Terris impersonated show business figures of the day. By 1946 Kim’s impersonations were replaced by a character ballad, “Nobody Else But Me.”...Most important, Captain Andy lost his 1927 act 1 specialty in the 1946 revival...Instead of choosing well-known comedians to play Andy and Parthy, Hammerstein cast Ralph Dumke and Ethel Owens, two character actors who were hardly box office names. In effect, Hammerstein trimmed the vaudeville elements from the piece, making *Show Boat* more in line with the post-*Oklahoma!* musical play he was developing with Rodgers.⁹¹

Similarly, the success of *Oklahoma!* created a new mode of theatre historiography, one intent on celebrating the narrative of an ever-more integrated musical theatre. With this in mind, I look back at how scholars and critics have characterized *The Black Crook*, the 1866 extravaganza sometimes considered to be the first musical. Gerald Mast gives some sense of the tone that often attends descriptions of *The Black Crook*:

According to critical consensus and traditional thinking, the first American musical was *The Black Crook*, which opened in New York City on September 12, 1866. According to the same consensus and thinking, the first fully “mature” American musical was *Show Boat*, which opened in New York on December 27, 1927. The dates alone imply that for half its history the American musical remained a juvenile, growing slowly and gropingly, in search of its forms, aims, and directions.⁹²

Mast goes on to write that “*The Black Crook* was a show that had everything: melodrama, romance, comedy, dance, song, specialty acts, spectacular scenic effects, elaborate costumes, and legs, legs, legs.”⁹³ I attempt to show how the “legs” of *The Black Crook* were the element that above all precluded its being integrated into the history of musical theatre. In the last chapter, I consider the possibility of an integrated musical theatre based on an operatic mode of construction. Given that the ideology of integration is, as we will see in chapter 3, deeply embedded with operatic values, it is unsurprising that critics and audiences received *Show Boat*

dance step was an organic part of the storytelling process. Instead of interrupting the dialogue, each song and dance continued it. For the first time everything flowed in an unbroken narrative line from overture to curtain call” in his *Musical Theatre: A History* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 248.

⁹⁰ Mast, 201.

⁹¹ Kirle, 37-38.

⁹² Mast, 7.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

and *Oklahoma!* as adumbrating an American form of opera. Stark Young, for example, reviewed the original production of *Show Boat* and wrote that “[s]ome of its best numbers are so successful in their combination of the theatrical elements, music, acting, scene, as to suggest openings for the development not of mere musical comedy, but of popular opera.”⁹⁴ (*Oklahoma!*, too, was heralded as a folk opera.) Given opera’s relationship to integration, then, I explore how some of the early Broadway operas figure in the debates surrounding integration. I focus on *Ballet Ballads* and *The Golden Apple*, two works by Jerome Moross and John Latouche, works which I argue show the very limited conditions under which a “musical” might be seen as integrated.

One broader consequence of this understanding of integration is that it suggests a way for performance scholars to intervene in the debates surrounding context and performance in musicology and ethnomusicology. In demonstrating that claims of “integration” must be situated and understood within very specific historical and cultural conditions, I am performing one kind of task ideally suited to the scholar of performance: ethnographically determining how auditors and spectators forge links between sound and significance, between spectacle and narrative. Free of the musicologist’s semiological baggage, performance scholars are uniquely situated to elaborate the modes of meaning-making whereby someone might claim music to be integrated with its context. By rightly insisting that the grounds of musical signification change from context to context, performance scholars may determine how musical meaning is constructed without relying on an improperly generic mode of musical analysis, and without proposing grand theories that resist portability from culture to culture. By instead focusing on developing methodologies that discern how these signification structures change from culture to culture, and event to event, performance scholars may be able to contribute to a musical performance studies that is truly musical. And, as in the case with my study, it may in fact shed light on the musical itself.

⁹⁴ qtd. in Stanley Green, *Musical Comedy: Told Through the Careers of Its Foremost Composers and Lyricists* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1969), 77.

THE SYNCHRONIZATION OF THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE, OR
SHOW BOAT, THE MOVIES, AND INTEGRATION

It is a scholarly commonplace to observe that *Show Boat*, through its landmark integration of its score, inaugurated the tradition of the modern musical. As Mark Steyn observes, “Mozart may have better music, Shakespeare better words, but only in the American musical play do we see the constituent elements fusing to create a unified, indissoluble identity.”⁹⁵ “We’ve known all this,” he continues, “since the opening night which opened it all up: 27 December 1927.” Echoing this sentiment, Cecil Smith of the *Los Angeles Times* later spoke of “an integration of music and drama...which make[s] *Show Boat* the fore-runner of the modern musical theater,”⁹⁶ while Howard Barnes mused, “...put comedy and music together in an integrated entertainment and toss in dances and odd turns for good measure and ‘Show Boat’ is the show—a miraculous musical comedy.”⁹⁷ Even the earliest of commentaries on *Show Boat* traffic in this kind of assertion: when Ziegfeld revived the show in 1932, for example, Brooks Atkinson remarked that it was “still the most beautifully blended musical show we have had in this country.”⁹⁸ How would such a blending work? What, we might ask, is being blended?

In a 1929 encomium of Kern in *Modern Music*, composer and music critic Robert Simon seemed to give some sense of what the newspaper reviewers might have meant by their vague claims of the score of *Show Boat* being ‘blended’ or ‘integrated’—even though Simon never used either of these terms himself. Writing just a little over a year after the opening of *Show Boat*, Simon attempted to distinguish Kern from the majority of his contemporaries, observing that

Perhaps one might help to place Kern in his proper light by sketching the process by which musical comedies of the common variety are generated. They are not composed; they are assembled. The composer, who rarely is a trained musician, is expected to manufacture two or three song hits. If he cannot produce these perquisites, other composers may be invited to submit their best melodies. The potential hits are “spotted,” i.e., placed at various strategic points in the sequence of the book, and the other numbers are fashioned as painlessly as possible to occupy places in which music may be required. What the producers and writers expect to be the hits may be lyrically and musically quite alien to the story and completely out of tone with the libretto, but nobody worries unduly on that score. Appropriateness and characterization do not enter into the scheme. More than one musical comedy has been composed before it has been written. Composers

⁹⁵ Mark Steyn, *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight: Musicals Then and Now* (Boston: Faber & Faber, 1997), 21.

⁹⁶ Cecil Smith, “‘Show Boat’ Drops Anchor at 1st and Grand,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 September 1967.

⁹⁷ Howard Barnes, “The Theater: Greatest of All Musical Comedies,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 13 January 1946. Peter Riddle baldly refers to Hammerstein being able to “attain the fullest possible integration of the songs and the story.” (Peter H. Riddle, *The American Musical: History and Development* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 2003), 48.) Gerald Bordman hedges admirably in writing that “Once again the matter of integration arises. Given the exigencies of the commercial theatre, the aim of a subtle, seemingly inevitable blend of dialogue, song, and dance is a probably unattainable goal, at least in its purest form. But if inevitability is replaced by reasonableness, a number of our best shows certainly attain it. And *Show Boat* is high among the best.” (Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 485.)

⁹⁸ J. Brooks Atkinson, “‘Show Boat’ As Good As New,” *New York Times*, 20 May 1932.

complete scores before the idea for the book, if any, has been conceived. Eventually the songs are shoved into the manuscript like so many meat pies into an oven. Kern, therefore, is working in a field in which musicianship is not regarded as an essential and in which any artistry on the part of the composer is likely to be considered something of an idiosyncrasy.⁹⁹

By contrast, Simon writes, “Kern is virtually the only one who looks on his score as an entity.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, Kern’s distinction comes primarily in his composing an integral score. Simon goes on to identify what he understands to be some of the distinctive features of Kern’s writing, taking note of the composer’s atypical willingness to employ dissonant notes in his melodies as well as his habit of composing mood-setting introductions for his songs rather than just relying on the customary final four bars to serve as introductions. Simon focuses in particular on the way in which “themes are quoted and even developed in almost Wagnerian fashion throughout *Show Boat*.”¹⁰¹

Indeed, this Wagnerian use of leitmotifs¹⁰² seems almost to encompass what many thought to be the dramatic use of music in *Show Boat*. Simon writes that “in *Show Boat*, Kern has an opportunity to make much of his dramatic gift,” noting in this same discussion that “the action is accompanied by a great deal of incidental music...[which] heightens immeasurably the emotional value of the situation.”¹⁰³ Simon is certainly right to celebrate Kern’s unusual facility of melodic economy and development. However, it is unclear to what end Simon apprehends these gifts as serving. In other words, what values are being associated here with leitmotivic development and its potential to integrate or blend music?

Unsurprisingly, much of Simon’s appreciation of Kern focuses on how unusual it is for such a profound level of artistic skill to be exhibited in a composer of *popular* song. Indeed, he is forthright in claiming that Kern’s work displays “craftsmanship and a definite musical self-respect which is conspicuously lacking in most of our purveyors of shows.”¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere, he refers to Kern as a “well-trained, practical musician, who not only knows what a fugue is, but even can write one without having a ghost composer.”¹⁰⁵ His lamentation of the composer’s talent being wasted on the popular stage approaches campiness in his final paragraph: According to Simon, “[T]hat most of Kern’s craftsmanship has been employed in the service of the commercial stage is regrettable, although it is heartening to know that it has enabled him to become one of our foremost collectors of first editions. (He reads them, too).”¹⁰⁶ In formulations such as this, the bias against the popular aspect of the musical stage becomes not only visceral, but palpably ridiculous as well.

This waste of Kern’s talent on popular music, it seems, was particularly egregious since it deprived him of working on the grand scale of opera for which such talent is naturally intended. Simon’s investment in Kern’s unrealized potential reaches its conclusion when he opines that

⁹⁹ Robert Simon, “Jerome Kern,” *Modern Music* (Feb 1929): 21.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰² A leitmotiv is a musical theme repeated and developed in the course of a musicodramatic work, often used in association with and in delineation of a particular character, setting, or action.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 24. However, it should be noted that Simon’s account of Kern finds the music *accompanying* the action, and Kern’s dramatic gift being exercised in a register *parallel* to that of the action.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

Show Boat is an epitome of Kern, although I suspect that he will surpass even this score when he finds a libretto which is designed as a vehicle for music rather than as a piece for popular approval. Not, I add, that *Show Boat* is not a masterpiece of its kind and a refreshing innovation in libretti. It probably goes as far to the left as possible, for a libretto has to be produced by a manager who expects a fairly certain return on a large investment.¹⁰⁷

The degree to which these appreciations are based on operatic values becomes even clearer in Simon's assertion that "if theatrical circumstances permitted, he would dispense entirely with dialogue and convert light opera into what he has designated as *leit opera*."¹⁰⁸ For Simon, it seems that *Show Boat* succeeds as a musical precisely because Kern strives to transcend the form and, ultimately, to write something other than a musical. In championing what he feels to be Kern's interest in eliminating dialogue, Simon reveals that he is looking not for an American musical, but for an American form of opera—for these operatic values are decidedly unconcerned with the relationship between dialogue and song, a relationship that is precisely constitutive of musical theatre. Thus, for Simon at least, the claim of blending seems rooted in a denigration of the popular form of musical theatre.

Simon's claim of leitmotivic sophistication is also a central aspect of two relatively recent musicological discussions of *Show Boat*. Both Geoffrey Block and Joseph Swain make arguments for the integrated qualities of *Show Boat*'s score, drawing on musical analysis to support their claims. However, the analyses offered hardly justify the notion that these moments are integrated or blended. To take one of [Swain's] examples of a sophisticated use of a leitmotiv in *Show Boat*, we can observe that a snatch of melody first heard with Parthy's entrance is heard again just as Magnolia realizes that she cannot fraternize with Ravenal. This leitmotiv, according to Swain, suggests or confirms that Magnolia—on uncertain ground in her dealings with the mysterious gentleman—is reticent to stay, knowing as she does that her stern mother would disapprove. This evocation of Parthy is undoubtedly musically sophisticated, but we can hardly call this "integration." What has been integrated? Certainly no characters have successfully integrated a song into the action. In fact, even in its instrumental guise, the use of Parthy's theme cannot really be called a *dramatic* use of music, for dramatic action has not been effected. Rather, it is at best a *narrative* use of music to suggest very subtly a psychological motive for an action, and it in no way deploys the interruptive, spectacular nature of song and dance to the unfolding of a story—as the songs of *Show Boat* certainly do.

The closest thing to dramatic action effected through song occurs in "Make Believe," in which, according to Geoffrey Block, "Kern's purpose... is to provide a musical narrative that accurately reflects the psychological progression of a budding romance."¹⁰⁹ It is important to note that the song feels as though it could be taken from just about any operetta of the 1920's, and the subsequent success of the number as a popular song—in recordings by stars as diverse as Bing Crosby, Jo Stafford, and Harry Nilsson—testifies to the ease with which it can be detached from its context. For Block, the success of "Make Believe" is that "although Magnolia wants to pretend that Ravenal is only 'playing a lover's part,' Kern's music belies Hammerstein's words." This, Block argues, is accomplished through Magnolia's willingness to adopt Ravenal's musical terms: she joins in waltz-time when he does, and she later sings the opening bars of "Make Believe," musical material first introduced by Ravenal, in a key an ecstatic half-step above his

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 23-4.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰⁹ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 37.

initial key of D. This is certainly the closest we come to “musical integration,” but such an assertion strikes me as a bit conceptually bloated. Ultimately, when critics claim that “Make Believe” tells a story, these accounts are not much more complicated than associating the “blending” cited in the lyrics (“Make believe our hearts are blending, in a phantom kiss, or two or three...”) with the actual blending of voices.

The problems attending this musicological trope of correspondence manifest themselves in Block’s account of Ravenal’s “Where’s the Mate for Me?”: the line, “I drift along with my fancy,” Block reports, is quite effective, not least since Kern sets the word “fancy” first on what Block calls “a fancy (and deceptive) resolution to a minor triad on the sixth degree on the scale” and later “with his fanciest chord.”¹¹⁰ The spottiness of this simple game of correspondence becomes even more obvious when we consider Block’s explication of Kern’s setting both syllables of the words ‘upstream’ on D, the lowest tone in the melody, necessarily approached by *downward* motion. Block writes that the D on which are sung both syllables of ‘upstream’ “is paradoxically the *lowest* note of the phrase—after all, the point is that Ravenal does not care whether he is going upstream or downstream.”¹¹¹ This is an elegant and ingenious reading, but demonstrates the precarious nature of searching for correspondences between lyrics and music, and between music and dramatic action. Since the evidence is altogether too supple, it can support any number of conclusions and almost requires the conclusions to be made in advance and evidence subsequently marshaled to support them. Why should certain notes or phrases be read quite literally while others are happily read ironically?

Furthermore, Block’s notion that the music must “reflect” the psychological progression of the narrative exemplifies the semiotic approach to the musical by which critics almost inevitably assign music to a secondary role of reflecting or mirroring the dramatic action. When Simon, for example, judges some songs to be ill-fitting for a particular show, we must demand: ill-fitting with regard to what? Why cannot a show be written around a musical score? And why cannot a haphazard amalgamation of storyline and musical episodes synergize into a new totality rather than inevitably be judged as a bastardized folly? In every instance in which claims are made of music being integrated, it is because we have ignored any way in which the musical element can disturb that which we already know from the drama. One of the great early historians of the musical theatre, Cecil Smith, tellingly wrote of *Show Boat* that it was “in its days...perhaps the only musical comedy to achieve a dramatic verisimilitude that seemed comparable to that of the speaking stage.”¹¹² For Smith, the beauty of *Show Boat*’s music was precisely that the musical elements seemed to disappear, leaving only a ‘straight’ play!

Block’s analytical skills are exemplary, and Kern’s musicality is virtually unparalleled, but I feel that we may be so invested in a conclusion—declaring that *Show Boat* is integrated—that we may find evidence for it wherever we look, and accept that evidence unquestioningly. For example, Block argues that the interval of a perfect fourth is used to connote the ‘natural,’ associated as it is with the river and with fate; it is, for example, the interval of “fish gotta swim.” In contradistinction, Parthy is associated not with the euphonious perfect fourth, but instead with chromaticism. Block thus explains Parthy’s theme:

The first two notes of Parthy’s theme are a descending perfect fourth (D-A). But although Parthy may lead a life along the river, Captain Andy cannot and Kern will not make her drink in its physical beauty and spiritual richness.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 36.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 36.

¹¹² Cecil Smith, *Musical Comedy in America* (New York: Theatre Arts, 1950), 276.

Consequently, after this perfect fourth, Kern has Parthy introduce a Bb, only a half-step up from the A but a giant step removed from the natural world of the river.¹¹³

In other words, Block argues that Kern immediately distinguishes Parthy from the rest of the riverfolk by juxtaposing her perfect fourth with less euphonious and “natural” intervals, thereby announcing her rejection of the river. How, then, are we to interpret Ravenal’s music, some of which is inflected chromatically? Indeed, since Block associates “[Ravenal’s] aimlessness with a harmonically ambiguous accompaniment that refuses to find a tonal harbor,” might we then find a ‘hidden’ relationship between Parthy and Ravenal? It’s very doubtful that we would, for they are absolutely opposed in the drama. Here again, the use of leitmotifs provides some evidence that Kern’s score is musically sophisticated—but it is rather specious to jump from this self-evident observation to a broader claim about the nature of musical storytelling through song. The musicological *modus operandi* of the semiotic approach seems at best to find evidence that confirms that which we already know from the dialogue—a claim which misleadingly accords music the sense of being ‘integrated’ with the action—and to ignore most anything that does not conform to our understanding of that dramatic action.

The manner in which these discussions of *Show Boat* devolve into celebrations of Kern’s gifts at melody and development—rather than on any particular dramatic phenomenon—becomes even more apparent in considerations of “Ol’ Man River,” the final song in the first scene. After Ravenal sets Magnolia’s heart aflutter, she rushes to tell Julie, but along the way runs into Joe, whom she asks what he thinks of her mysterious suitor. Joe replies, “Better ask de ol’ man river what he thinks...,” and promptly begins his famous hymn. Swain claims that this song constitutes “another dramatic development,” but this seems a bit much. Indeed, the scene is introduced awkwardly—as Swain himself admits—and constitutes absolute dramatic stasis, containing as it does no dramatic action and relating only marginally and awkwardly to the events which have just transpired.

Swain elaborates and develops his idea that the song constitutes “another dramatic development” in his discussion of the song’s form: “Kern’s melody,” he writes, “is a triumph over the form for an American popular song, a form that has survived to some extent to the present day: AABA.”¹¹⁴ In discussing AABA form, Swain writes that “for dramatic uses...the form has one clear disadvantage, in that the song must end with the same music with which it began. In other words, a melodic idea conceived as a beginning must also function as an ending. In many examples less fortunate than ‘Ol’ Man River,’ the effect is one of a static or even anti-dramatic emotion.”¹¹⁵ Swain goes on to demonstrate how Kern employed subtle shifts in the melody to produce the effect of a series of ever-increasing and unexpected climaxes. While Swain’s analysis is helpful in thinking through the song’s subtle interplay of motivic consistency and melodic invention, I think that he inflates his claim through the use of the word “dramatic.” The ‘dramatic’ effect of ever-increasing melodic peaks is not dramatic in the sense of furthering the action of the play, or even of inflecting the lyrics in any ‘appropriate’—whatever that might mean—way. If anything, the relatively ‘static’ popular form of AABA would seem to befit a song focused on the enduring qualities of nature. When Swain calls “Ol’ Man River” a “triumph over the form for an American popular song,” we must wonder why this beast need be

¹¹³ Ibid., 31.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 43.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 43.

vanquished in the first place. Yet again a musicological argument for the integration of *Show Boat* rests almost entirely on denigrating a convention of popular culture.¹¹⁶

If Robert Simon distinguished Kern from his contemporaries by noting that he did not interpolate pre-written songs into his shows “like shoving so many meatpies in an oven,” it is worth noting that Kern did in fact have a number of interpolations in *Show Boat*. The other best-known song of the score, “Bill,” is hardly a plot number, having been salvaged from another Kern show and interpolated into *Show Boat* as a framed performance, referring to a “Bill” about whom we know absolutely nothing other than that which we glean from this pop song. Kern also allowed a number of different songs written by other composers to infiltrate his score: Sousa’s “Washington Post March,” “Good-bye, Ma Lady Love,” “Georgia Camp Meeting,” “After the Ball,” “Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight,” along with a number of other instrumental allusions, including a couple to music written by Kern for other shows.

However, the notion that such encroachments could undermine the great Kern’s work has not detracted some historians from defending them: Julian Mates, for example, writes that “[m]usical interpolations had been a part of musicals (and of revues) for many years; several musical interpolations were used in *Show Boat*, too, but these were not merely to show off the star’s repertory or to tout some music publisher’s sheet music; these interpolations served to set time and place and tone—relevant interpolations, in short.”¹¹⁷

Thus, the notion that the score of *Show Boat* is “integrated” cannot conclusively be traced to any musical evidence. Even those who argue that *Show Boat* is integrated are hard pressed to discern such integration in any scene following the introductory one. After his analysis of the first scene of *Show Boat*, Swain admits that “[t]here are a number of other fine musical moments in the play, but Kern and Hammerstein never again attempt musical-dramatic integration on such a large scale.”¹¹⁸ Geoffrey Block’s detailed investigation of *Show Boat*’s musicality similarly considers only the first scene.

Neither Kern’s deftness in constructing melodies and developing motives nor his spurning of the clichés of popular culture should be conflated with the bringing about of dramatic action. Furthermore, claims of “appropriateness” are based on precarious evidence and indeed reveal a striking hierarchy in which music must mirror the other events transpiring. Thus, given the degree to which critics have been invested in discussing *Show Boat* as integrated, we must view this “integration” as a discursive effect produced, if at all, only in part by musical forces. In this chapter, I will attempt to articulate some of the qualities and contexts that cultivated and continue to cultivate this effect of integration.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ As one footnote about the denigration of popular culture, it is interesting to note that Brooks Atkinson writes that “... ‘Show Boat’ is a thoroughbred. Having developed logically out of a fragment of folklore, it is a work of art and a classic.” It is rather difficult to imagine the folk who invented this lore! (J. Brooks Atkinson, “‘Show Boat’ As Good As New,” *New York Times*, 20 May 1932.) For further thoughts on commercial folklore in musical theatre, see Walter Kerr’s review of *Greenwillow*, quoted in Steven Suskin, *Opening Nights on Broadway* (New York: Schirmer, 1990), 271.

¹¹⁷ Julian Mates, *America’s Musical Stage: Two Hundred Years of Musical Theatre* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 185.

¹¹⁸ Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 47.

¹¹⁹ This claim of dis-integration may evoke some overtones of Arthur Knight’s influential *Disintegrating the Musical: Black Performance and American Musical Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). However, there are several distinctions that are crucial to make: First, Knight’s account is limited to musical film and does not seriously consider the disintegrated qualities of stage shows, except briefly in

Now, to be sure, all the critical gooseflesh surrounding *Show Boat* was certainly well-deserved: it was an extraordinarily moving dramatization of the Edna Ferber classic, containing one of the most exceptional scores in the history of the American musical theatre. However, *Show Boat*'s greatness cannot account for the claims of formal development that attend this show. It seems to me that one of the sources of the adulation afforded *Show Boat* ultimately stems merely from its attempt to treat a serious subject in musical fashion.¹²⁰ Perhaps the greatest signal that this musical was laden with gravitas came in the much-celebrated elimination of the frothy chorus line, which was replaced in *Show Boat* by two racially segregated choruses.

As Miles Kreuger observed,

[*Show Boat*] was not to be a typical Ziegfeld girlie show, with extravagant routines for scantily clad show girls, and with scenes so casually sketched that the comics could interpolate their specialty routines. This was to be a tightly written musical play with devotion to character development, with songs that grew meaningfully out of the plot, with spectacle and dance only when spectacle and dance seemed appropriate to the story.¹²¹

However, Kreuger must later restrain his claim a bit, sweeping these very kinds of Ziegfeldian excesses under the critical rug: "Except for the Congress of Beauty in the world's fair scene," he writes, "*Show Boat* afforded no such situations."¹²² When we also consider that Norma Terris, the original Magnolia, interpolated her comic impersonations into the show, it becomes rather clear that these two hobgoblins of the musical past did in fact haunt the *Cotton Blossom*.

In mentioning the bogeyman of the chorus line, this review alludes to the longstanding fear of those who would elevate the genre that their beloved (serious) musical would be tainted by the trivializing presence of female bodies. By replacing the chorus line—the very icon both of the frivolous, sensual dimensions of musicals and of the ease with which spectators can be distracted from the narrative—with two racially segregated choruses, *Show Boat* telegraphed its intention to be serious.¹²³

Indeed, if anything, much of the novelty of *Show Boat* was not so much that it told a story in a radically different way, but rather that it told a different kind of story, one dealing with a serious subject. This becomes rather apparent in what I take to be an unusually perceptive review of a 1966 revival of *Show Boat*, starring David Wayne, Barbara Cook, and William Warfield. After praising the production, Stanley Kauffmann concludes with an epilogue of sorts:

his introduction (13-15). Second, despite the title, Knight only cursorily discusses "integration" as an aesthetic, formal category. He situates his arguments among those of other scholars (including Feuer, discussed below), arguing that "the integrated musical shifts and aestheticizes the terms and the stakes of this crisis [of mass industrial integration and social integration] under the rubric of entertainment, and this shift allowed the integrated musical to 'resolve'—or erase—the contradictions between industrial and social integrations." (15) Knight thus accepts the notion of formal integration but argues that it contradicts the social-racial segregation upon which the musical relies. I am arguing instead that the formal notion is bankrupt itself, and relating its usage to that very dependence upon black performers.

¹²⁰ Julian Mates seems to link this with the broader musical developments in his claim that "it was...the attempt to take a musical seriously, to write a libretto with serious themes, to write music specifically for one show rather than for any show on hand, that provided a change in direction..." (186)

¹²¹ Miles Kreuger, *Show Boat: The Story of A Classic American Musical*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 26.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 64.

¹²³ For further thoughts on the relationship between female bodies and musical theatre, see ch. 3.

Oscar Hammerstein's book from Edna Ferber's novel was once considered the harbinger of a new American popular opera, but someone always says something like that whenever a musical doesn't hew exactly to the chorus line. The show is historically noteworthy because it made some attempts at characterization, touched a few then-forbidden subjects, and reveled in some authentic Americana. But perhaps the large terms like 'classic' and 'great work' are dimming a little with time. What of it? We are left with a serviceable show that has one of the best scores ever written for the American musical theatre.¹²⁴

This seems exactly right to me. In order to understand, then, what might have prompted viewers—even, and especially, in 1927—to discern in *Show Boat* the presence of a very new kind of musical drama, we might in fact do well to examine the presence in *Show Boat* of a very old kind of musical drama, one that attracted the attention of almost all the contemporaneous critics.

In the logic of the narrative, the itinerant showboat would drop anchor in various towns and host local audiences for performances of melodramas. In one scene of *Show Boat*, we find the troupe performing a scene from "The Parson's Bride," a classic weepie featuring all the requisite hokum associated with the genre: the heel-clicking, mustachioed villain; the fragile damsel in distress; the musically inflected drama of good and evil. As the troupe performs, the framed audience of the showboat freely hisses at the entrance of the drunken ex-husband, with one rowdy (framed) spectator of the melodrama becoming so enraptured by the production that he begins to confuse it with real life, ultimately threatening Frank, who is playing the villain, by shooting a pistol. Frank runs offstage, leaving Cap'n Andy to take over all the parts, in a flamboyant coup de theatre. This scene was almost universally cited by critics as being captivating: one reviewer, for example, noted an "especially effective [scene] showing the auditorium and stage of the Cotton Blossom Show Boat during the third act of 'The Parson's Bride.'"¹²⁵

Significantly, the critics who were sensitive to melodrama often found this framed melodramatic performance to carry over into the rest of *Show Boat*.¹²⁶ Wilella Waldorf, for example, wrote that "if one scene stood out amid the general opulence, it was that show boat interior with a pretty good burlesque of old melodrammer [sic] going on. Miss Terris and Mr. Marsh did splendidly by the burlesque, even carrying the spirit of it, perhaps unconsciously, into their subsequent scenes."¹²⁷ A similar sense of old-fashioned melodrama permeating the proceedings can be found in a review of a 1960 production in Los Angeles, featuring Joe E. Brown and Jacquelyn McKeever. Albert Goldberg, the reviewer, noted that "the [actors, excepting Lawrence Winters] are mostly decorative, and if they sing rather better than they act, that is all to the good. Sometimes, in fact, it was hard to distinguish between the parody of the

¹²⁴ Stanley Kauffmann, "Theater: 'Show Boat' Back With All Those Songs," *New York Times*, 20 July 1966.

¹²⁵ "W.B.," untitled and undated clipping in the files of the New York Public Library.

¹²⁶ Consider, for example: The very same reviewer who took note of the "especially effective" melodrama scene also noted that "in their efforts to reproduce the old-fashioned atmosphere of the 1880's, the musical comedy authors of 'Show Boat' got caught in their own atmosphere and wrote and produced an old-fashioned musical comedy: fine voices, effective settings, gorgeous costumes, lavish treatment in almost every direction, but none of the speed and dash and novelty for which we look in 1928."

¹²⁷ Wilella Waldorf, undated and untitled clipping in the files of the New York Public Library.

play within the play and the characterizations of the straight drama.”¹²⁸ The significant influence of melodrama—and of vaudeville—is felt, too, in Robert Garland’s review of the original production in the *New York Telegram*, in which he refers to the show as an “operetta-melodrama-vaudeville-revue.”¹²⁹

In finding the framed melodrama to carry over into the rest of *Show Boat*, critics reveal in their comments about the melodrama some sense of what they found so remarkable about their broader experience of *Show Boat*. A review from the 1932 production—the very same review that spoke of *Show Boat* being still the “most beautifully blended show”—elaborates what made this melodrama scene so significant to spectators. In this review, Brooks Atkinson wrote that the “Parson’s Bride” scene is

only one of seventeen scenes, many of which are major episodes, but it is almost a play in itself. Joseph Urban’s triangular setting, with its fantastic décor, makes room for an audience on the floor and in the gallery and for a miniature stage without a sense of crowding. Somehow the scene contrives to give you the entire story of riverboat playing—not only the ingenuous nature of the drama, and the acting, but the neighborliness of the audience and the tense reality of the illusion.¹³⁰

For Atkinson, then, the melodrama scene is charming for its bringing to the fore the “neighborliness of the audience and the tense reality of the illusion,” the latter half of this quotation a seemingly oxymoronic formulation matched by his parallel suggestion that the episodic nature of the play is assuaged by the wholeness contained therein (“almost a play in itself”). This melodrama scene, suffused as it is with music, is a constant reminder to stage audiences of the very “tense reality” in play in any theatrical production—including *Show Boat* itself.

Just as the melodrama scene was noted for transcending the episodic nature of the play, the melodrama scene also shows the logic whereby spectators and critics began to feel that in *Show Boat* they were experiencing a new, integrated type of entertainment. In fact, in writing that they found the spirit of the melodrama to carry over into the larger play, critics and spectators testified to the ways in which the intimacy of the melodrama could be found elsewhere, not least in the sense that the music was emerging organically from the story. When spectators reached for the ill-fitting talk of musical integration, it seems that they were in fact projecting onto the form of the drama their own experience of the play itself. Indeed, the scene’s invocation of the intimacy of stage entertainment—in this case, musical stage entertainment—seems to be nothing short of “blending,” a blending of actor and audience in an organic experience. This celebration of the melodrama scene—the very scene which the critics felt carried over into the rest of the show—seems to praise the theatre for keeping the bodies of actor and audience in such palpable contact and presence. One significant aspect of the integration of *Show Boat*, then, seems to be an integration of actors and audiences, and it seems that the audiences were especially interested in being up close with the actors—particularly the company of black actors.

A survey of the reviews of *Show Boat* reveals an extraordinary investment in the black bodies onstage. Writing in the *Washington Daily News*, Leonard Hall took note of the touring

¹²⁸ Albert Goldberg, “‘Show Boat’ Revival Opens to Full House,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 August 1960.

¹²⁹ Robert Garland, “Master’s Hand Makes Ferber’s Novel Glitter,” *New York Telegram*, 28 December 1927.

¹³⁰ J. Brooks Atkinson, “‘Show Boat’ As Good As New,” *New York Times*, 20 May 1932.

company that visited Washington, writing that *Show Boat* “has a huge company of colored performers, including a hot double sextet of creamy skinned dancing girls whose ‘Dahomey’ number early in Act II, dressed in yellows and reds, is a genuine gem,” while the *San Francisco Examiner* drew attention to the “dusky coryphées.”¹³¹ Writing in *Rob Wagner’s Script*, Paul Gerard Smith enthused, “Particularly let me wave a flag for that colored group. How they sing—and how they dance. And how, above all, they seem to enjoy it. Kenneth Spencer, who did the Old Man Rivering, had a tough assignment...but Spencer did it well, and he was greatly aided and abetted by that swell singing chorus.”¹³² When the show was produced in southern California in 1933, the Dahomey scene yet again captivated audiences, with *Los Angeles Times* reviewer Katherine T. Von Blon writing that “in one or two scenes, especially in the dance of the Dahomey Villagers, the Negro performers became so imbued with the primitive urge of the thing that they rocked with a strange intensity, as though they heard the jungle calling.”¹³³ There was a real sense that the black actors were unmediated, that they were not acting, that audiences were experiencing their jubilant spirit unadulterated. This kind of claim received its most transparent expression in Alan Dale’s review of the original production, when he wrote that “the ‘colored’ people were in their element. I think we are gradually beginning to realize that these ‘colored’ neighbors of ours are so essentially dramatic and so innately theatrical that we can use them for almost anything...”¹³⁴ Indeed, communing with this *unmediated* phenomenon seems to be precisely the “tense reality” that so excited the spectators of *Show Boat*.

In celebrating these black actors, *Show Boat* and its audiences were further consolidating the melodramatic values of the experience. It was on the stage of the “Parson’s Bride,” of course, that Julie was evicted from the troupe for being a “miscegenation case.” Framing this eviction with the stage melodrama aligned the racial spectacle of Julie, and of the black chorus, with a long history of melodramatic spectacles of interracial exchange, including the paradigmatic relationship of Tom and Eva in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. By evoking the most famous image of melodrama—the virtuous white character and the suffering black character—and by focusing attention on black bodies in the eviction scene and the Dahomey scene, *Show Boat* further consolidates its melodramatic ethos by relentlessly exploring the effects of blacks and whites occupying intimate space together and by depicting the suffering of blacks for white audiences.¹³⁵ This exploration of the intimate interrelationship of blackness and whiteness was perceived as a musical exchange as well, with one San Francisco critic, for example, noting that “the operetta has been modernized with hi-de-ho and hey-hey rhythms in its final darky melodies...”¹³⁶ Reviewing the original production, Arthur B. Waters also noted that Kern “has blended the Negro spirituals of the Southland with the jazz of today.”¹³⁷

¹³¹ “‘Show Boat Makes Bow at Curran With Huge Cast,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 31 October 1933.

¹³² Paul Gerard Smith, “Drama and Music: Show Boat,” *Rob Wagner’s Script*, 9 December 1933.

¹³³ Katherine T. Von Blon, “‘Show Boat’ in Hollywood,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 1933.

¹³⁴ Unattributed (presumably Alan Dale), “Show Boat,” *New York American*, 27 December 1927.

¹³⁵ For further thoughts on the racialized dimensions of melodrama, see Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹³⁶ Fred Johnson, “‘Show Boat’ Given Opulent Production at Curran,” *San Francisco Call Bulletin*, 1 November 1933.

¹³⁷ Qtd. in Kreuger, 55. It is useful to remember that jazz was, at that time, largely a ‘white phenomenon.’ One need only remember that the “King of Jazz” was Paul Whiteman to get a sense of what the term meant in that period.

Thus, everything that was central to the melodrama—its suffusion with music, its intimacy, its long history of appreciating black bodies—were all focused on cultivating a sense of liveness, of real contact, of unmediated expression. How did these “essentially dramatic and innately theatrical” aspects of *Show Boat* come to be associated with the “tense reality” and the unmediated nature of its entertainment? The emphatic association in 1927 of drama, theatre, reality, and a lack of mediation seems unsurprising when one considers that *Show Boat* opened a mere couple of months after *The Jazz Singer*, the first major motion picture to feature synchronized sound. In a time when the movies were celebrating the synchronization of voices, live theatre found a striking parallel in the purported synchronization of musical episodes to the broader dramatic demands of the piece. Thus, the discourse of “integration” is in some sense a cinematic phenomenon, both in its appropriation of the cinematic values of synchronization and in its counterassertion of its own uniqueness.

Two months before *Show Boat* would dock on Broadway, Warner Brothers produced *The Jazz Singer*, a film melodrama starring Al Jolson as Jakie Rabinowitz, the cantor’s son who longs to escape his traditional upbringing and find success (and love) on the Broadway stage.¹³⁸ Ultimately, the young jazz singer gets his big chance, but not without a dilemma: when his father falls sick on Jack’s opening night, Jack must choose between taking his father’s place and singing Kol Nidre and following his heart and going for his big break on Broadway. The conclusion of the film finds Jack somehow having resolved all of these dilemmas, performing a number—in blackface—both to his mother, representing the sacred ways of the past, and to his Gentile girlfriend, who represents the sometimes thrilling and sometimes profane values of assimilation. The film, which prominently featured scenes of blackface performance, was a landmark in cinema history and a robust success.¹³⁹

The film, though often referred to as the first talking picture, is more precisely the first narrative film with significant musical interludes; almost all the action and dialogue of the film are conducted in the conventions of silent cinema. Other than the Vitaphone musical numbers and one brief conversation, the movie proceeds with intertitles suffused with a pre-recorded soundtrack. In being so produced, one cannot help but notice that the musical numbers stand out as both more and less realistic: for employing such primitive technology, the verisimilitude of the singing is remarkable; within the realm of the action, however, they remain remarkably distinct and in some ways un-real. Writing in the *New York Times*, Mordaunt Hall seemed to think that the one instance of synchronized dialogue was not nearly as effective as the synchronized musical excerpts. “In the expression of song,” Hall observed, “the Vitaphone vitalizes the production enormously. The dialogue is not so effective, for it does not always catch the nuances of speech or inflections of the voice so that one is not aware of the mechanical features.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, Hall seemed to think that the synchronized blackface songs in some way

¹³⁸ *The Jazz Singer*, (dir. Alan Crosland, U.S., 1927).

¹³⁹ For more on the *Jazz Singer*, see Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants and the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Krin Gabbard, “The Ethnic Oedipus: The *Jazz Singer* and Its Remakes,” from Gabbard, *Jammin’ at the Margins: Jazz and American Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Susan Gubar, “Spirit-Murder at the Movies: Blackface Lynching,” from *White Skin, Black Face in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁴⁰ Mordaunt Hall, “Al Jolson and the Vitaphone,” *New York Times*, 7 October 1927.

helped one to forget the mechanical apparatus.¹⁴¹ In fact, this mechanical apparatus, and a desire to overcome it, seemed to preoccupy many of the contemporaneous critics. The *Variety* review, for example, remarks that “Jolson, when singing, is Jolson... When he’s without the instrumental spur, he’s camera conscious... But as soon as he gets under cork, the lens picks up that spark of individual personality solely identified with him.”¹⁴² Here, as before, we find the apparatus inhibiting Jolson, but this review illustrates how Jolson could overcome the cinema’s besmirching of his realistic individuality: by singing in blackface. The unrealistic dimensions of the film—its interruptions by Vitaphone—could be assuaged by the burnt cork, which made unremarkable both the awkwardness of the technology and the awkwardness of the interruption.

However, blackface seemed unable to assuage all the anxieties surrounding the new entertainment. Indeed, many of the comments of critics testify to a profound sense of alienation. For example, the *Variety* critic brought attention to the disturbing alienation of the voice from the body in a comment observing “the end of the picture with Jolson supposedly on a stage and a closeup on the *screen as his voice pours through the amplifiers.*”¹⁴³ That critic went on to report that “...possibly all that disappointed the people in the packed theatre was the fact that they could not call on him or his image for an encore. They had to content themselves with clapping and whistling after Jolson’s shadow finished a realistic song. It was also the voice of Jolson, with its dramatic sweep, its pathos and soft slurring tone.”¹⁴⁴ It was the “shadow” onscreen, with his voice pouring through amplifiers, necessarily somewhere else—but the song that it was pouring was “realistic”!

Thus, the alienating qualities of the apparatus—and the potential to obscure them—were at the foreground of spectators’ experience of the first synchronized motion picture. However, the burnt cork episodes, the moments when Al Jolson was singing in blackface, seemed to assuage these anxieties; these songs sung by “shadows” were deemed to be realistic. This blackfaced mask was also the focus of the *New York Times* review, in which Mordaunt Hall, having already written that “Warner Brothers astutely realized that a film conception of *The Jazz Singer* was one of the few subjects that would lend itself to the use of the Vitaphone,” went on to note that “one of the most interesting sequences of the picture itself is where Mr. Jolson as Jack Robin is perceived talking to Mary Dale as he smears his face with black. It is done gradually and yet the dexterity with which Mr. Jolson outlines his mouth is readily appreciated.” Indeed, it is the burnt cork mask—and more specifically the mouth, with its blackened outline and exaggerated lips left untouched by the cork—that so captivated these critics. And, as we have seen, this spectacle—in particular, the spectacle of the black mask—did something in denying the technological mediation of the apparatus. However, it seems that it may have denied it precisely by affirming it.

By foregrounding the blackfaced lips—with their insistence on a separation of the visual source of a black body, and the auditory source of a voice issuing from white lips—film was able to link its peculiar method of sound production to a widely accepted theatrical practice. In thematizing this difference, I argue, *The Jazz Singer*—a seminal film in a genre that foregrounds issues of sound and vocal production—is essentially apologizing for the alienated source of filmic sound, an alienation noted obliquely in the review’s related comments about voices

¹⁴¹ It is telling that the one scene with synchronized dialogue is conducted without blackface makeup. The dialogue gets no help from the lubricating properties of blackface.

¹⁴² “The Jazz Singer,” *Variety*, 12 October 1927.

¹⁴³ Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁴ “The Jazz Singer,” *Variety*, 12 October 1927.

pouring through amplifiers, about Jolson's shadow, about calling him *or* his image for an encore. In watching blackface performers on film, audiences could not help but see the blackface performer himself as mediated, as presenting a shadow whose vocal production came from elsewhere, and yet these very shadows attested to the "realistic" qualities of blackface musical entertainment. The focus upon the white mouth of the blackfaced Al Jolson only emphasizes the way in which spectators cathected onto the source of vocal production—one, indeed, differentiated from the "shadow" they were seeing onscreen. In doing so, they aligned the novel experience of synchronized sound with the by-then old hat tropes of theatrical blackface.

If *The Jazz Singer* was reaching into the past for theatrical tropes to neutralize the alienating nature of film, it makes all the more sense in the world why a discourse of black authenticity—rooted almost exclusively in actual black bodies rather than blackfaced ones, with one not insignificant exception—would be so legible to 1927 audiences as being "so innately theatrical."¹⁴⁵ The technology of the *Jazz Singer* reveals both the episodic nature of the musical and the alienated source of filmic sound, while *Show Boat* revels in the integrated nature of its music and its organic nature of theatrical experience—both articulated through the variously mediated or unmediated presentation of blackness.

Dale's praise of the essentially "essentially dramatic and so innately theatrical" qualities of the black actor bears a striking resemblance to Robert Benchley's comments in a 1929 issue of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*. In a review of *Hearts in Dixie*, the first predominantly-black studio film, which Benchley calls "the first real talking picture," he writes that

one of the chief obstacles in the advance of the 'talkies' has been the voices of the actors. Even granted that the sound could be made to come from somewhere near their mouths, the voice itself was impossible... With the opening of 'Hearts in Dixie' however, the future of the talking-movie has taken on a rosier hue. Voices *can* be found which will register perfectly. Personalities *can* be found which are ideal for this medium. It may be that the talking-movies must be participated in exclusively by Negroes, but, if so, then so be it. In the Negro the sound-picture has found its ideal protagonist... And people who have never been able to see anything at all in the 'talkies' are convinced after seeing this one. There is a quality in the Negro voice, an ease in its delivery and a sense of timing in reading the lines which make it the ideal medium for the talking-picture.¹⁴⁶

As Thomas Cripps notes, "there were some who saw the era of sound as the apotheosis of blackness because, they believed, the Negroid voicebox recorded with greater fidelity than the Caucasian."¹⁴⁷ Alice Maurice has convincingly shown the widespread use of this trope, with blackness serving to shore up any number of technological gaps in the fledgling medium.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ The "one not insignificant exception" is Tess Gardella, a vaudeville performer who did in fact perform in blackface in the original production. While Gardella's presence does not invalidate the obsession with authentic blackness—and indeed may have helped to bring it into relief—her presence also shows the complicated nature of popular culture, and the ways in which theoretical accounts must be tempered by the messiness of popular culture's peculiar bedfellows.

¹⁴⁶ Robert Benchley, "'Hearts in Dixie': (The First Real Talking Picture)," *Opportunity* (April 1929): 122.

¹⁴⁷ See Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 104-105. See also Cripps, 219-235.

¹⁴⁸ Alice Maurice, "'Cinema at Its Source': Synchronizing Race and Sound in the Early Talkies," *Camera Obscura* 17:1 (2002): 31-71.

In celebrating the Negro voice as the ideal subject for the talking pictures, Mr. Benchley reveals the interaction between sound and sight—in this case, racialized sound and synchronized sight—that necessarily followed the initial use of blackface involved in naturalizing the cinematic apparatus and minimizing its mediating qualities. Thus, just as the black bodies in *Show Boat* served to stress the unmediated nature of the entertainment, the same seems to be true of the black bodies in *Hearts in Dixie*—unlike the very different use of blackness in earlier films like *The Jazz Singer*. Both theatre and cinema, then, seem to have developed racially-inflected terms for the un-mediation they sought to promote: integration and synchronization. After the initial use of blackface to neutralize the awkward alienation inherent in the initial experience of film, these discourses of integration and synchronization were invested with using the perceived naturalness and spontaneity of black actors to elide gaps in their respective formal structures. As the cinema began to press for a greater sense of reality, in its increasingly successful attempts at the synchronization of sight and sound, the theatre began to thematize its own sense of unity: a unity that manifested itself in spectators' sense that all sorts of gaps did not exist, including the gap between dialogue and song.

Thus, Benchley's remarks illustrate well how black bodies were received in the burgeoning field of cinema, and they also show how theatre and film shared certain strategies for thematizing their purported lack of mediation. If Benchley's arguments carry on a tradition of thought that first found itself being articulated in the realm of theatre, the very same can be said of Jane Feuer's influential "The Self-Reflective Musical," in which Feuer argues that the film musical's displays of performance are deployed so as to deny the genre's intensely mediated nature. She examines the musical's "self-reflectivity," arguing that many musical films are prolonged affirmations of the musical genre itself, ultimately working to mediate three central contradictions of popular entertainment: the myths of spontaneity, integration, and the audience. For Feuer, the musical's investment in spontaneity involves the genre's perpetual insistence that musical performance—and by extension, filmic entertainment—is spontaneous, unplanned, and unlabored. The myth of integration—in Feuer's treatment, the musical's inevitable forging of a group identification—again works to resolve the mediated nature of the musical film by insisting that writers, performers, and audiences are all part of an organic totality out of which sprang the performance at hand. Related to this myth of integration is the myth of the audience, which finds the musical film insisting, diegetically, upon the genesis of the film's musical numbers in theatrical settings in which audiences gave feedback.

Reading those reviews of *The Jazz Singer*, it is easy to confirm some of Feuer's hypotheses, with the *New York Times* claiming that "in the expression of song, the Vitaphone vitalizes the production enormously. The dialogue is not so effective, for it does not always catch the nuances of speech or inflections of the voice so that one is not aware of the mechanical features," and *Variety* similarly claimed that "Jolson, when singing, is Jolson... When he's without the instrumental spur, he's camera conscious... But as soon as he gets under cork, the lens picks up that spark of individual personality solely identified with him." We can see how spectators found the film's musical numbers performed in front of framed audiences to cultivate the sense of spontaneity and integration so central to the musical film. However, in the *Jazz Singer*, this is accomplished through the use of the burnt cork mask, and as we have seen, blackface integrates just as much as it dis-integrates: one function of the burnt cork is to align the movies with a long history of alienated and alienating sound.

Thus, the variously integrated and disintegrated entertainments of 1927 existed in an atmosphere of profound interdependence, and the discourse of "integration" can be understood

only in the rich context of the ever subtle and protean interplay between theatre and film. Feuer's approach is quite starkly deconstructive, attempting to argue that film derived its organic qualities solely from the realm of theatre. However, it is striking to note the irony that Feuer's deconstructive argument about film is in fact more rooted in theatrical premises than filmic ones. Perhaps Feuer would have benefited from taking her deconstructive approach one step further, to show how the theatrical premises upon which her argument was based derived in part from the theatre's early engagement with films. Even in the earliest days of film, theatre and the movies were engaged in a sophisticated intercourse that went far beyond deconstructive binarism—a complex situation affirmed by the circuitous provenance of “integration” in Feuer's elegant argument.

Nowhere can this sophisticated interplay be more palpable than in the 1936 film of *Show Boat*.¹⁴⁹ One significant difference between the stage production and the film of *Show Boat* concerned the Cotton Blossom's performance of “The Parson's Bride”: Whereas the stage production paired “The Parson's Bride” with a dance number by Frank and Ellie, the film version has a bill containing the “Parson's Bride” melodrama and a blackface minstrel number. As Cap'n Andy whirls through the conclusion of “The Parson's Bride,” cuts enable the film spectator to watch Magnolia blacking up backstage. In a further evocation of the immediacy and spontaneity of live performance, she is assured by the stagehand that Cap'n Andy will keep talking, vamping until she's ready. Once Magnolia takes the stage, we view her performance from a number of different perspectives: from that of the audience, from the balcony, from backstage, from the wings. Blacked up, Magnolia strums her banjo, peppering her rendition of “Gallivantin' Around” with all the stereotypical facial gestures of minstrelsy. As the chorus, also in blackface, joins her for a dance number, the film cuts to backstage, where we find Cap'n Andy making sure that Rubber Face is ready for the “moon effect,” whereby the effect of a radiant moon is produced by reflecting a kerosene lantern off a metal lid and projecting the light onto a scrim. When the company sings a last chorus of “Gallivantin' Around,” the camera oscillates between shots of the production, seen from the perspective of the audience, and shots backstage of Cap'n Andy producing the “moon effect” while he muses about how audiences eat this kind of gimmickry up. The scene concludes with a fake bird being awkwardly “flown” across the stage.

It is difficult to ignore the way in which the scene insists upon the moon effect as central to the blackface show. The spectacle of Dunne in blackface is matched, shot for shot, with scenes of Cap'n Andy working the “moon effect.” In the film, the melodrama scene—with its emphasis on live theatricality—is being moderated by a blackface performance, one added specifically for the film, and one which revels in the charm of old-time theatrical gimmicks. Indeed, the film seems to deploy the blackface performance so as to foreground the ways in which theatre is a technical affair, not exclusively an immediate connection between human beings, but rather an uneasy confluence of man and machine, of reality and appearance. Thus, a nod to similar theatrical practices helped to assuage these filmic anxieties by drawing continuity between them and long-accepted stage conventions. Whereas the stage production of *Show Boat* emphasized theatrical values, the film production seems to insist upon the continuity between theatrical values and filmic ones.

This interplay was by no means limited to 1927 or 1936, of course. History seemed to repeat itself in 1956, when Lewis Funke reviewed a particularly spectacular stage production of *Show Boat* and opined that “[i]t is all like those movie gadgets designed for dimension and

¹⁴⁹ *Show Boat*, (dir. James Whale, 1936, U.S.).

realism. Only here it is all really real.”¹⁵⁰ As we have seen, the confusion over what is “really real” is quite understandable, for our sense of the “really real” is informed by our experiences with the celluloid reel. And while much of early celluloid may have literally disintegrated, there can be little doubt that it nurtured the sense of “integration,” that deep sense of presence which is so available to spectators of the so-called “live” theatre.

¹⁵⁰ Lewis Funke, “The Theater: Shipshape Show Boat,” *New York Times*, 22 June 1956.

**THE DIS-INTEGRATING DIVA OF MUSICAL THEATRE:
RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN, BRECHT & WAGNER**

Watching a 1964 episode of *The Ed Sullivan Show* featuring British music hall star Tessie O'Shea, one cannot help but wonder which is louder: her voice, her banjulele, or her appearance. Wearing an ocean of turquoise sequins bedecked with a kelly green boa, O'Shea performs with a slightly carnivorous charm: the downright visceral manner with which she fills space—indeed, consumes it—is certainly part of the allure of her proto-heavy-metal performance aesthetic. As her strumming accelerates to the manic fervor that brings her signature tune, “Two-Ton Tessie,” to a close, one is almost relieved, and certainly surprised, that she doesn't break her banjulele across her knee in a fit of ecstasy.¹⁵¹ Reaching toward the viewer, O'Shea seems like some sort of musical hologram, at once two- and three-dimensional. With such a remarkable power to articulate and create space with her body, it is not surprising to learn that O'Shea won the 1964 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical—without having ‘acted’ at all.

She won the award for essaying the role of Ada Cockle, a London fish-and-chips dealer, in the 1963 Noel Coward musical *The Girl Who Came to Supper*. Produced by Herman Levin, the show was, like Levin's previous success *My Fair Lady*, a Pygmalionesque story of a naïve young maiden who is transformed into a society sophisticate. Ada Cockle had virtually no dialogue with other characters in the play and instead performed an atmospheric song cycle consisting of “London Is a Little Bit of All Right,” “What Ho, Mrs. Brisket,” “Don't Take Our Charlie for the Army,” and “Saturday Night at the Rose and Crown.” This vaudeville turn was the most successful moment in the entire production, and the opening-night reviews focused almost exclusively on O'Shea's performance. Distinguished critic Walter Kerr, for example, began his review with an encomium of O'Shea:

Tessie O'Shea. A name to be conjured with, a face to be cherished, a form to be whistled at if that's all that you can do. (It's what the customers finally did last night, whistling at the girl and whistling at her until I thought they'd blow her through the backdrop!)...she has the blood of a thousand sailors in her about-to-burst veins...

In the same review, Kerr wrote that “if Tessie O'Shea had had just five more minutes with the customers, and just five more minutes with the package of sentimental, old-fashioned bumptious tunes Noel Coward has deliberately patterned for her, there wouldn't have been room or need for the whole long plot...which, incidentally, would have been more or less all right with me.”¹⁵² The other critics agreed, with John Chapman, for example, writing that he had “not heard such cheers since Renato [sic] Tebaldi first came to the Met as there were for Miss O'Shea...”¹⁵³ Indeed, though critic Howard Taubman might have called O'Shea's song cycle the evening's “principal ornament,”¹⁵⁴ the reviews in fact focused on that so-called ornament. Just as Tessie's performance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* found her shuffling off the mortal confines of the televisual universe and escaping into a world of her own, Kerr's review very

¹⁵¹ *Ed Sullivan Show*, dir. Tim Kiley, prod. Bob Precht, CBS, 9 February 1964.

¹⁵² Walter Kerr, “The Girl Who Came To Supper,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 9 December 1963.

¹⁵³ John Chapman, “Henderson, Coward and Ferrer in the Groove in Grand Musical,” *New York Daily News*, 9 December 1963.

¹⁵⁴ Howard Taubman, “Theater: ‘The Girl Who Came to Supper’ in Premiere,” *New York Times*, 9 December 1963.

eloquently hints that O’Shea’s performing style nearly single-handedly eliminated the room and the need for the “whole long plot.” This comment seems to betray an extremely sensitive and complex understanding of the interplay between these moments of (musical) performance and the broader dramatic and narrative concerns of the piece.

The implications of Kerr’s remark that the elimination of the plot would have been “more or less all right with [him]”—itself a seemingly ornamental aside—brings us to the center of a wide range of issues concerning the seductive and disruptive relationship of female bodies and musicality in musical theatre. Donna Monroe, an actress in the company of *The Girl Who Came to Supper*, recalled that the reviews “all raved on about Tessie O’Shea...At the time, I thought they were great, but Herman Levin, the producer, sadly shook his head and said they were bad for the show. Paragraph after paragraph about Tessie.”¹⁵⁵ Why should “paragraph after paragraph about Tessie” be “bad for the show”? How, in other words, could the presence and success of this female star be considered a deathknell for the show as a whole?

This problem of dramatic integrity—of the relationship between music and plot, between the star turn and the story—emerges again and again in the discourse of musical theatre. If the problem is glaring in a show like *The Girl Who Came to Supper*, it is no less evident in a show as canonical as *Gypsy*. Reviewing the 2007 revival starring Patti LuPone, critic Charles Isherwood of the *New York Times* writes of the tension he felt between LuPone’s star turns—which he argues were demanded by LuPone’s rabid fans—and the dramatic demands of the character. In the article, titled “Patti’s Turn, if Not Rose’s,” Isherwood asks, “How do you set aside the knowledge that your admirers are out there, hoping to be transported by your assumption of an all-but-legendary role? How do you find the courage and concentration to disappear into the skin of another character when you know it is also your own voice they have come to hear?” Ultimately, Isherwood writes that “[LuPone] delivered Rose’s big songs with assured musicianship and commanding authority. Missing, for me at least, was the sense that she was living these crucial moments inside the itching soul of the character.”¹⁵⁶

Isherwood’s anxieties about LuPone’s performance in the 2007 revival have striking parallels in the score itself. When writing the score of *Gypsy*, composer Jule Styne and lyricist Stephen Sondheim decided to interpolate one of Styne’s old trunk tunes into the otherwise fresh 1959 score. An old snatch of melody to which Sammy Kahn had once written the lyric “Why Did You Have to Wait So Long?” became, in *Gypsy*, the popular “You’ll Never Get Away From Me.” Arthur Laurents hated the song, complaining that it “never seemed to be up to the rest of [the score].”¹⁵⁷ Sondheim agreed, even though it was Sondheim himself who first wanted to find a place in the show for that melody. Reflecting on this many years later, Sondheim remarked that “the song came from the wrong impulse. It came from outside instead of from inside the play and inside the characters.”¹⁵⁸ Styne’s reply was a much more unapologetic “old songs never die.”¹⁵⁹

Indeed, the entire development of *Gypsy* is fraught with moments like this interpolation, moments in which the direction of “impulses” and the integrity and consistency of style are the subject of passionate debate. This is evident not only in the score, but also in the book: Arthur

¹⁵⁵ Personal correspondence with the author, 20 July 2003.

¹⁵⁶ Charles Isherwood, “Patti’s Turn, if Not Rose’s,” *New York Times*, 5 August 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., ed., *Broadway Song and Story: Playwrights/Lyricists/Composers Discuss Their Hits* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1986), 64.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

Laurents complained that his book for *Gypsy* was “totally inconsistent. The first scene is vaudeville. Then you have a musical comedy scene. Then an out-and-out farce scene.”¹⁶⁰ “The reason why it works,” Laurents went on to say, “is that Rose is an outrageous character who’s consistent in her attitude.” The chief inconsistency in the show, however, remained intact until *Gypsy*’s out-of-town tryout in Philadelphia. While Sondheim and Laurents wanted to keep the show strictly about Rose and Louise, director Jerome Robbins wanted to make *Gypsy* into a panorama of vaudeville; they had apparently auditioned and hired vaudeville acts, jugglers, and burlesque comics. According to Sondheim, this vaudeville panorama was “a major structural problem,” and it was axed. However, as Styne said, old songs never die, and so it was with vaudeville. On the one hand, the famous “You Gotta Get A Gimmick” scene—in which strippers teach Louise the essentials of their art—was inspired by the auditions of vaudeville performers and, as such, remains a vestige of Robbins’s hope for a vaudeville extravaganza. On the other hand, though, this tension between vaudeville and narrative drama remains elsewhere: the score of *Gypsy* reveals a host of musical numbers, half of which function quite explicitly as performed pieces; in other words, half of the show is flagrantly vaudeville. And, of course, the concluding songstravaganza of *Gypsy*, “Rose’s Turn”—surely one of the most satisfying pieces of musical theatre—is explicitly conceived as a (vaudeville) “turn.” Thus, at the heart of one of the classic “integrated” musicals, we find the very antithesis of integration: vaudeville. I propose, however, that all musicals exhibit this structural schizophrenia and that popular criticism of musical theatre—and our consequent understanding of those pieces—often ignores the impossibility of extricating vaudeville and burlesque from musical theatre and, in so doing, ignores a fundamental relationship between musical bodies—female musical bodies, in particular—and dramatic storytelling.

The structural schizophrenia of the musical is a function of form: the musical must negotiate a range of different registers, dialogic and musical among them. Consisting as it does of numerous compartmentalized artforms—in which musical moments are *distinct* from dialogic moments—the musical is fundamentally unable to achieve full formal integration. However, despite what I find to be the musical’s inherent, constitutive lack of seamlessness, a doxa of integration has saturated criticism and popular discourse about musical theatre. For someone as distinguished as conductor Lehman Engel,

The books of early musical comedies were almost totally without virtue. Their main effect was to help drive intelligent theatergoers away from the musical theatre... In a form which seeks to integrate drama, music, and dance, the qualities of all its elements must hang together ... [these were] shows based on absurd books, containing songs that were mere interpolations...¹⁶¹

Indeed, the argument goes, the musical finally matured when it sloughed off the juvenilia of vaudeville- and burlesque-influenced musical comedies and integrated its various component artforms—something which Rodgers & Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!* supposedly accomplished in 1943. Reviewing the opening night of *Oklahoma!*, critic Burton Rascoe wrote that the “joy of the production... is in its total effect.”¹⁶² Lewis Nichols, writing in the *New York Times*, asserted that “Mr. Rodgers’ scores never lack grace, but seldom have they been so well integrated as this

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 73.

¹⁶¹ Lehman Engel, *The American Musical Theater: A Consideration* (New York: CBS Legacy, 1967), 76.

¹⁶² Burton Rascoe, “The Guild’s Oklahoma Opens at the St. James,” *New York World-Telegram*, 1 April 1943.

for “Oklahoma!”¹⁶³ Howard Barnes similarly observed that “songs, dances, and a story have been triumphantly blended at the St. James.”¹⁶⁴

This attitude was also taken up in academic treatments of musical theatre. In his magisterial account of the Broadway musical, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, Gerald Bordman discusses the “excellent totality of *Oklahoma!*,” writing that “much ballyhoo ensued over how well the songs and plot were integrated. They were.”¹⁶⁵ In *The Broadway Musical*, Joseph Swain muses that *Oklahoma!* “survives because of its own integrity,”¹⁶⁶ while John Bush Jones writes in *Our Musicals, Ourselves* that *Oklahoma!* was a “totally integrated musical.”¹⁶⁷ The organization of Geoffrey Block’s seminal *Enchanted Evenings* attests to the significance of *Oklahoma!*, divided as it is into two sections, “Before Rodgers & Hammerstein” and “The Broadway Musical After *Oklahoma!*”¹⁶⁸

Integration ostensibly refers to an artful melding of the various components of the musical, such that the dances, songs, and dialogue appear fluid and continuous, of a whole. For Richard Rodgers, the success of *Oklahoma!* was that it was “a work created by many that gave the impression of being created by one.”¹⁶⁹ To this end, the integrated musical attempts to render opaque its polyvalent qualities—yet such an approach ignores the ultimate impossibility of the musical to speak from a single voice, given the shift between the dialogic and musical registers. Those who argue that Rodgers & Hammerstein integrated the musical, or that musicals can or should be integrated, are making a complicated claim, a claim whose rhetoric, I will argue, conflates various senses of the word “integration.”

If “integration,” as I have suggested, cannot refer to the successful fusion of the various artforms, one might speculate that the claims of integration which are bandied about in fact concern the elimination of superfluous chorus lines, generic musical numbers, and bad jokes. In addition, much of the love of *Oklahoma!* in particular might be a thinly veiled appreciation of its earnestly rural milieu; scenes at the box social and by the butter churn were by no means common fare on Broadway at the time.¹⁷⁰ I further suspect that some of the acclaim critics afford *Oklahoma!*, and a number of other musicals, confuses integration with a general sense of

¹⁶³ Lewis Nichols, “‘Oklahoma!’ a Musical Hailed as Delightful, Based on ‘Green Grow the Lilacs,’ Opens Here at the St. James Theatre,” *New York Post*, 1 April 1943.

¹⁶⁴ Howard Barnes, “Lilacs to ‘Oklahoma,’” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 1 April 1943. It is worth noting that the opening night reception of *Oklahoma!* was not as universally enthusiastic as later critical commentary would suggest. Louis Kronenberger remarked that “the book, to be sure, is just one of those things, if that, and the comedy is neither subtle nor extensive. But they play so minor a part in the evening’s business that they can play an equally minor one in this review.” Similarly, Wilella Waldorf’s review of the production was somewhat tepid, opining that “Mr. Hammerstein has done a workmanlike job of adapting Mr. Riggs’ play after that first dull stretch, and his lyrics are often bright and amusing.”

¹⁶⁵ Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, 3rd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 589.

¹⁶⁶ Joseph Swain, *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 74.

¹⁶⁷ John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003), 142.

¹⁶⁸ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁶⁹ Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages* (New York: Random House, 1975), 229. In the same paragraph, Rodgers writes, “That’s what made *Oklahoma!* work. All the components dovetailed. There was nothing extraneous or foreign, nothing that pushed itself into the spotlight yelling ‘Look at me!’”

¹⁷⁰ See also ch. 4.

social and political progressivism. In that very same season, after all, Ethel Merman starred in a musical (*Something for the Boys*) about a woman who receives enemy radio broadcasts by way of her dental fillings. Integration might also refer in part to the inclusion of lyrics whose diction is seemingly realistic for the character singing, though it is hard to know what, precisely, is “realistic” when one is speaking in melody and rhymes in the first place. The fact remains that none of these concerns—social earnestness, elimination of the chorus, situatedness of lyrics—in any way formally *integrates* the musical. Yet *Oklahoma!* was thought to do just that: as Rodgers noted, “everyone suddenly became integration-conscious, as if the idea of welding together song, story, and dance had never been thought of before.”¹⁷¹

Though the discourse of integration does not refer unambiguously to the integration of music and narrative, I will argue that it does refer nonetheless to a particular type of “integration.” The accomplishment of Rodgers & Hammerstein—and of *Oklahoma!*, in particular—was less the welding of song, story, and dance, which can be only *so* seamless, and more an attempt to integrate potentially disruptive female bodies—including potentially disruptive female voices—into the musical’s narrative line. To be sure, the depreciation of hierarchy among musical comedy performers is a hallmark of integration: both *Oklahoma!* and *On The Town*, another oft-cited bulwark of integration, thrived without stars. The primary players in *Oklahoma!* were basically neophytes: Alfred Drake, who played Curly, had performed mostly chorus roles; Joan Roberts, the female lead, had been seen before only in *Sunny River* of 1941; and Celeste Holm, the comic sidekick, had, for the most part, appeared in unremarkable, short-lived shows.

While contemporaneous critics generally singled out stars when writing reviews, a surprising number of the reviews of *Oklahoma!* contain an implicit or explicit appreciation not of particular stars, but instead of the cast as an ensemble. As Howard Barnes wrote in his review, “there are no particularly well-known performers in the piece, but that is all to the good in a show with inherent theatrical excitement.”¹⁷² The excitement previously generated in stars, it was thought, could now be generated more organically in the “integrated” content of the show. Revisiting the New York production more than a year after it opened, Barnes wrote that “certainly [*Oklahoma!*] is not dependent on any particular set of principals, let alone a star. It is a show first and foremost—an exercise in performing only according to the standards of particular presentations.”¹⁷³ When *Chicago Sunday Times* critic Robert Pollak reviewed the traveling production which visited Chicago in December of 1943, he wrote that “*Oklahoma* was born star-less on the last day of March, 1943, and it is star-less still. Many a fat and sassy musical has come to life only because Ethel Merman or Victor Moore was handy at the time. But the idea of *Oklahoma* glittered like Orion long before its premiere...”¹⁷⁴ “They collected,” Pollak continues, “a cast of young and capable principals who were willing to work hard because they believed that *Oklahoma* was going to be a wow and revelled in its sturdy, American quality.” In 1947, critic William Hawkins of the *New York World-Telegram* revisited the

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 229.

¹⁷² Howard Barnes, “Lilacs to ‘Oklahoma,’” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 1 April 1943.

¹⁷³ Howard Barnes, “The Theatre: Old Season Sets Pace For New,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 August 1944.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Pollak, “Oklahoma flows on like river of delight,” *Chicago Sunday Times*, 5 December 1943. See also the *Boston Globe*’s October 23, 1945, review of a traveling production, which remarked, “As for the cast—here is definite proof that ‘Oklahoma’ is a great show. There isn’t a single star in the billing...yet they seem as talented and fresh as the original company which was here in 1943.”

Broadway production and wrote that “the real joy of ‘Oklahoma!’ is the spirited exactness of the whole company as an ensemble...here the show remains the thing...”¹⁷⁵

Rodgers & Hammerstein continued writing for the plot, and not for stars: both *Allegro* and *Carousel* were intended for newcomers. When they decided to produce *Annie Get Your Gun*, slated to star Ethel Merman, they declined to write the score and instead invited Irving Berlin, the old master of revues, to compose the show for Merman. Though they did eventually write *South Pacific* for Mary Martin, they were strict with Martin’s performance, always insisting that she defer to the broader theatrical demands of the piece.

Notably, the split in musical theatre history—between piecemeal and “integrated,” between vaudevillesque musical comedy and “mature” musical theatre—was seen in many ways to coincide with Rodgers’ professional split from Lorenz Hart, when Rodgers began work with Oscar Hammerstein on *Oklahoma!* However, Rodgers did in fact work with Hart once more, when the two wrote a few new songs for a 1943 revival of *A Connecticut Yankee*. An anecdote surrounding the opening of this show will, I think, prove helpful in thinking about what might be at stake—especially for female stars, their composers, and their fans—in the new aesthetic of musical integration.

The revival of *A Connecticut Yankee* was to star Vivienne Segal, a famous belter for whom Hart had written a new song, “To Keep My Love Alive.” While Rodgers was apparently willing to siphon Hart’s emotional reserve for songwriting, Rodgers found Hart’s emotional state to be disturbingly unstable. According to Samuel Marx’s and *Carousel* actress Jan Clayton’s account of the incident, Rodgers ultimately forbade house management from allowing Hart to enter the theatre on opening night. Rejected at the door, Hart went across the street to a bar and began to drink; after a while, he returned to the theatre and was able to slip in through an unattended door. When Segal began to sing “To Keep My Love Alive,” “[Hart] began his familiar pacing, at first nervously and then frenetically and finally joining in with her singing, louder and louder.”¹⁷⁶ Per instructions given earlier to house management by Rodgers, Hart was removed, and the audience grew silent. Within a couple of days, Hart admitted himself to a hospital, and his death followed shortly thereafter.

Hart’s ability to sing along with the diva is precisely what is at stake in the switch from vaudevillesque musical comedy to integrated musical theatre. The older tradition permitted a bolder recognition of the diva (female or male) outside the narrative order of the musical play. Segal was more than merely a part of a plot: she was also a performing body, a body able to escape her position as narrative object and instead able to present herself as a defiant musical subject, one with whom Hart could identify and sing along. This is precisely the beauty of the musical diva, whose body and voice can enact a utopian mobility, thwarting and transcending attempts at musical integration. Identification with the diva, as in the case of Hart, emphasizes the potential of the musical register to promote a signifying order—and a signifying subject—different from the more conventional signifying orders of narrative and *mise-en-scène*. If the beauty of the female diva occurs in her carnivalesque oscillation between narrative/visual object and defiant musical subject, we can see how the female singer functions as a *mise-en-abîme* for the musical itself, with its uneasy split between narrative and music, and its even uneasier attempts, in the wake of *Oklahoma!*, to integrate these various components. The representational

¹⁷⁵ William Hawkins, “‘Oklahoma!’ Revisited Is Still a Great Show,” *New York World-Telegram*, 24 December 1947.

¹⁷⁶ Samuel Marx & Jan Clayton, *Rodgers & Hart: Bewitched, Bothered, and Bedevilled* (London: W. H. Allen, 1977), 265.

possibilities of theatre, and of the performing woman, are pushed to their respective limits simultaneously in the musical form.

Given the inherent awkwardness of attempts to “integrate” music and diva-esque female bodies/voices into the narrative economy of the play, it might be helpful to investigate some of the factors that made this clumsy discourse so appealing. Without doubt, some of the charm of the concept of integration comes from its association with opera. By assimilating operatic terminology, those writing about the musical were able to endow it with the legitimacy associated with a high art. However, an examination of the role of “integration” in operatic discourse reveals striking similarities in the anxieties surrounding the integration of music and female bodies and voices. Indeed, Richard Wagner, the greatest proponent of operatic integration, and its greatest critic, Bertolt Brecht, perform these very anxieties in their writings. It is useful to examine their ideas in order to articulate some consequences of the debates surrounding integration, in particular as they concern the performing bodies of women.

For composer Richard Wagner, the curious nature of musical moments in theatre, the fundamental oddness of singing in a drama, could be squelched by seamlessly integrating these moments into the piece—as he argues composer Christoph Gluck did before him. In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner celebrates Gluck’s “reproducing the feeling of the text as truly as possible through the medium of musical expression. . . .” Gluck’s object, Wagner continues, “was to speak in music both correctly and intelligibly.”¹⁷⁷ Gluck himself writes that he attempted to “divest [his music] entirely of all those abuses (introduced either by the uncomprehending vanity of the Singers or by the Composers’ excessive wish to please) which have so long disfigured the Italian opera.”¹⁷⁸ In a similar vein, Wagner writes that “if we consider honestly and unselfishly the essence of music, we must own that it is in large measure a means to an end, that end being in rational opera the *drama*. . . .”¹⁷⁹ In a view which strikingly resembles the integrationists’ concerns about the frothy musicals of the 1920s and 1930s, Wagner felt that many opera composers arrived at projects with music written well in advance, music that paid scant heed to the dramatic particularities of any given piece.

Wagner elaborates his theory of opera composition using a series of gendered and natal analogies. According to him, the opera composer is well-situated to submit to the poet in order to render organically expressive music. Composers working in the older mode of composition, however, “could never succeed, on account of standing in a fundamentally wrong relation to that element of poetry which was alone capable of bearing fruit; having, in his unnatural and usurping situation, robbed it, in a certain sense, of its productive organs.”¹⁸⁰ Poetry, for Wagner, contains a certain spiritual kernel of the entire Drama: this kernel is capable of penetrating the composer to provide a proper operatic offspring; the parthenogenetic hysteria of traditional composers, though, does nothing but produce ill-bred children outside the logical economy of rational opera. It is hubristic, Wagner argues, for music to believe that it could retreat to its own devices and create a true drama; true operatic music cannot exist without having been inspired, or fertilized,

¹⁷⁷ Richard Wagner, vol. 1 of *Opera and Drama*, trans. Edwin Evans, Sr. (London: W.M. Reeves, 1913), 136.

¹⁷⁸ Qtd. in Piero Weiss & Richard Taruskin, eds., *Music in the Western World* (Belmont: Schirmer, 1984), 301.

¹⁷⁹ Richard Wagner, vol. 1 of *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*, trans. & ed. Francis Hueffer (London: H. Grevel, 1888), 92, emphasis Wagner’s.

¹⁸⁰ Richard Wagner, vol. 1 of *Opera and Drama*, trans. Edwin Evans, Sr. (London: W.M. Reeves, 1913), 181.

by the poetic lyrics and text, which combine with the music to form a synergistic drama. This synergistic drama engenders the Aristotelian totality that Wagner sought to reclaim in opera.

Wagner is emphatic about this point: “Music is the female—destined to bring forth—the poet being the real generator; and music had, therefore, reached the very summit of madness when it aspired, not only to bear—but also to produce.”¹⁸¹ For him, music alone could not tell stories, and it was foolish for it to aim for pure expression. Music could, however, express the poetic elements of the Drama. “Music,” Wagner writes, “is a woman. The nature of woman is love; but this love is one of conceiving, and of unreserved devotion in conception. Woman only attains to full individuality at the moment of this devotion.”¹⁸² Music, then, in its absolute attention to the poetry, in its complete devotion to bringing the poetry to life, comes into its own; similarly, a singer fulfills her role in the drama by championing the text and effacing her own presence.

German playwright Bertolt Brecht, however, argued that Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) was an undesirable and in fact unrealizable goal, and Brecht’s writings strike a sturdy blow at the ideology that champions integration. Whereas Gluck and Wagner view the traditional conception of opera—one which celebrates certain musical moments or performers, perhaps at the expense of the overall drama—as a great evil that must be overcome, Brecht views opera’s lack of integration as its fundamental strength. For him, opera is senseless, and it is therefore at its best when it interrogates and deploys the “senselessness of the operatic form” as an aesthetic phenomenon.¹⁸³ The musicality of opera is what gives it this senselessness: “A dying man is real. If at the same time he sings we are translated to the sphere of the irrational.”¹⁸⁴ For Brecht, the degree of unreality is directly proportionate to the amount of pleasure that opera affords; as one increases, so does the other. While Brecht ultimately abandoned opera as a viable form of epic theatre, he did sustain an interest in using songs in his theatrical projects.

Indeed, part of the reason that Brecht so championed music as a central element of his epic theatre was that he could deploy music as one way of underscoring “unreality.” He could seize upon this unreality, alienate it—in other words, bring a particular kind of attention to it—and thereby metaphorize the entire theatrical project. By foregrounding the essentially theatrical elements of theatre, Brecht was able to catalyze a consciousness of the narrative modes through which the drama was being presented. This represents Brecht’s great revolution in dramatic practice: the musical moments were *recognized* and *valued* precisely because they were profound ruptures in the narrative. Though Brecht did seek to deploy the oddness of music to a particular end, his understanding of music as narrative rupture represents a direct critique of Wagnerian integration and thus obliquely criticizes the understanding of music that enables critics to discuss musicals as integrated. I will argue, however, that despite Brecht’s sophisticated understanding of, and investment in, music, he—not unlike Wagner—does not ultimately seem able to embrace the political possibilities of the fully “disintegrated” musical form.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 185.

¹⁸² Ibid., 186.

¹⁸³ Bertolt Brecht, “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre,” in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. & ed. John Willett, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964), 35.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 35-36.

The centrality of music to Brecht's epic theatre has been widely appreciated. Upon closer analysis, however, it appears that Brecht retained a great deal of suspicion toward music in and of itself. He was quite wary of the autonomous art music of his time, writing that

Most 'advanced' music nowadays is still written for the concert hall. A single glance at the audiences who attend concerts is enough to show how impossible it is to make any political or philosophical use of music that produces such effects. We see entire rows of human beings transported into a peculiar doped state, wholly passive, sunk without trace, seemingly in the grip of a severe poisoning attack.¹⁸⁵

For Brecht, then, art music—music *qua* music—was basically a disguised form of Aristotelian theatre. Indeed, he went even so far as to write that this “music is cast in the role of fate.”¹⁸⁶ The idea of fate, of course, was anathema to Brecht's theatre of social transformation; by labeling this music as fate, he was relegating music—because of its affective power—to complicity with the status quo. Brecht concludes this discussion by writing that “such music...seduces the listener into an enervating, because unproductive, act of enjoyment. No number of refinements can convince me that its social function is any different from that of the Broadway burlesque.”¹⁸⁷ What, then, is the social function of the burlesque?

Brecht suggests an answer to this question in the same article when he elaborates his understanding of the connection between music and fate. Epic theatre, he writes, constitutes a revolution in theatre because it dispenses with the Aristotelian desire for catharsis. These cathartic plots, Brecht suggests, are structurally founded on “lead[ing] the hero into situations where he reveals his innermost being.” Brecht goes on to write that

All the incidents shown [in an Aristotelian drama] have the object of driving the hero into spiritual conflicts. It is a possibly blasphemous but quite useful comparison if one turns one's mind to the burlesque shows on Broadway, where the public, with yells of ‘Take it off!’, forces the girls to expose their bodies more and more.¹⁸⁸

The spectator of the Aristotelian drama, then, is very much like the spectator of the burlesque show. In both situations, the social function is the diffusion of disruptive energies and the reinscription of the status quo, whether this be achieved through the cathartic denouement of the drama or the unveiling of the female body. Indeed, Brecht's distrust of music as fate seems to be mediated by the presence of the female burlesque performer. For Brecht, the power of these three forces—the impulse toward catharsis, the affective power of music, and the bodily presence of the female performer—must be corralled if theatre is in fact to be transformative, if the play is to be in any way programmatic, if the story is to be heard at all.

This complex discussion of musicality and bodies is further complicated when Brecht follows his analogy of classical drama and burlesque with some additional thoughts on the role of fate and identification in Aristotelian theatre. “Everyone (including every spectator) is then carried away,” Brecht writes, “by the momentum of the events portrayed, so that in a performance of *Oedipus* one has for all practical purposes an auditorium full of little Oedipuses....”¹⁸⁹ If Aristotelian theatre demands this sort of identification with the hero, then

¹⁸⁵ Brecht, “On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre,” in Willett, 89.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

what must the burlesque theatre demand of its audience? Surely that it simultaneously desires the body it views and that it quite possibly *becomes* the body it views. The presence of the female body minimizes the distance between the spectator and the stage and, in so doing, Brecht argues, forecloses the possibility of critical thought. Brecht's disdain for burlesque—"naughty" variety shows which often featured songs, sketches, and erotic dances—was motivated by the various pleasures, bodily and musical, that ran counter to the cognitive pleasures he sought to deploy in his epic theatre. The pleasures of burlesque seem to be not unlike the pleasure that Lorenz Hart got by singing along with Vivienne Segal; to be sure, such a psychic cross-dressing seems to provide one way of understanding what Brecht called the "enervating" pleasure of burlesque and art music and what Wagner called music's "robbing of the productive organs." Brecht, Wagner, and the integrationists meet on this ground: all find this possibility imminent and alarming. Given this possibility, Brecht was very careful to advocate using music in very precise ways, so that one might ensure a proper relation between the various elements in play.

In articulating his thoughts on music, Brecht gave particular attention to the relationship between music and language. By adding a dimension to the textual presentation, Brecht explains, music is able to be "gestic," to "convey particular attitudes adopted by the speaker toward other men."¹⁹⁰ Insofar as it can take up an attitude toward the lyric—by challenging its most conventional meaning—music can alienate the lyrics and make them questions instead of answers.¹⁹¹ This juxtaposition and unexpected contrast is what Brecht means when he refers to his epic theatre's "radical separation of the elements."¹⁹² This radical separation, of course, stands in direct contrast to Wagner, a fact that does not escape Brecht: "So long as the expression 'Gesamtkunstwerk' (or 'integrated work of art') means that the integration is a muddle...the various elements will all be equally degraded."¹⁹³

However, despite his professed appreciation of this musical dimension, Brecht's writings nonetheless betray his fear that music has an unbelievable power to efface the meaning of the text. His distrust of music seems to transcend genre; writing about older (pre-Wagnerian) operatic music, he writes that part of the problem with conventional opera was that "rational elements" and "solid reality" are "washed out by the music."¹⁹⁴ Indeed, he seems to deny this music the possibility of communicability, for even when music mirrors the text, as in the old opera, it still—despite mirroring the text—obscures it. Brecht's epic opera, by contrast, would "communicate," he writes.¹⁹⁵ This "communication" seems to be predicated on muting the power of music.

Indeed, just as Brecht seems to champion music's disintegrating quality at the same time that he reins in its power, his radical separation seems to be less a strict separation than a subjugation of music to text. Despite arguing for the strict separation—and equality—of music and text, Brecht's own description, in fact, privileges the text, arguing the music must "take the text for granted," must work from this text to present another dimension. However this additional musical dimension could function, however this gestic quality might work, it seems to work in relation to the language of the text. This hierarchy seems to result from the fact that

¹⁹⁰ Brecht, "On Gestic Music," in Willett, 104.

¹⁹¹ It is worth noting that Brecht did remark that "so-called 'cheap' music, particularly that of the cabaret and the operetta, has for some time been a sort of gestic music."

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹⁴ Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," in Willett, 35.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

Brecht seems paradoxically to think that music actually *is* capable of expression without an underlying situatedness or textual basis; in “On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre,” he remarks that “serious music...still clings to lyricism, and cultivates expression for its own sake.”¹⁹⁶ Brecht is ultimately wary that the emotive force of music can overwhelm a listener and limit the possibility of critical distance.

Brecht’s theatre, then, does succeed in separating the elements, but it does so only insofar as the musical, the irrational, can ultimately be subjugated by the rationality of the textual. Brecht’s basic problem with Wagnerian opera is not so much that the arts are “fused,” as he seems to claim, but rather that the musical inevitably overpowers the verbal. He is uncomfortable with the power of music to render everything else a slave to its siren-like allure, just as the enervating influence of the female body impaired the effectiveness of the drama and of the dramatic spectator. Nonetheless, because music carries so much affective and signifying weight, it can still be useful to Brecht’s theatrical project. Thus, Brecht seeks not only to separate the elements, but also, at the same time, to instill a sense of deference within music. He faced a startling dilemma: the very musical elements that could activate the “dramatic” realm were precisely the ones he felt had to be controlled.

Wagner and Brecht help illuminate the theatrical and intellectual traditions out of which emerges the ideology of musical “integration.” For Wagner, like the integrationists, the bizarreness of the musical drama could be tamed by integrating this musical element into the larger drama. To use Wagner’s terminology, such an integration would keep music in its proper place: as a woman devoted to bearing the fruit of the drama, as a woman who never attempts to produce such fruit by herself. Music, for Wagner, is a means to an end. Though Brecht insightfully calls attention to the impossibility of Wagner’s ideas about the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Brecht’s ideas—however much we might wish to think that they provide a startling critique of Wagner’s misogynist reflections—often reinscribe the problem of dramatic music and musically dramatic women in different ways. For Brecht too, music is a means to an end; this is due not least to the ultimately programmatic demands of Brecht’s epic theatre. His view of the affective power of music meant that the linguistic text had to come first, and that the music—and the musical performer—had to work carefully to avoid usurping the role of the textual, such that “communication” could occur in the form of a message.

Epic musicals, then, may entertain the possibility of the singing woman becoming a musical subject, but they do so only on the condition that she ultimately return to being an object of the narrative-visual economy.¹⁹⁷ This certainly inflects our understanding of Brecht’s dictum that the musical gest emphasizes “showing”.¹⁹⁸ the demonstrative quality of music is not a strictly aural phenomenon; it is mediated by the spectacular presence of bodies, especially those of women. Whatever their limitations, Brecht’s thoughts about music, theatre, and performance are useful in reminding us that an inherently disruptive musicality—frequently embodied in the

¹⁹⁶ Brecht, “On The Use of Music in an Epic Theatre,” in Willett, 87.

¹⁹⁷ Brecht’s ambivalence toward music and female performance seems to be revisited in the critical reception of the landmark 1954 off-Broadway production of *The Threepenny Opera*. One review negatively remarked that actress Charlotte Rae played Mrs. Peachum “as though she were doing a nightclub turn rather than a character in a play.” Interestingly, critic Richard Watts remarked that composer Kurt Weill never did anything in his life to approach *The Threepenny Opera*, having written for that show “a brilliantly integrated score.” However confused this use of the term might be, it is a confusion shared, if in different ways, by a critic no less imminent than Brecht himself.

¹⁹⁸ Brecht, “A Short Organum for the Theatre,” in Willett, 203.

diva—can never fully be exiled from musical theatre. No matter what the intentions of the author are, there is no such thing as an integrated musical. After all, the reason that *Gypsy* worked, Laurents said, is because Rose was consistent in her “outrageous” attitude. Her consistent outrageousness—and that of the diva who plays her—will always challenge the equally outrageous notion that a musical can be consistently integrated.

Though the concept of integration remains central even today to theatrical criticism, it is worth noting that this phraseology entered a slight crisis in the early 1970’s. If we recall Lehman Engel’s complaint that early musical comedies were “based on absurd books, containing songs that were mere interpolations,” we find a striking analogue in Walter Kerr’s 1970 review of *Company*, in which Kerr wrote that “songs and dances pop up out of nowhere to assert themselves independently.”¹⁹⁹ Another similarity to earlier musical traditions can be discerned from Clive Barnes’ comment that *Company* was nothing more than a “series of linked scenes”;²⁰⁰ what’s more, the songs in *Company* were far from integrated—a number of songs in the score function quite obviously as indirect commentary on the plot and clearly occupy a different time than the time of the dramatic action. As Elaine Stritch stepped to the front of the stage to sing “The Ladies Who Lunch,” the show’s plot could not help but recede behind a cloud of cigarette smoke, leaving only the diva, her honey baritone, and her fans.

Opening a mere six months after *Company*, *No, No, Nanette*—a “revisal” of a 1925 musical—shared an interest in the older vaudeville-influenced aesthetic: chorus boys made inexplicable entrances from behind bay windows onstage; practically every number contained a superfluous tap dance; and the plot was exceedingly flimsy, concerning a traveling Bible salesman and the three women he supported (but never seduced). Richard Watts, reversing a twenty-year trend in theatrical criticism, noted that “an important merit was that the slender if complex narrative never got in the way of the central business of the songs and dances.”²⁰¹ It was no coincidence that central to the success of *No, No, Nanette* was its star, Ruby Keeler, who stopped the show with her entrances and with her dancing. The narrative—to the degree that there was one—ground to a halt when Keeler appeared. Within only a couple of years, a number of other older stars, including Debbie Reynolds, Patsy Kelly, and Alice Faye, would headline musicals indebted to an older, pre-*Oklahoma!* vaudeville aesthetic. In addition, stars like Katharine Hepburn and Lauren Bacall appeared in musicals, musicals whose narratives were sacrificed, necessarily, to the stars’ personalities. Writing about Katharine Hepburn’s show *Coco*, critic Walter Kerr noted that “the new occasion at the Mark Hellinger purports to be about a dress designer named Chanel...but it is nothing of the sort. It is, as an evening, plainly and simply about a phenomenon called Katharine Hepburn.”²⁰²

Shows like *No, No, Nanette*, *Coco*, *Company*, and *Follies*—not even to mention more contemporary shows like *Chicago* (subtitled *A Musical Vaudeville*), *Mamma Mia!*, and *Spring Awakening*—foreground the inadequacy of the discourse of integration as they instead celebrate an aesthetic feature present in every musical: the deployment of bodies and voices—in particular, women’s bodies and voices—as a driving force of the show. Whereas Rodgers & Hammerstein purport to dissolve the space between dialogue, narrative, song, and dance, these “disintegrated” shows emphasize the gap between musical and narrative registers, a gap often produced and amplified by the presence of the diva. To some degree, then, integration is an

¹⁹⁹ Walter Kerr, “‘Company’: Original and Uncompromising,” *New York Times*, 3 May 1970.

²⁰⁰ Clive Barnes, “Alvin May Have a Hit in Lean Season,” *New York Times*, 27 April 1970.

²⁰¹ Richard Watts, “Return of an Old Favorite,” *New York Post*, 20 January 1971.

²⁰² Walter Kerr, “‘Coco’: About Coco—or Kate?,” *New York Times*, 28 December 1969.

attempt to integrate the diva into the narrative line, such that her star power cannot “stop the show,” and such that the affective power of the musical register is diminished for the greater good. By stopping the show, however, the presence of the diva is precisely what allows many a musical to go on in the first place.

**REDRESSING *THE BLACK CROOK*:
MUSICAL THEATRE, DANCE, & INTEGRATION**

In the wake of the purported integrations of *Show Boat* and *Oklahoma!*, the musical began to be revered as having at least the potential to be a work of art. Part of the ascendance of the ‘art form’ of the musical was the concomitant historiographic efforts written by scholarly enthusiasts of the genre, beginning with Cecil Smith’s landmark 1950 *History of Musical Comedy in America*. These histories attempted to narrate the development of the genre, and the narrative used to structure this development was quite unsurprisingly one of increasing integration as the musical matured to its then-present form. However awkward the use of integration may have been by contemporary spectators and critics to describe *Show Boat* and *Oklahoma!*, it became even more inappropriate when it was anachronistically applied to *The Black Crook*, the 1866 musical spectacular extravaganza often considered to be the first musical comedy.

In this chapter, I will briefly explore how critics have positioned *The Black Crook* in their historical studies, paying particular attention to the manner by which they claim that the components of the extravaganza were disintegrated. Ultimately, I hope to show how the prominent dance element of *The Black Crook* was positioned as an impediment to the show being considered an authentic forerunner of the integrated musical comedy. Then, I will show that later claims that dance was integrated—especially in *Oklahoma!*—was a result less of a change in form and more of a change in content. Indeed, integration came by way of dance taking on dark and somber subject matter, thus rendering it distinct from the earlier dance trends of shows like *The Black Crook*. This historiographic problem misrepresents the history of dance in musical comedy and diminishes the spectacular and sensuous elements of dance in musical theatre, all in service of the fictitious narrative of integration.

In 1950, the pioneering musical theatre historian Cecil Smith published the first major history of musical theatre, *Musical Comedy in America*. Smith began his history by writing that “for all important purposes, the history of musical comedy in America starts with *The Black Crook*, as everyone has always said it did,” adding that he sees the story of musical theatre stretching from “*The Black Crook* at one end to *South Pacific* at the other.”²⁰³ However, despite the widespread acknowledgment of *The Black Crook* as the first musical comedy, some influential critics have forcefully argued the very opposite: that *The Black Crook* was *not* the first musical comedy. In his oft-cited article “*The Black Crook* Myth,” Julian Mates argues that “[n]othing about *The Black Crook* justifies its position as the precursor of our modern lyric stage.”²⁰⁴ “*The Black Crook*,” he continues, “added no new elements and no new ways of integrating spectacle, music, and drama. It did, however, offer the traditional forms on a very large scale.” The show, Mates concludes, “while good fun and tremendously popular, neither originated the features that made it popular nor culminated any significant trends.”²⁰⁵ Mates quotes Cecil Smith and Leonard Bernstein, citing these influential authors as perpetrators of the myth that *The Black Crook* was the first musical.

Though Mates chastises Smith and Bernstein for uncritically promoting *The Black Crook*, closer examination of Smith and Bernstein reveals a profound ambivalence in discussing the

²⁰³ Cecil Smith, *Musical Comedy in America* (New York: Applause, 1950), viii.

²⁰⁴ Julian Mates, “*The Black Crook* Myth,” *Theatre Survey* 17 (1966): 31-32.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

show's proper role in the annals of theatre history. If, as we have seen, Cecil Smith began his survey of musical theatre by noting that "the history of musical comedy in America starts with *The Black Crook*," he seems to moderate this claim twenty pages later, writing that "to call *The Black Crook* the first example of the theatrical genus we now call musical comedy is not only incorrect; it fails to suggest any useful assessment of the place of Jarrett and Palmer's extravaganza in the history of the popular musical theatre."²⁰⁶ Smith argues that "it was, to be sure, the first American entertainment to achieve the long-run prosperity upon which producers subsequently learned to pin their hopes. But in its first form it contained almost none of the vernacular attributes of book, lyrics, music, and dancing which distinguish musical comedy, as a type, from ballet and spectacular extravaganza."²⁰⁷

Mates also chastises Leonard Bernstein for appearing on a broadcast of the Omnibus television show and narrating a history of musical theatre that began with *The Black Crook*, yet Bernstein actually displays the same ambivalence as did Cecil Smith in his writing.²⁰⁸ While Bernstein does begin his program by discussing *The Black Crook*, which he notes has been "historically considered to be our first American musical theatre," no sooner has he asserted this than he begins to make snide and catty remarks about the show. "What can we say about *The Black Crook*?" Bernstein asks himself. "Not much," he replies. Criticizing not only the quality of the music but also its haphazard provenance, Bernstein complains that "[i]ts score is a mélange of uninspired songs like [You Naughty, Naughty Men]," a few bars of which he catatonically plays before stopping abruptly. "Pretty tiddly!" he sneers. He goes on to note "dance music of similarly low caliber" as well as "a dull little number called 'The Black Crook Waltz.'" After playing a few bars of the waltz, Bernstein stops and stays, "But why go on?" However, he does go on, noting that "this number was bolstered up by a grand introduction of pompous nature, which went something like this. . .," illustrating his point by playing a prologue with campy flourishes of his hand. This introduction, he observes, "only made the tune sound sillier." Bernstein attributes much of the production's success to its legs and to its being able to pass for art, given the European roots of its prominent ballet.

Bernstein's narration, then, adopts the very same attitude towards *The Black Crook* as does Smith's argument: both feel obligated to tip their hat to *The Black Crook* and yet just as obligated to denigrate it as a primitive and pathetic excuse for entertainment. It seems to me that the great uneasiness surrounding *The Black Crook* has its roots in the governing ideologies of musical theatre historiography—most significantly, the ideology of integration. These three men are unable to reconcile *The Black Crook*'s formal features and the circumstances of its creation with their loftier values of intermedial integration: their narrative argues that the American musical is a synergistic totality of plot, song, and spectacle—yet conventional wisdom argues

²⁰⁶ Smith, 20.

²⁰⁷ He also notes that the use of the term "musical comedy," which came into fashion later, is anachronistic. Smith's comments about "long-run prosperity" are part of a much-repeated trope in discussions of *The Black Crook*, a trope which unfortunately denigrates the place of *Black Crook* merely within the realm of the money-grubbing. Raymond Knapp, for example, remarks that "[f]irst and foremost—especially considering the importance of commerce to the future history of the American musical—its signal achievement was what we would now call its 'bottom line': its unquestioned and lasting commercial success." (23)

²⁰⁸ A transcript of this *Omnibus* broadcast is printed in Leonard Bernstein, *The Joy of Music* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959).

that the genre originated in *The Black Crook*, a piece that subscribes to none of these synergistic values.

Indeed, no musical can claim a more hodgepodge origin than *The Black Crook*. The saga of *The Black Crook* begins in 1866, with the entrepreneur Henry C. Jarrett, whose greatest success theretofore consisted of making a booming tourist attraction out of the *Great Eastern*, a docked steamship. Jarrett approached Leonard Grover, who was leasing the Olympic Theatre in New York City, proposing that they travel to Europe and assemble a ballet troupe to use in a production of *Undine*. His plate full, Grover declined, but arranged for Jarrett to meet Harry Palmer, a Wall Street man with an abiding interest in theatre. Jarrett and Palmer entered into a partnership, leased the venerable Academy of Music for their production, and set sail for Europe.

Once on the other side of the ocean, the two men traveled to the great opera houses, surveying the terpsichorean treasures of Europe and recruiting some of the continent's finest for their American production. Jarrett & Palmer saw Maria Bonfanti as she was completing an engagement at Covent Garden, while Rita Sangalli came to their attention in her role as principal dancer at Her Majesty's Theatre in London, where she had just replaced Giuseppina Morlachchi. The two impresarios quickly seized upon these two graduates of La Scala's distinguished ballet program and made arrangements for them to travel to New York (with chaperones!). They also hired a number of other European dancers to form the company.

Shortly after Jarrett & Palmer returned from gallivanting around Europe, though, a fire broke out at the Academy after a May performance of *La Juive*, trapping some employees of the theatre and gutting the building by the early morning hours. Still in custody of the orphaned dance company and yet without a theatre, Jarrett & Palmer ingeniously approached William Wheatley, a producer who was leasing Niblo's Garden, an enormous stage located at the intersection of Spring Street & Broadway.²⁰⁹ Niblo's was one of the most luxurious (and well-ventilated!) theatres in nineteenth century New York. As Niblo's box office manager Joseph Whitton recalled in 1897,²¹⁰

Niblo's Garden was then considered the most popular of New York's theatres, and not—what in after years it became—too far down town for the convenience of amusement-seekers. The wholesale business houses were confined, with their nightly gloom and quiet, to that portion of Broad which lies below Canal Street. Immediately above the latter, the great thoroughfare commenced its dizzy whirl. And dizzy enough it was, and giddy enough, and gaudy enough, to satisfy the most hilarious owls and upset the bile of the sedate. Niblo's was in the midst of it

²⁰⁹ In the immortal phrasing of Edward B. Marks, "By five in the morning, with the embers still smoldering, an idea rose like a phoenix from the ashes. If they couldn't have *UNDINE*, they would have *NUDINE* instead." See Edward B. Marks, *They All Had Glamour: From the Swedish Nightingale to the Naked Lady* (New York: Julian Messner, 1944), 4.

²¹⁰ Whitton's short book *The Naked Truth!: The Inside Story of the Black Crook* has long been one of the principal sources of information about the show, with its authority coming from Whitton's position as the manager of Niblo's. However, the July 21, 1866, edition of the *New York Clipper* reports that "Joseph Whitton, treasurer for a long time for Manager Wheatley, in Philadelphia at the old Arch, and at Niblo's, in this city, has resigned the position, and taken up his abode in the country. He is succeeded at Niblo's by Jacob Zimmerman, a young man connected with Mr. Wheatley in his management for some time." This would still place Mr. Whitton in Mr. Wheatley's company at the time of the acquisition of *The Black Crook*, though he would seem to be out of the picture well before the ballet troupe arrived in America. (Joseph Whitton, *The Naked Truth!: The Inside Story of the Black Crook* (Philadelphia: H.W. Shaw, 1897)).

all. Over its broad entrance flashed a sign bearing the name, formed of illuminated globes, and of more colors than ‘Joseph’s Coat.’ It was one of the nightly features of New York’s artery, and its main object was to stop the flow of frisky blood and coax the boodled substance into the coffers of the box office.”²¹¹

Seeking to install their production at Niblo’s, Jarrett & Palmer proposed that Wheatley, the manager of the theatre, join the two men in producing a spectacular drama which would include the dance troupe, as well as the fancy scenery and costumes that they had commissioned in Europe. Wheatley agreed to the proposal, and suggested that *The Black Crook*, a manuscript submitted to him by Charles Barras, might be suitable for their joint endeavor.²¹² Box office manager Whitton later wrote that as he read the play he saw “what Wheatley had already seen, that here was the very piece to fit the Ballet—a clothes-line, as it were, on which to hang the pretty dresses, besides affording abundant opportunities for scenic display.”²¹³ While Whitton goes on to note, as have many others, that the play was not particularly original or inventive, it is clear that it was for some reason considered uniquely valuable. Indeed, Jarrett & Palmer, not wishing to pay Barras’ high asking price, proposed either that they pay Augustin Daly five hundred dollars to write a play or that they use the *Naiad Queen*, which they could employ at no cost. Somehow, though, Wheatley was somehow able to persuade the duo that Barras’ play was valuable enough to pay the playwright \$2,000 for allowing the piece to be transformed into a spectacle.

(Just as the play had to be transformed to allow for moments of extraordinary visual spectacle, so too did the stage of Niblo’s require elaborate reconstruction in order to present these elaborate stage effects.²¹⁴ Shortly before the piece was to open, the *New York Clipper* announced that

²¹¹ Whitton, 7. In the next paragraph, Whitton notes that “the theatre was a complete one, famed for its beauty, and with a grip on public favor that some of its devotees thought everlasting. But, alas for the evanescence of all earthly things! The mortality of theatres seems no less sure than that of their goers; and this one, so long the pride of the metropolis—this one, that cradled the Crook and nursed its growth into favorhood—this one, that in the sixty-six years of its existence twice arose from its ashes, each time more beautiful than before, has at last given up the ghost, and now lies dead and buried with a skyscraper for its tombstone.”

²¹² The April 7, 1866 issue of the *New York Clipper* verifies that Wheatley already had possession of the play before he was approached by Jarrett & Palmer. As a sidenote, M.B. Leavitt, reports that it was Grover who recommended the piece so highly to Wheatley, but one then wonders why Grover didn’t then produce it himself (but perhaps for the theatre being leased). See M.B. Leavitt, *Fifty Years in Theatrical Management* (New York: Broadway Publishing, 1912), 157.

²¹³ Whitton, 10.

²¹⁴ It is often reported that Wheatley had to pay the Ravels \$10,000 to free up the stage for repairs. However, this claim seems very slightly exaggerated. The Ravels, a popular acrobatic family who starred in spectacles, had been announced at Niblo’s with great fanfare (9 June 1866); the *Clipper* surmised that they would run throughout the summer, and while they apparently had robust audiences at the very beginning of their summer run, there were reports by June 30 that “The Ravels, even, cannot get along this hot weather, and their business at Niblo’s...was only moderate.” The *Clipper*’s early announcement that the Ravels “have always proved a popular card in this city, no matter how unsuccessful they may have been elsewhere,” seemed to portend doom, and by July 14, the troupe was gone. The February 16, 1867, issue of the *Clipper* confirms that the Ravels had been working on a guarantee of \$500 per night, and so it seems that Wheatley would have had to buy out the contracts of the Ravels so as to cut his losses. However, the stage was not freed up for repairs, as Wheatley then booked an Italian troupe of

[t]he old stage has given place to a new one, with all the modern London and Paris improvements, and is what can be truly called a ‘trick stage.’ There is not a trap opening to be seen from the front of the house, yet the entire stage is cut all up into traps. The cellar beneath the stage has been dug to a depth of twenty-three feet, in order to sink a whole scene at once. The space underneath looks like a small forest; it is crowded with columns and beams, each of which performs another office besides supporting the flooring, and has its important part to play in the mechanism of the stage. At an hour’s notice, every inch of this flooring may be made to slide out of sight, and every one of these beams may be unlatched and lifted out of place, and thus leave the space behind the curtain a huge cavity for the reception of a monster tank of water in which a ship may float.²¹⁵

Including the cost of the complicated scenery and lighting, the total expense was thought to be around \$55,000. That the producers should invest such extravagance in the production gives a sense of how certain they were of their success.²¹⁶)

Given these helter-skelter origins, it is easy to see how *The Black Crook* confounds any claims that it participates in the tradition of the “integrated” musical comedy. The narratives of Mates, Bernstein, and Smith all tell the story of a musical theatre inching its way toward integration. Bernstein, for example, remarks in the course of the program that “the whole growth of our musical comedy can be seen through the history of integration,” and his characterization of *The Black Crook* situates the show as a half-hearted, dis-integrated precursor to musical theatre. Making no attempt at integrating its components, *The Black Crook* is, for Bernstein, less art than diversion, and in essence little more than a variety show.

Yet however much Professor Mates may criticize Bernstein, the two men adhere to the very same ideology of ‘integration’ when they criticize *The Black Crook* for being a musical hodgepodge. Professor Mates argues that “there are various reasons why one is reluctant to grant *The Black Crook* the label of genuine musical comedy.”²¹⁷ “The music,” he writes, was written by a conglomeration of composers, rather than by one man. There is a complete lack of collaboration between librettist and composer, with a consequent disunity of musical conception. As might be expected, the music fails to illuminate particular kinds of action or particular characters. Undistinguished music was certainly not uncommon on the early American lyric stage, but *The Black Crook*, in this department, exemplifies the most backward, rather than the most advanced, level of achievement to which the musical had risen.²¹⁸

In describing the show’s music, Bernstein similarly notes that “all of these pieces just followed one another for 5 ½ hours, without rhyme or reason, like its Germanic plot, its French ballet, and its American comedy songs.”²¹⁹ Thus, part of the disdain accorded *The Black Crook* seems to emerge from a bias against the seemingly random incorporation of popular songs into the play. What values are being attached here to music being composed “by one man”? And do these

opera singers to follow the Ravels. The opera singers’ middling performance at the box office, though, did assure that the stage would be unoccupied and available for repairs.

²¹⁵ *New York Clipper*, 1 September 1866.

²¹⁶ Intriguingly, Leavitt reports that Palmer was in fact penniless, and that only through loans from Grover could Palmer finance the production. See Leavitt, 158.

²¹⁷ Mates, 38.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

²¹⁹ Bernstein, *Omnibus* broadcast.

values unnecessarily limit our ability to appreciate the potential synergies that could be borne of a show composed by many different writers?

It is certainly the case that the music was composed by more than one composer. Though Thomas Baker was announced as the composer of the original 1866 production, and though he is thought to have composed much of the score, he most certainly did not compose the show's hit song, "You Naughty, Naughty Men," which was written by George Bicknell and Theodore Kennick. Furthermore, the show was subject to frequent interpolations during its long run, as was customary at the time; playbills and newspaper reports from various points in the show's run confirm that there was no set score, with songs occasionally coming and going.²²⁰ However, it is unclear why the unplanned nature of the musical score of *The Black Crook* is so damning. Does music composed by one man somehow necessarily cohere?

Furthermore, there is very little evidence to support any claim—positive or negative—regarding the appropriateness or "integrated" quality of the score. "You Naughty, Naughty Men" remains the only piece of vocal music that we have from *The Black Crook*; we have none of the songs that Thomas Baker composed expressly for the production. Much of the music that does exist consists of piano arrangements of dance music heard in the show—evidence not only adulterated but also so scant that conclusions about the integrity of the score are necessarily unsubstantiated.

On a more abstract note, however, given the disjunctive nature of the musical, with its distinction between speech and music, any claims regarding the relationship between song and story are open to serious scrutiny—even if we did have the complete vocal score. And it is certainly plausible to imagine how an interpolated song could still form a meaningful theatrical experience, and perhaps a more engaging one. Our criteria for judging the aesthetic success of a song within a story remain vague at best.

As for the plot of *The Black Crook*, it too was criticized as being a pitiful assortment of worn-out theatrical clichés.²²¹ The *Tribune* famously reported that "the scenery is magnificent; the ballet is beautiful; the drama is – rubbish. There is always a bitter drop in the sweetest cup, a fly in the richest ointment. Mr. Barras' drama is the bitter drop and the superfluous fly in this instance."²²² The primary criticism of Barras' melodrama concerned the fact that virtually all of *The Black Crook*'s conceits originated long before Barras put pen to paper, resulting in a singularly unoriginal plot. The *Tribune* noted that "Mr. Barras, an old reader and an old actor, has picked up a great many literary and theatrical properties in his time, and they have been more or less usefull [sic] to him, we dare to say; but we remember that the fields of literature are open to all gleaners, and hence that many people will infallibly recognize Mr. Barras' properties. To

²²⁰ Even the hit song was taken out during the absence of Milly Cavendish, who sang it in the show and with whom it had become popularly associated. (*New York Clipper*, 29 December 1866, and 6 April 1867).

²²¹ Given the beating that Barras has taken over the years, and the usual depiction of him as a bumbling hack, it seems in the interest of justice to note that he was apparently an actor of some repute. The May 5, 1866, edition of *The New York Clipper* noted that "C. Barras...artistically made a very favorable impression. His *Vertigo Morbid*, in his own play of the 'Hypochondriac,' was a rare bit of acting, perhaps a trifle slow and solemn for our fast theatre-goers, but nevertheless a life-like portraiture." Speaking of another Barras role, the *Clipper* noted that "he was equally well received...he has a style of his own which is decidedly laughter-provoking. Mr. Barras is a clever actor."

²²² This September 17, 1866, review is reprinted in George Freedley, "The Black Crook and The White Fawn," in Paul Magriel, ed., *Chronicles of the American Dance: From the Shakers to Martha Graham* (New York: Da Capo, 1978), 69-71.

call ‘The Black Crook’ original is to trifle with intelligence.”²²³ “For the construction of it,” the writer commented, “we can only observe that the literary materials, stage business, etc., appear to have been put into an intellectual bag and vigorously shaken together.” A later critic, describing a revival, similarly noted that “Mr. Barras took a slice of ‘Der Freischutz’ and a scrap of ‘Undine.’ He grated in some of the ‘Naiad Queen’ and gave it a dash of ‘The Swiss Cottage.’ Then he stirred and stirred, and this Witch’s Broth he called ‘The Black Crook.’”²²⁴

Given these accusations, it might help to get some sense of what *The Black Crook* was really like, as a piece of dramatic entertainment. As the curtain went up on opening night, the audience beheld an apparently accomplished scene-painting evoking “a quiet valley at the foot of the Hartz Mountains,” sometime around 1600. A young man, Rodolphe, enters, thrice clapping his hands so as to summon his beloved, Amina, to the window. Amina reports that while Rodolphe was away, trying to find someone to purchase his artwork, she attended the Festival of St. John. There, she was eyed by Count Wolfenstein, “the all-powerful Lord of this wide domain,” who secured her hand from Amina’s self-absorbed foster mother, Dame Barbara.

At this point, as the town readies for a wedding, a brief clog dance heightens the celebratory mood and complements the peasantry dimensions of the locale. This *Pas de Sabot*, likely performed by garland-hoop-bearing secondary dancers in wooden shoes, brought acclaim for one of the featured coryphées, Rosi Delval, who “received the well-merited applause of the house.”²²⁵

Amina’s friend and confidante, Carline, also sings around this point of “You Naughty, Naughty Men,” the show’s big hit number, a song likely brought over from the British music hall.²²⁶ Then, with the Sun “peeping over the Great-Toe of the Brocken,” the Count and his “corpulent and rubicund” factotum, Von Puffengruntz, arrive to conduct Amina and Dame Barbara to the castle. The cavalier Rodolphe boldly asserts that Amina is his, yet the Count ridicules him as a madman and sends him away. As Amina is placed in a “festooned chair” and escorted offstage, the villagers sing a song about their “charming lady fair.” A *Pas de Fleurs* concluded the scene; this mazurka consisted of competitive solos by the three principal dancers, Maria Bonfanti, Rita Sangalli, and Betty Rigl. This dance was one of the evening’s highlights, with no less than two encores being demanded.

This second scene also won favor for its scene-painting, which here depicted a rocky pass where Wolfenstein’s henchmen, Wulfgar and Bruno, anticipate Rodolphe’s path and stand ready to abduct him. “Quick, conceal yourself,” Wulfgar admonishes Bruno, “and when I hood the hawk, stand ready to clip his claws,” which indeed they do once the fatigued and delirious Rodolphe approaches them.

Meanwhile, toiling in his laboratory is the sorcerer Herzog, otherwise known as “The Black Crook,” a “hideous deformity with leaden complexion, humped back, knotted limbs, crooked body, and lame.” Seeking to restore potency to his spells, the Black Crook sets off for the Serpents’ Glen, which, as his underling notes, is “Beelzebub’s favorite chapel.” Once there, through various incantations and the casting of various powders into a fire, the Black Crook summons the evil Zamiel, who appears amidst “loud crashing thunder and vivid lightning,” while “huge serpents writhe to and fro across the stage.” Zamiel offers the Black Crook a

²²³ Ibid., 69-71.

²²⁴ Unattributed clipping in the files of the New York Public Library.

²²⁵ *Times* review, qtd. in Freedley, 10.

²²⁶ As a sidenote, a copyright lawsuit was brought by the writers of a similar song, “Oh, You Naughty Organ Men,” a song about organ-grinders.

renewable lease on life: each year, he must offer up one soul to Zamiel, in exchange for another year of living. The Black Crook agrees to this pact and is advised by Zamiel to begin with the desperate Rodolphe, now enchained in a vault beneath the castle of Wolfenstein.

Making his way to the vault, the Black Crook lures Rodolphe to pursue riches which would enable him to snatch Amina from the clutches of Wolfenstein. These riches, the Black Crook tells Rodolphe, can be plundered from a cave long guarded by superstition—but which can be safely breached thanks to a talismanic ring that he gives Rodolphe. Knowing that in fact fairies will kill anyone approaching the cave, the Black Crook is leading Rodolphe to his demise.

Two short scenes follow—the first, a comic exchange between Dame Barbara and her suitor, Von Puffengruntz; the second, a brief conversation between Rodolphe and his traveling companion as they plow through the Hartz Mountains in search of the fabled cave suggested by the Black Crook. These short scenes were likely performed ‘in one,’ for the following scene, set in the grotto of Golden Stalactites, was of such profound complexity as to require a good chunk of time to assemble it onstage. Barras’ script describes the set as

a grand and comprehensive water-cavern of gold, deeply perspective, with stalactiform, arched roof. Vistas, running parallel and harmonizing with the main Grotto, the mouth of which discloses an open lake and distant shore at back. Transparent silver waters, in which are seen sporting fishes and nondescript amphibia. Diminutive fairies asleep on the waters of the Grotto in golden shells. Ground- or shore-piece, richly studded with gold and jewels. Masses of emerald and gold, upon and at the foot of which are reclining gnomes and amphibia. Fairies asleep in poses. The moon, seen through the opening at back and over the distant shore of the lake, shows red upon its face at opening of scene.²²⁷

Observing that “some of the most perfect and admirable pieces of scenery that have ever been exhibited upon the stage are employed in the exhibition of this piece,” the *Tribune* critic singled out the scenery which created Stalacta’s realm: “A vast grotto is herein presented, extending into an almost immeasurable perspective. Stalactites descend from the arched roof. A tranquil and lovely lake reflects the golden glories that span it like a vast sky. In every direction one sees the bright sheen or the dull richness of massy gold.”²²⁸ The effect of this Golden Realm was achieved by a number of arched drop-and-wing pieces, which were netted and then painted to create the effect of stalactites, with the pieces diminishing in size until they reached the backdrop, thereby creating a primitive sense of boundless depth.

In the grotto, Queen Stalacta recounts to her various subjects the fraught situation in which she found herself that very day:

Tonight, while wandering in the fastnesses of the Hartz, without my protecting talisman, I heedlessly trod within one of the charmed circles of our enemy, the arch-fiend Zamiel... On the instant, I was transformed into a white dove with shorn pinions. From beneath the rank leaves of an adder-plant glided a huge serpent. Its eyes were burning coals, its tongue a living flame. I was paralyzed with fear and powerless to move. Nearer and nearer it came. I felt its stifling breath displace the purer air—I saw its venomous fangs glist’ning in the pale moonlight. Rising from out its deadly coil preparing itself to strike, when suddenly a youth, a mortal, strangely present in that wild, weird spot, seeing the

²²⁷ Charles Barras, *The Black Crook*, in Myron Matlaw, ed., *Nineteenth Century American Plays* (New York: Applause, 1967), 350.

²²⁸ Qtd. in Freedley, 69-71.

danger of the trembling bird, seized a dead bough, which chance had fashioned like a Holy Cross, and smote the foul thing dead. Then he bore me safely from the charmed spot and gave me life and liberty.²²⁹

Just as she finishes recounting her travails, she receives word that mortals bearing the enchanted magnet of the Black Crook have come to harvest the riches of their grotto. While the Fairy-Chorus sings, Stalacta discovers that one of the mortals, Rodolphe, is none other than the savior who rescued her from the Serpent. She invites him into the grotto, thanks him, and beseeches him to partake in the carnival celebrating her “natal hour.” A significant element of this carnival was a *Pas de Naiad*, otherwise called a ‘fish ballet,’ featuring a panoply of piscatorial personae, with Rita Sangalli leading the coryphées as they skimmed the surface of the lake.

Stalacta then offers Rodolphe a magic ring that he can use to summon her if he is endangered, and they leave amidst a “copious shower of gold.” At this point came the highlight of the evening, a *Pas de Demons* in which Bonfanti and her ballet master, David Costa, performed a waltz so celebrated that it was thrice encored. This elaborate number, in which Bonfanti and Costa were attired in normal ballet costumes, also featured Betty Rigl and three secondary dancers (Mlles. Zuccoli, Svandi, and Mazzeri) in decidedly scanty clothing. As Kristina Gintautiene notes, an illustration of the scene in an October 1866 issue of *Frank Leslie’s* shows “a stage crowded with dancers, most in traditional tutus, while three are in more tightly fitting pantaloon costumes, and one wears a special and more elaborately designed tutu.”²³⁰ By the time this scene concluded, three hours had already passed!

The third act takes place six months later at a masquerade ball hosted by Count Wolfenstein. Armed with Stalacta’s ring, Rodolphe feels empowered to reunite with Amina, and approaches her at the ball. Just as the two lovers affirm their romance, Wolfenstein’s men attack. In defense, Rodolphe kisses the ring, whereupon “Lights flash. Stalacta springs up in glittering mail, with helmet, sword and shield, followed by [her minion] Dragonfin, armed with a trident. Fairies and nymphs as amazons, with breastplates, helmets, shields and javelins. Gnomes and amphibeas with knobbed clubs and tridents.”²³¹ This “March of the Amazons,” a staple of spectacles, inspired awe in their sheer display of numbers, with the entire corps de ballet marching “through a drill series with the corps moving through advancing and dissolving kaleidoscopic floor patterns, with added decoration in the handling of their props.”²³² “Exciting action,” Barras’ script epigrammatically prescribes. As the scene concludes, the Black Crook stands in tableau, looking “the embodiment of baffled rage,” while Wolfenstein and his henchmen recoil.

Six months later, at Rodolphe’s retreat in the forest of Bohemia, another confrontation ensues between Rodolphe and Wolfenstein, this time felling Wolfenstein and Wulfgar, leaving only the Black Crook. After another six months, the Black Crook returns and sets the forest of Bohemia ablaze, but Stalacta’s intervention again saves Rodolphe. Having harvested no souls, the Black Crook is condemned by Zamiel into the fires of Hell.

All these exotic settings—replete with glittering grottoes and dank dungeons, conflagrations and incantations—afforded ample opportunity for complicated scenery and

²²⁹ Matlaw, 350-351.

²³⁰ Kristina Gintautiene, “The Black Crook: Ballet in the Gilded Age (1866-1876)” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1984), 78.

²³¹ Matlaw, 367.

²³² Gintautiene, 85-6.

elaborate stagecraft.²³³ The most celebrated of *The Black Crook*'s scenic wizardry, though, occurred in the evening's closer, the "Grand Transformation Scene." Just after the Black Crook himself has been "dragged on by Fiends....and dashed into the flaming chasm," we find ourselves in a "subterranean gallery of emerald and crystal stalactites," with music accompanying a

characteristic march. Grand procession of amphibia and gnomes bearing in their arms and upon their heads salvers, shells, and quaint vases filled with gold and jewels. They are followed by amazons in armor, led by Stalacta. They march, double the march, and vary the evolutions, 'till the transformation is ready, when they exit and the scene breaks away to...Music. An elaborate mechanical and scenical construction of the Realms of Stalacta, occupying the entire stage. This scene must be of gradually-developing and culminating beauty, introducing during its various transformations Stalacta, the entire host of fairies, sprites, water nymphs, amphibia, gnomes, etc., bearing treasure. Rodolphe, Amina, Greppo, and Carline. Calcium lights, brilliant fires, and slow curtain.²³⁴

The *Tribune* wrote that the

last scene in the play...will dazzle and impress...by its lavish richness and barbaric splendor. All that gold, and silver, and gems, and lights, and woman's beauty can contribute to fascinate the eye and charm the sense is gathered up in this gorgeous spectacle. Its luster grows as we gaze, and deepens and widens, till the effect is almost painful. One by one curtains of mist ascend and drift away. Silver couches, on which the fairies loll in negligent grace, ascend and descend amid a silver rain...From the clouds droop gilded chariots and the white forms of angels...²³⁵

This "gradually-developing" transformation scene was a popular stage effect, in which spectators are treated to the unfolding of an elaborate scene, as carefully planned lighting and a series of scrimms reveal new components sequentially.²³⁶ In one production of *The Black Crook*, the various stages of exposition included "The Golden Vineyard of Fairyland," "The Valley of Ferns," and "The Temple of Arcadia." The various fairies and sprites called for in Barras' script were displayed using "tinsel sinks," which were essentially disguised harnesses which allowed the dancers to pose "here and there in more or less picturesque attitudes."²³⁷ The brilliance of the transformation scene was made possible through the widespread use of calcium lighting, also known as limelight, which allowed careful control of intense illumination. Other lighting technology was also put to great display in a number of props, illuminating various crowns, wands, and necklaces. Amidst all this cutting-edge stagecraft was some lower-tech stage magic as well: as H.E. Cooper notes, the conflagrations prescribed in Barras' script were achieved

²³³ The *Clipper* noted before the show's run that it required the services of "no less than seven scenic artists, Messrs. Richard Marston, from London; S.E. Hayes, Richard Smith, D.A. Strong and W. Wallack, and the Brothers Brew, from Ashley's Theatre, London..." (15 September 1866).

²³⁴ Matlaw, 374.

²³⁵ Qtd. in Freedley, 69-71.

²³⁶ The transformation effect was famously designed by William R. Beverly and displayed for the first time in an 1848 London Lyceum production of *The Island of Jewels*.

²³⁷ H.E. Cooper, "The Black Crook," *The Dance* (September 1926): 10.

through “the burning of the pans of red fire in the wings—a source of much subsequent coughing on the part of the audience.”²³⁸

Recalling his trip to *The Black Crook*, Mark Twain reminisced about the Transformation Scene, recalling

Beautiful bare-legged girls hanging in flower baskets; others stretched in groups on great sea shells; others clustered around fluted columns; others in all possible attitudes; girls—nothing but a wilderness of girls—stacked up, pile on pile, away aloft to the dome of the theatre, diminishing in size and in clothing, till the last row, mere children, dangle high up from invisible ropes, arrayed only in a camisa. The whole tableau resplendent with columns, scrolls, and a vast ornamental work, wrought in gold, silver and brilliant colors—all lit up with gorgeous theatrical fires, and witnessed through a great gauzy curtain that counterfeits a soft silver mist! It is the wonders of the Arabian Nights realized.²³⁹

In considering *The Black Crook*, then, one cannot help but find the tropes to be well-worn. It is almost hard to imagine a time when these stories—of sorcerers hungry for eternal life, of poor artists trying to win their beloveds—could have been novel. However, despite its being a trite concatenation of theatrical clichés, Barras’ work was nevertheless drama—perhaps mediocre drama, perhaps recycled drama—but drama all the same. Unlike extravaganzas or revues, *The Black Crook* featured a plot that united the various features of the evening’s entertainment.

The production was, no doubt, a precarious amalgamation of new-fangled technology, old-fashioned melodrama, scandalous ballerinas, and decidedly unadventurous music. Yet there at the heart of the matter, awkwardly comprehending all these various elements, was Mr. Barras’ libretto. This was not a burlesque show, or a circus, or a mere spectacle. As Odell wrote in his magisterial *Annals of the New York Stage*, Wheatley “incorporated [Jarrett & Palmer’s] effects and their really gorgeous ballet in an absurd melodrama by Charles M. Barras, a melodrama more ridiculous than any burlesque melodrama could possibly be. But it served as a connecting link for the progression of dances, scenes and episodes that made *The Black Crook* the unique thing it was.”²⁴⁰ Writing in 1929, Willis Fletcher Johnson similarly observed that “there were in it scores of graceful forms and lovely faces, and of artistic costumes of every conceivable hue, all harmoniously selected and blended; and there were incessant groupings and regroupings and evolutions until the bewildered vision seemed to be dwelling upon the mirrored scenes of a vast kaleidoscope. Yet withal the observant mind could perceive running through it all an integral dramatic thread, a coherent and logical plot, that entitled it to be regarded as a real play and not merely a sensuous spectacle.”²⁴¹ Even in 1866, just as all these elements were being amalgamated, there was a sense that the book might unify, however tentatively, all of the evening’s entertainments. In a nod to the best ‘melting pot’ logic, the very American book was felt to cobble together all the various imported arts. As one prominent theatrical newspaper put it,

²³⁸ Cooper, 10.

²³⁹ Mark Twain, *Mark Twain’s Travels with Mr. Brown*, eds. Franklin Walker and G. Esra Dane (New York: Knopf, 1940), 85-6.

²⁴⁰ George C.D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, vol. 8 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 152.

²⁴¹ Willis Fletcher Johnson, “Niblo’s Black Crook,” *Boston Globe*, 24 March 1929.

We are promised...an immense company of dancing girls, imported expressly for this market; a gorgeous costumery also manufactured abroad, on account, probably, of the scarcity of sewing machinery in this country; a fabulous transformation scene, likewise got up in Europe, and so forth, to say nothing of French supers, English auxiliaries, Dutch singers, and other outlandish effects. But the spectacle in which all these imported things are to be shown off is of American manufacture, and the 'Black Crook' it is called."²⁴²

"If the text itself," the notice patriotically concluded, "should make a hit dressed as it will be in all this imported stuff, we ought to feel very grateful to the author." Whatever the inadequacies of the book, it did in fact serve to link the various components of the entertainment, indeed into a uniquely American concoction. With *The Black Crook's* book serving to unite, however tentatively, its various episodes of music and dance, it is easy to see the show as a primitive example of musical comedy, and in fact it has long been recognized as our *first* musical comedy. Christopher Morley, writing in 1929, similarly called it "the grandparent of modern musical comedy,"²⁴³ and around the same time H.E. Cooper wrote in *Dance* that with the raising of *The Black Crook* curtain "begins the era of the musical comedy..."²⁴⁴ Esteemed historian Stanley Green begins his *Musical Comedy* by noting that "[a]lthough there were earlier attempts to present dramas on the same program with music and dancing, *The Black Crook*, in 1866, was the first successful venture in American to combine the two forms of entertainment."²⁴⁵

However, though critics perceived ruptures in the trite book and the haphazard music, they almost invariably focus on dance when discussing the disintegrated qualities of *The Black Crook*; take, for example, a not uncommon critical consolation like that of Julian Mates, who argues that "*The Black Crook*...did help build the rage for burlesque in American and cater to the growing American appetite for girlie shows."²⁴⁶ Indeed, these critics seem unable to reconcile the show's terpsichorean wiles with their gravitas-laden narrative of integration. Interrupting the narrative for its spectacular beauty, the ballet in the *Black Crook* served to draw attention to the sensuous dimensions of the dramatic entertainment, a disruption that many critics felt had compromised the dramatic integrity of *The Black Crook*.

So notorious was the dancing in *The Black Crook* that even those who had not yet seen the production could hardly have been unaware of the presence of the female body in the production. Various moralizing preachers, who were swift to evangelize, warned the masses of the profound evil inherent in such a sight. The most prominent of these evangelists was the Rev. Dr. Charles B. Smythe, who fit the battle of *The Black Crook* at the Cooper Institute, arguing that [t]he first thing that strikes the eye is the immodest dress of the girls; the short skirt and undergarments of thin gauze-like material...the flesh colored tights, imitating nature so well that the illusion is complete; with the exceedingly short drawers, almost tight fitting, extending very little below the hip, also of thin material; arms and neck apparently bare, and bodice so cut and fitted as to show off every inch and outline of the body above the waist. The attitudes were

²⁴² *New York Clipper*, 28 July 1866.

²⁴³ Christopher Morley, "Hoboken Nights," *Saturday Evening Post*, 13 July 1929.

²⁴⁴ Cooper, 9. It is worth noting that Cooper also identifies *The Black Crook* as the beginning of the dance revue, the comic opera, and the musical burlesque!

²⁴⁵ Green, 1.

²⁴⁶ Mates, 37.

exceedingly indelicate—ladies dancing so as to make their undergarments spring up, exposing the figure beneath from waist to toe...²⁴⁷

With such salacious description being regularly circulated, it is no wonder that *The Black Crook* would go on offending for 473 more performances. The newspapers, though, were rightly suspicious of Reverend Smyth's moralizing, with the *Clipper* opining that "Smith, it appears, went to see the 'Black Crook,' at Niblo's, as many other preachers had done before him, and as many are still doing; for be it ever so humble, the flesh is ever weak."²⁴⁸ Sermons like that of Smyth necessarily betray the profound investment on the part of the moralizers, and indeed it comes as little surprise to discover that "outside one Kentucky performance of *The Black Crook*, two ministers, disguised rather poorly in false whiskers, were arrested by the police on charges of vagrancy."²⁴⁹

Using their papers as a pulpit, the *New York Herald* joined the clergy in denouncing the production, warning the populace that

[n]othing in any other Christian country, or in modern times, has approached the indecent and demoralizing exhibition at Wheatley's Theatre in this city... We can imagine there might have been in Sodom and Gomorrah such another place and scene, such a theatre and spectacle on the Broadway of those doomed cities just before fire and brimstone rained down upon them and they were buried in the ruins. There was, too, we believe, similar places and scenes in Pompeii just as that city was buried beneath the eruption of Vesuvius. We may be saved, perhaps. From a like fate on account of the many good people there are in New York... If any of the *Herald's* readers, in spite of its warning and advice, are determined to gaze on the indecent and dazzling brilliancy of the Black Crook, they should provide themselves with a piece of smoked glass.²⁵⁰

Almost every writer felt compelled to remark on the display of the female body, with some comparing it to the tawdriness of "model artist" shows. After remarking on the usefulness of 'bad publicity,' Mark Twain went on to feign his own indignation at the sight of these shameless ladies:

When I was here in '53, a model artist show had an ephemeral existence in Chatham Street, and then everybody growled about it, and the police broke it up... people wouldn't go to see it. But now they call that sort of thing a 'Grand Spectacular Drama,' and everybody goes. It is all in a name. And it is about as spectacular as anything I ever saw without sinking right into the earth with outraged modesty. It is the wickedest show you can think of. You see there is

²⁴⁷ Qtd. in *New York Clipper*, 1 December 1866.

²⁴⁸ *New York Clipper*, 1 December 1866. This issue of the *Clipper* also contains a fantastic poem to commemorate Rev. Smyth's visit, which included the stanzas, "Who left at home his bible book/While he a stage in Broadway took/All for to see the famed 'Black Crook'/?/My Pastor" and "Who traced the outlines clean and neat/From bosom bare to sandal'd feet/And said he never saw the beat/?/My Pastor."

²⁴⁹ Qtd. in John Russell David, "The Genesis of the Variety Theatre: The Black Crook Comes to St. Louis," *Missouri Historical Review* (January, 1970): 143.

²⁵⁰ Whitton, 23-25. (Also noting that such vivid description and flamboyant chastising served only as good publicity, box office manager Joseph Whitton even went so far as to speculate that the publisher of the *Herald* may have surreptitiously penned the editorial so as to aid Wheatley, who had earlier sided with the *Herald* during a disagreement between the newspaper and a union of theatrical managers. Oh, the intrigue!)

small harm in exhibiting a pack of painted old harlots, swathed in gauze, like the original artistes, for no man careth a cent for them but to laugh and jeer at them. Nakedness itself, in such a case, would be nothing worse than disgusting. But I warn you that when they put beautiful clipper-built girls on the stage in this new fashion, with only just barely clothes enough on to be tantalizing, it is a shrewd invention of the devil.²⁵¹

Ever the prude, Twain wrote that “those girls dance in ballet, dressed with a meagerness that would make a parasol blush. And they prance around and expose themselves in a way that is scandalous to me.”²⁵²

Of course, dancers had long been subject to suspicions of prostitution—yet however revealing these costumes may have been, it is worth noting that *The Black Crook* actually presented genuine ballet,²⁵³ performed by some of Europe’s finest dancers who had been trained at La Scala. As Robert C. Allen notes, this was far from a glorified burlesque show, however much it might have satisfied the baser instincts of man. In his comprehensive study of burlesque, Allen writes that “the single most transgressive element of the production, the ballet costume, retained its associations with that art form, which, by this time, was much more culturally acceptable than it had been three decades earlier. The choreography was kept solidly within the mainstream of romantic ballet.”²⁵⁴

There is no doubt that a goodly portion of the audience came solely to see the immodest legs of the company; management, we can be sure, did little to dissuade parties wishing to skip the peasant-and-dungeon obligatories of melodrama from arriving just in time for the saucier elements. However, this hardly justifies the claim sometimes advanced that *The Black Crook* was nothing but a “girlie show.” Such a claim, while also ignoring the theatrical context of the presentation, seems patently mistaken given not only the remarkably high standards of the company, but also the show’s other standout attractions, from the dazzling scenic magic of the Transformation Scene to the hit song, “You Naughty, Naughty Men.” As Robert Allen notes in *Horrible Prettiness*, “...perhaps the most important reason *The Black Crook* remained within the pale was that it was not a burlesque. There was no impertinent, inversive burlesque humor in the piece; it was played straight, not for laughs. In the original production...there were no cross-dressed roles. This is not to say that there was no comedy in the production, but it was not burlesque comedy.”²⁵⁵ Scholar Rachel Shteir also declines to categorize *The Black Crook* as a “girlie show.” In her *Striptease: The Untold History of the Girlie Show*, Shteir writes that “*The Black Crook* also set the stage for Lydia Thompson and the British Blondes, the first burlesque

²⁵¹ Twain, 85.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 86. “Moreover,” he continued, “they come trooping on the stage in platoons and battalions, in most princely attire I grant you, but always with more tights in view than anything else. They change their clothes every fifteen minutes for hours, and their dresses become more beautifully and more rascally all the time.”

²⁵³ Along with the historic visit of Fanny Elssler to the United States during the 1840’s, the *Black Crook* was the most significant introduction Americans had to ballet. Not only did the widespread popularity of the production create a great hubbub, but many of the accomplished dancers imported from Europe ended up settling in America, and became dedicated teachers of the European tradition.

²⁵⁴ Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 116-7.

²⁵⁵ Allen, 117.

show to conquer America.”²⁵⁶ While Shteir clearly sees the “legs” of the *Black Crook* as adumbrating the plethora of legs in the burlesque shows to come, she clearly does not view *The Black Crook* as a “burlesque show.”

Fifty years after *The Black Crook*, Maria Bonfanti told an interviewer that “then the ballet was lovely because all the girls were artists. They knew how to dance.”²⁵⁷ “But now,” she lamented, “the manager does not want anything but young and pretty girls. The talent does not bother him at all.” Bonfanti rightfully reminds us that the producers of *The Black Crook* went to great lengths to secure the finest talents available. The notion that these great dancers were gum-chewing ingénues on the arms of cigar-smoking mogul producers—or that it was possible to perceive them as such—seems to be patently untrue. Olive Logan similarly testified that the show’s scandalous display of the feminine corps was tempered by the art involved:

When the *Black Crook* first presented its nude woman to the gaze of a crowded auditory, she was met with a gasp of astonishment at the effrontery which dared so much. Men actually grew pale at the boldness of the thing; a death-like silence fell over the house, broken only by the clapping of a band of claqueurs around the outer aisles; but it passed; and, in view of the fact that these women were French ballet-dancers after all, they were tolerated... Those women were ballet-dancers from France and Italy, and they represented in their nudity imps and demons. In silence they whirled about the stage; in silence trooped off. Some faint odor of ideality and poetry rested over them.²⁵⁸

This contrast reminds us that however tantalizing the legs may have been, the immodestly sexual dimension, ever present, was nonetheless mediated—even if only modestly—by the artistic overtones of the evening. Artistes!

We must consider even more carefully, though, any claims that the dance of *The Black Crook* was not integrated with the dramatic action. Just as with the assertions about the music in *The Black Crook*, we have no significant choreographic descriptions or records upon which to base such a claim. Furthermore, even were we to possess more information about the dances than we have, these kinds of claims are difficult to evaluate. Given that Act I opens in a “quiet valley at the foot of the Hartz Mountains,” the featured clog dance would seem entirely conventional and ‘appropriate,’ whatever that might mean. How, exactly, might choreographer David Costa have better “integrated” that dance?²⁵⁹ In other words, what demands would we

²⁵⁶ Rachel Steir, *Striptease: The Untold History of the Girlie Show* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 28.

²⁵⁷ Undated clipping in the files of the New York Public Library.

²⁵⁸ Olive Logan, *Apropos of Women and Theatres, With A Paper or Two on Parisian Topics* (New York: Carleton, 1869), 134-135. By contrast, Logan wrote, “the nude woman of to-day represents nothing but herself. She runs upon the stage giggling; trots down to the foot-lights, winks at the audience, rattles off from her tongue some stupid attempts at wit, some twaddling allusions to Sorosis, or General Grant, or other subject prominent in the public eye, and is always peculiarly and emphatically herself,—the woman, that is, whose name is on the bills in large letters, and who considers herself an object of admiration to the spectators.”

²⁵⁹ It is also worth noting that ballet master David Costa had been lauded in Italy for the “lightness and simplicity of his choreography...and for elimination the traditional minuets and polkas from his ballets,” the latter compliment signaling his interest in innovation and the elimination of clichés. See Barbara Barker, *Ballet or Ballyhoo: The American Careers of Maria Bonfanti, Rita Sangalli, and Giuseppina Morlacchi* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1984), 51.

make of the choreography in such a scene to claim that it is better integrated with the story? The semiotic approach is especially ridiculous when there are virtually no signs to analyze.

By thinking more carefully about the values of integrations that many historians have brought to discussions of *The Black Crook*, we might begin to question the very claim that dance can be *integrated* into the musical at all. Proponents of “integration” have long cited George Balanchine’s “Slaughter on Tenth Avenue” ballet from the 1936 musical *On Your Toes* as inaugurating the tradition of integrated dance. As Robert Moulton summarizes the dance,

The three principal dancers are the heroine, a strip tease dancer; the villain, a pimp and her boss; and the hero, a tap dancer. The story is conventional. The hero shoots the villain, and after a wild tap dance is supposed to pretend that he commits suicide. The ballet was tied into the actual book of the play by placing two gangsters in one of the stage boxes. They plot to shoot the hero when he arrives at that point in the ballet in which he is to commit mock suicide. As he is dancing[,] an enterprising dancer, dressed as a waiter, passes him a warning note from backstage. The hero repeats the last portion of his tap dance over and over with both comic and desperate effects until the police arrive to arrest the gangsters. Then the hero is free to end the dance with his stage suicide.²⁶⁰

However clever this ballet may be, it is hard to claim that it has a narrative dimension exceeding that of the most basic pantomime, and thus it is hard to claim that the dance is integrated with the dramatic action. As Roger Copeland observed, Balanchine “engineered no structural change in the musical comedy form itself...Even a masterful work like “Slaughter on Tenth Avenue” exists within *On Your Toes* as a self-contained unit.”²⁶¹ Copeland later writes that “Balanchine’s sophisticated concept of absolute dance—that is, dancing uncontaminated by narrative or ‘dramatic’ responsibilities—was actually facilitated by the crudity of 1930’s musical theatre form (insofar as dance remained only minimally connected to plot).” Significantly, Balanchine himself disagreed with those who claimed that he had told a story, rejecting the notion that narrative was—or could be—the principal dimension of ballet. As he wrote in *Dance Index*, “a ballet may contain a story, but the visual spectacle, not the story, is the essential element.”²⁶² Scholar Robert Moulton agreed, writing in 1957 that “most present day choreographers would have us believe that the dances are used mainly for meaning, and that if they have other appeals, they are incidental,” yet Moulton argued that ‘bringing down the house’ was still the principal goal.

Even more ambitious claims have been made surrounding the work of Agnes de Mille’s ballet in *Oklahoma!*, long cited as having finally integrated dance into musical theatre. George Amberg, for example, writes that de Mille “may claim the exclusive credit for the discovery of a new theatrical function in the ballet...All her work is clearly of the theatre in the precise sense that the dramatic expression above all determines characterization, composition, choreography, and movement pattern.”²⁶³ There can be little doubt that de Mille was a master of characterization, and given the widespread popularity of group precision numbers in the

²⁶⁰ Robert D. Moulton, “Choreography in Musical Comedy and Revue on the New York Stage from 1925 Through 1950,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1957), 201.

²⁶¹ Roger Copeland, “Broadway Dance,” *Dance Magazine* (November 1974): 34. Quotation marks around the title of the dance have been added.

²⁶² George Balanchine, “Notes on Choreography,” *Dance Index* 4:2 (February-March 1945): 20-31.

²⁶³ George Amberg, *Ballet in America: The Emergence of an American Art* (New York: Duell, 1949), 178.

preceding years, de Mille's work was surely perceived as extraordinary. However, merely differentiating dancers hardly constitutes "integration." In championing the individuality of dancers, critics such as Amberg were joining a long line of distinguished critics—foremost among them, Siegfried Kracauer—who disparaged the mechanical nature of group dancing. For Kracauer, these "indissoluble girl clusters" obliterated the subjectivity of the dancers and promoted sheeplike masses on the part of spectators. As Kracauer put it, "the regularity of these patterns is cheered by the masses, themselves arranged by the stands in tier upon ordered tier."²⁶⁴ As Felicia McCarren has shown, this attitude was widespread, and in such an environment, de Mille's simple characterizations were no doubt a welcome relief, particularly for the critics and intellectuals.²⁶⁵ But these simple characterizations do not constitute integration.

Yet others had already ventured to present serious ballet onstage, even some with similar aspirations to 'integration.' And not everyone was as enamored of ballet; for some, the effect of such dancing was one of disintegration and distraction. Both Boots McKenna and Russell Markert, another choreographer from the '20's and '30's, felt that "the productions are often interrupted for 'arty' ballets in much the same way that earlier productions were interrupted for a song and dance."²⁶⁶ George Jean Nathan, too, felt that ballet intruded on the play.

The sense of seamlessness in deMille's choreography appears to have been at least partly the product of novelty, for the widespread adulation surrounding her work was fleeting. Not long after *Oklahoma*, a number of critics had grown tired of the ballet. Less than a year after *Oklahoma!* opened, Wilella Waldorf was complaining that "it is now apparently a rule that any Broadway musical comedy costing over \$50,000 must feature (1) a ballet by Agnes de Mille, or (2) a take-off on a ballet by Agnes de Mille."²⁶⁷ In 1945, Ward Morehouse spoke of the "inevitable ballet" in Natalie Kamarova's work in *A Lady Says Yes*, and in a 1946 review of Helen Tamiris' choreography for *Annie Get Your Gun*, John Chapman wrote that "there is nothing in the show that could be accused of being a ballet."²⁶⁸ Recounting his work on *Where's Charley*, George Abbott wrote that "[l]ater Frank [Loesser] pointed out to me that... all the songs were kept in the production exactly as we planned them. Usually there is a great shifting around of numbers, but in this case the only changes were at the end of Act One, which was, I regret to say, a dream ballet, a number that was already beginning to be passé."²⁶⁹ Abbott later complains of a dream ballet that Fosse prepared for *New Girl In Town*, which Abbott argued "was a device already worn threadbare by its frequent use on Broadway."²⁷⁰ This sense of intrusion, of course,

²⁶⁴ Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 76.

²⁶⁵ For an elegant elaboration and contextualization of Kracauer, see Felicia McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

²⁶⁶ Moulton, 276.

²⁶⁷ Wilella Waldorf, *New York Post*, 14 January 1944. Waldorf was writing a review of *Jackpot*, a show with a score by Vernon Duke & Howard Dietz, and which featured a truly jackpot cast, including Nanette Fabray, Mary Wickes, and Betty Garrett. Charles Weidman's ballet parody was titled "Grist for de Mille."

²⁶⁸ John Chapman, *New York World Telegram*, May 17 1946.

²⁶⁹ George Abbott, *Mister Abbott* (New York: Random House, 1963), 224.

²⁷⁰ Abbott, 254. Abbott objected to Fosse's dream ballet for several reasons, and when he objected to its presentation, Fosse and dancer Gwen Verdon "replied that it was high art, that they didn't care what the audience liked, and that people had thrown fruit at Stravinsky." Abbott writes that "we tried to point out that the act of throwing fruit at a project was not in the strictest logic an absolute proof of its high art..."

need not be considered a slander—but it should suggest that ballet did not function in a more integrated manner than did many of the dance styles which preceded it. The principal difference is not that ballet—with its claims to high art and above all seriousness—helped Broadway ease into a starkly different form; instead, I argue, it helped Broadway ease into a dramatically different, and more serious, content.

Indeed, a significant degree of de Mille's acclaim was inspired not by the fact that her dancing told a story or that it complemented the dramatic action—but by the fact that it muted the musical's lighter elements, insisting on somber themes.²⁷¹ Her most celebrated dance, "Laurie Makes Up Her Mind," was a psychological study of the place of women in a masculine world. Depictions of romance and a wedding reveal to Laurie that she dreams not of the cowboy Curly, but instead of the brooding farmhand Jud, whose sexuality is depicted in a dance that presents both romantic and scandalous aspects of female desire. Here, the jubilantly romantic and innocently sexualized dances of yesteryear have given way to a psychological study of the darker depths of human sexuality. Only when sexuality—once, the locus of feminine pulchritude and gaiety—took on a sinister tone could it finally be integrated. (In her book *Posing A Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920s*, Angela J. Latham notes that "in spite of the cries of moralists, nudity was common theatrical fare even by the early 1920s, especially in revues. . . ."²⁷² Given that musical "theatre" was increasingly defining itself against the revue format, it makes all the more sense why sexuality would need to be muted, and the female body associated with dark themes, in order for the musical play to distinguish itself from its less 'integrated' cousin.) Critics could finally move past the female dancing body once it became dark and heavy. As Roger Copeland observed in *Dance Magazine*, "it was de Mille's dream ballet *Laurey Makes Up Her Mind* which first suggested that even a frivolous, simple-minded ingénue like *Oklahoma!*'s Laurey might possess a complex and turbulent inner life." "De Mille," he argued, "had, in fact, introduced into *Oklahoma!* a degree of seriousness which Hammerstein's libretto couldn't really sustain. *Oklahoma!*, after all, revolves around the momentous question of whether Laurey will be taken to the box social by Curley or by Jud! And, as a result, de Mille's choreography seemed by far the most eloquent, subtle and intelligent part of the evening."²⁷³

The necessity of sadness to deMille's work was noted at the time, too. Reviewing the 1945 musical *Carousel*, Otis Guernsey, Jr., wrote that "of course there is an Agnes de Mille ballet, and of course, it tells a story with the lighter touches of dancing gradually becoming serious and ending in a note of sorrow."²⁷⁴ Though de Mille is purported to have been hired for *Oklahoma!* because her work in *Rodeo* was in the same vein of Americana, her longstanding

²⁷¹ The very same might be said of Balanchine, whose "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" was not exactly lighthearted!

²⁷² Angela J. Latham, *Posing A Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920s* (Wesleyan: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 105. For more on the figure of the "chorus girl," see Linda Mizejewski, *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Alison Kibler, *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); and Eve Golden, *Anna Held and the Birth of Ziegfeld's Broadway* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000). Lee Davis provides a useful survey of the American revue in his *Scandals and Follies: The Rise and Fall of the Great Broadway Revue* (New York: Limelight, 2000).

²⁷³ Copeland, 34.

²⁷⁴ Qtd. in Moulton, 233.

fascination with themes of women, sexuality, and loneliness seems far more relevant to her success. Moulton also suggests that ballet became essential to the musical comedy of the 1940's because it was the style of dance more suited to the depiction of death and other 'romantic' themes. Here again, ballet—the "integrated" dance form—attains that effect because it creates a sense of psychological depth through its deployment and suggestion of dark, morose subjects.

While the seriousness of ballet—and its capacity ultimately to assume heavier themes—made it bear much of the work of integration, tap dance bore its own burden. For many, tap dance is the epitome of meaninglessness and is practically incapable of being integrated. On the one hand, Robert Moulton brings to our attention the fact that choreographer Boots McKenna 'integrated' a tap dance into a scene of the 1930 musical *Fine and Dandy*. The dance, "Starting At the Bottom," was set in a factory, and featured men dancing with brooms, while the women danced on ladders. Reflecting on the dance in 1956, McKenna said, "We went from the bottom of the ladders to the top, just as the boys would have to start work as porters to get to the top. We tried to tie the thing in."²⁷⁵

Moulton observes that "[McKenna's] integration was specific within the number, but the dances still interrupted the story or action of the play." (Here, "integration" seems merely to mean that the dance had some iconic representation which constituted a simple narrative within itself.) However, the place of tap dance in many frothy musicals of the 1920's was entirely in keeping with the tone of those shows. As Moulton himself noted, "the tap dance had been gay, foolish, and charged with wild abandon. When the stage vehicles changed, the dances followed suit."²⁷⁶ The difference was that these shows made no great pretense about narrative or gravitas, but instead luxuriated in their own spectacle. Thus, tap dance was as "appropriate" to the shows in which it was featured as was ballet to the shows in which it was featured. The sense of depth which we accord to ballet is really a function of our sense that—to put it crudely—death, however it is treated, must have greater depth than a plot which does not deal with death. This is surely a groundless proposition, and it illuminates the shaky ground upon which rests the very influential notion that modern ballet, diminishing the tawdry elements of feminine movement and insisting upon emotional depth, is integrated.

This debate helps refine our understanding of the scholarship surrounding *The Black Crook*. Of course, we may rightly question the arbitrariness of any "first" when musicodramatic entertainments have been a mainstay of the American stage since the founding of the country. Making any formal judgment as to the genealogy of modern musical theatre would already involve distinctions of dubious import. However, the difficulty of distinguishing any "first" aside, the nature of evidence compromises any such judgment. Any serious formal judgments must be made cautiously we have so few of the actual components of the performance itself. Professor Mates claims that *The Black Crook* contains no new ways of integrating drama, dance, music, and spectacle. However, I would argue that the show exemplifies—through the circumstances of its creation—a particular kind of relationship between the various arts which compose the musical. Through the oft-told story of its precarious assembly, *The Black Crook* insists upon the fact that its various components maintain some degree of autonomy and resist the semblance of total unity—a fictitious goal often advocated under the somewhat questionable mantra of integration. If viewers wish to integrate the components of *The Black Crook*, they certainly may—but if they are unable to do so, this reveals as much about the materials under consideration as it does about the aesthetic standards of unity brought to bear on the material by

²⁷⁵ Qtd. in Moulton, 62.

²⁷⁶ Moulton, 58.

critics and scholars. The story of how *The Black Crook* came into being reminds us of the very dis-integrated nature of the musical as a theatrical genre.

To think of the musical in this way, however, eschews the normal aesthetic categories of coherence and seamless unity—and emphasizes the sensuous pleasure of old-time musical comedy trappings: “pretty girls,” dance numbers, costumes, and élan vital. Indeed, this was truly the revolution of de Mille: her focus on sad themes overpowered the musical’s usual generators of theatrical energy. Possessing less a substantial change in form, the integrated musical is really marked by a different kind of content. Indeed, there may be far more significant connections between *The Black Crook* and *Oklahoma!* than historians have long surmised.

With long-running revivals produced in all the major cities of the country, *The Black Crook* ran almost continuously throughout the 19th century, but received its most prominent revival in 1929. Christopher Morley had been attempting to start a legitimate theatre in Hoboken, New Jersey, and he wrote that “from the beginning we had a hankering to revive *The Black Crook*. I’m afraid it was only a name to us; if we had really studied the matter we should have recoiled from the heavy cost of such a production. But ever since boyhood we had heard rumors of the famous old extravaganza, of the prodigious scandal it caused in its prime.”²⁷⁷ Morley and his associates considered other plays—*Streets of New York* and *Blue Jeans* among them—but ultimately opted for that old chestnut which had beguiled Wheatley so many years before. They leased the Lyric Theatre, which, while having once been a respectable house, was then featuring what Morley called “a despairing program of moving pictures, lectures on physiology—for Men Only!—and an occasional evening of prize fights.” With the theatre and play in hand, Morley needed an audience. Luckily, in the time of Prohibition, the beer salons of Hoboken, New Jersey, were known to sell a “golden, frothy liquid consisting of hope, alcohol, and ether, which tasted more like beer than the rival produce on the other side of the Hudson,”²⁷⁸ the availability of which was added enticement for New Yorkers to trek to Hoboken’s Lyric to see Morley’s production of *The Black Crook*.

However earnest Morley’s intentions might have been, though, the production was ultimately mocking in tone. Critic Edward B. Marks complained that Morley’s production was “no extravagant production starring world-class ballet dancers, but instead a tongue-in-cheek satirical production which pointed up the plot—that outmoded atrocity—and omitted all that made the original production a success.”²⁷⁹ Marks wrote that the production achieved its goal, which was to “mak[e] the modern audience feel far superior to the creatures of bygone days who thought this hysterically funny drama was good enough to run for 475 performances.” While Marks may have been spot-on in noting that Morley’s production was a tongue-in-cheek satire, he was a bit off-the-mark in claiming that it starred no world-class ballet dancers: Its choreographer, who also danced the part of Queen Stalacta, was none other than Agnes de Mille, making her choreographic debut.

Yet de Mille’s association with *The Black Crook* would not end with Morley’s production. In the winter of 1950, Jerome Chodorov, the writer who would later pen the book to *Wonderful Town*, purchased a copy of Cecil Smith’s *Musical Comedy in America* and thought that the story behind the making of *The Black Crook* would make a fine basis for a musical comedy. De Mille was hired to choreograph the show, which was eventually titled *The Girl in*

²⁷⁷ Christopher Morley, “Hoboken Nights,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 13 July 1929, 110.

²⁷⁸ Marks, 13.

²⁷⁹ Marks, 13.

Pink Tights. While Sigmund Romberg wrote the score with Leo Robin, Chodorov and Joseph Fields would have to assume responsibility for the book, which modulated the oft-told story of *The Black Crook* into a sublimely corny key. Actor-cum-playwright Barras was transformed into Clyde Hallam, “a handsome young actor who has come home in uniform after many long and weary months in a Johnny Reb prison camp.”²⁸⁰ Once back, he presents the owner of Niblo’s with “Dick the Renegade,” a Wild West melodrama he wrote while in confinement. Outside the theatre, Clyde meets Lisette Gervais, “a truly beautiful and fascinating girl” who is the prima ballerina of a French ballet troupe about to perform in a rival theatre. Clyde and Lisette get in a slight tiff—she even calls him an “animal trainer”—yet they are clearly intrigued by each other. These flickers of attraction are only fanned when the Academy of Music goes up in flames, with the brave Clyde rescuing Lisette from the conflagration. With the Academy in ruins, the producers agree to merge their shows, provoking Clyde’s indignation. Furious with Clyde, Lisette refuses to relinquish her place in the center of the spectacle and decides to entertain the advances of a theatrical financier named Van Beuren. After much anguish, a dejected Clyde finally goes to the premiere. During the curtain call, Lisette unexpectedly defers to Clyde and gives him center stage. In the immortal phrasing of the program, “Lisette and Clyde know that though they may hurl names at each other again and again, theirs is really a true love.”

Writing in the *Daily Mirror*, critic Robert Coleman advised readers to “leave your supercritical faculties at home, come to the playhouse prepared to enjoy yourself, and you’ll have a wonderful time.”²⁸¹ George Jean Nathan seemed less generous, writing in the *Journal-American* that “in short, where the authors have most greatly erred is in calling their show an extravaganza instead of a lampoon of an extravaganza, and in not adding to it a trained seal, a female impersonator like the Richard Harlow of ‘1492,’ and a grand finale introducing actors made up to resemble Teddy Roosevelt, Admiral Dewey and Richmond P. Hobson.”²⁸²

Director Shepherd Traube told Gilbert Millstein that the show was “an affectionate look backward. Not a burlesque, a look backward.”²⁸³ deMille’s dances, however, ranged from the “straight” to the “satirical,” with reviewer Robert Coleman noting “a charming, sentimental pas de deux” as well as “a hilarious burlesque of a corny bacchanale.”²⁸⁴ Indeed, while de Mille did provide some serious ballet, her choreography seemed to mock *The Black Crook*: as Nathan wrote, “The burlesque in question may be sufficiently described as the kind in which one of the more awkward girls periodically breaks down giggling and in which another girl dubbed “a messenger from Heaven” floats back and forth on a tangled wire desperately kicking out her legs in all directions. Agnes de Mille is responsible for this jewel.”²⁸⁵ Dance critic Frances Herridge complained that “[t]he lengthy spoofing of old-time interpretative dance in ‘Bacchanale’—usually so easy to laugh at—is too broadly slapstick to be funny. Its nymphs and satyrs and skyborne messenger are to [sic] aware of how hilarious they’re supposed to be.”²⁸⁶ *Herald-*

²⁸⁰ Souvenir program, *The Girl in Pink Tights*.

²⁸¹ Robert Coleman, “‘The Girl in Pink Tights’ Is A Tuneful Frolic,” *New York Daily Mirror*, 8 March 1954, 28.

²⁸² George Jean Nathan, “Theatre Week: The Show in Split Tights,” *New York Journal-American*, 28 March 1954.

²⁸³ Gilbert Millstein, “How The First Musical Was Born,” unattributed clipping in the files of the New York Public Library.

²⁸⁴ Coleman, 28.

²⁸⁵ Nathan.

²⁸⁶ Frances Herridge, “Dance Differences in Two Musicals,” *New York Post*, 26 April 1954.

Tribune dance critic Walter Terry, too, felt that de Mille's impulse was satirical, even though he enjoyed it: according to Terry, de Mille had "done a great job of satirizing the kind of spectacle which astounded New York in the 1860s in such extravaganzas as the famed 'The Black Crook.'"²⁸⁷

Having been inspired by Cecil Smith's *History of Musical Comedy in America*, the creators of *The Girl in Pink Tights* seem to have recreated not only Smith's description of *The Black Crook*, but his attitude as well. Just as Smith and Leonard Bernstein exhibit a strange ambivalence toward the *Crook*, de Mille's satirical work salutes *The Black Crook* largely by poking fun at it. However, just as Bernstein, Smith, and Mates dismiss *The Black Crook* because it resists their values of integration, de Mille's choreography attempts to exaggerate the differences between the frivolity of yesteryear and the seriousness of contemporaneous ballet. However, it's unclear how many people could be persuaded by her point. *The Girl in Pink Tights* ran for a little over three months. *The Black Crook* ran far, far longer.

²⁸⁷ Walter Terry, "Dance: 'Golden Apple,' 'Pink Tights,'" *New York Herald-Tribune*, 21 March 1954.

**BETWEEN MUSICALS AND OPERA:
INTEGRATION IN THE MOROSS-LATOCHE COLLABORATION**

As we have seen, the distinction between dialogue and song in musical theatre precludes any sense of integration. Since this rhetoric of integration is based on operatic values, we might question whether certain musical-opera hybrids—so-called “Broadway operas”—can lay claim to being “integrated.” There had always been opera on Broadway, of course—but it was no different from the presentations made in the opera houses of Europe; it just happened to be held at venues that usually housed extravaganzas or musical comedies.²⁸⁸ In 1937, Broadway’s New Amsterdam Theatre hosted Gian-Carlo Menotti’s *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, the first of several wildly popular Menotti operas—including, most famously, *The Consul*—which would play at one of Broadway’s houses. However, as scholar Larry Stempel notes, “Menotti’s operas... while commercially produced *on* Broadway, were not *of* Broadway. They made no musical concessions to Broadway or American vernacular styles, while Broadway operas characteristically mixed their styles.”²⁸⁹

This sense of compromise—the necessity of musical ‘concessions’ to Broadway or American vernacular styles—reflected the emphatic American perception of the European nature of opera; an ‘American’ opera gained its citizenship not through its author or place of production, but instead through its subject matter and style. From these demands emerged the oft-repeated generic classification of “folk opera.” In *Opera for the People*, historian Herbert Graf begins his chapter “Opera on Broadway” by noting that

To an American, ‘Broadway’ means the legitimate theatre and musical plays. It does not include the Metropolitan Opera, although the Met’s main entrance is located at 1417 Broadway. But ‘Broadway’ has its own opera. Not the pretentious grand opera of the European tradition, associated with the Met, but a sort of American folk opera. The word *opera*, though, is often avoided on the programs and a variety of ruses are used to disguise the actual nature of the offerings. To such an extent is Broadway afraid of losing its audience if it appears to go ‘highbrow.’ Or, more accurately perhaps, to such an extent has the conception of opera as an import, remote from life, and sung in a foreign tongue alienated a large segment of the American public.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ As Lehman Engel notes, “*The Bohemian Girl* enjoyed a run in 1844. Beginning with *Pinafore* in 1879, eleven of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas were produced by 1889, with *The Mikado* (1885) running for 250 performances. Planquette’s *The Chimes of Normandy*, Strauss’ *The Queen Lace Handkerchief* (1882) and *the Merry War* (1883) and, in the same years, Offenbach’s *La Vie Parisienne* and *the Princess of Trebizonde*, Strauss’ *Die Fledermaus* (1885), and many others, were successfully holding their own against the numerous extravaganzas of that time and the popular shows of Harrigan and Hart.” (Lehman Engel, “Broadway Opera,” in *The American Musical Theatre: A Consideration* (New York: Collier, 1975), 141.) Also, Virgil Thomson’s *Four Saints in Three Acts*, based on a libretto of Gertrude Stein, played the 44th Street Theatre on Broadway in 1934 (and was revived at the Broadway Theatre in 1952).

²⁸⁹ Larry Stempel, “The Musical Play Expands,” *American Music* (Summer 1992): 152.

²⁹⁰ Herbert Graf, “Opera on Broadway,” in *Opera for the People* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951), 133.

As historian Lawrence Levine has shown, opera was enjoyed in the early nineteenth century by all the various classes of American society. As the century progressed, however, audiences began to reject operas sung in foreign languages in favor of English translations of those operas, with scores featuring interpolations of “Yankee Doodle” and other distinctly non-operatic American music. By the end of the century, opera had become associated with highbrow patrons who elevated the ‘art’ above the interests of audiences (who enjoyed interpolations) and performers (who enjoyed flaunting their virtuoso skills). In such an atmosphere, opera came to be seen as elitist, European, and distinctly un-American. It was precisely this atmosphere that made opera unpalatable to audiences of the 1930s and 1940s. Anyone aiming to produce anything on Broadway approaching opera would have to temper the operatic dimensions of their work with patently American material and song styles.²⁹¹

The first “Broadway opera” is generally agreed to have been DuBose Heyward’s and the Gershwins’ *Porgy and Bess*, produced by the Theatre Guild in 1935.²⁹² As Lehman Engel notes, *Porgy and Bess* “is the earliest ‘new’ opera; it contained what was for its time the most original application of native American musical material, it came the closest in outline to traditional grand opera...”²⁹³ Engel clarifies this notion of “grand opera” by writing that opera is “a drama in which music is the essential factor comprising songs with orchestral accompaniment (as recitatives, aria, chorus) and orchestral preludes and interludes.”²⁹⁴

Perhaps the greatest distinction between a musical and opera (as we know it today) is the presence of dialogue in a musical, linking narrative scenes—while operas generally feature sung (or declaimed) recitative passages which unite arias. Since the recitative, then, can in some sense be said to distinguish an opera from a musical, it is fascinating to note how critics rejected Gerhswin’s recitatives—thereby rejecting the most operatic element of the production. Writing in the *New York Times*, Brooks Atkinson praised the show, opining that “Gerhswin has contributed something glorious to the spirit of the Heywards’ community legend,” yet in the very same review he grouched that the recitatives contain “a deluge of casual remarks that have to be thoughtfully intoned and that amazingly impede the action of the play.”²⁹⁵ *Times* music critic Olin Downes also frowned on the recitatives, arguing that “the treatment of the passages of recitative is seldom significant,” while critic John Anderson complained that “when Mr. Gershwin is merely tying the narration together, he gets in the way of the movement of the whole show, but when he is decorating it with isolated compositions, he enriches it marvelously.”²⁹⁶ Anderson’s use of “isolated” signals his understanding of the arias as being distinct moments of spectacle, much as the songs would be in a (structurally similar) Gerhswin musical. All these critics seemed to celebrate Gerhswin’s songs—which were classic musical theatre songs—yet they denigrate his recitatives, which represent the through-composition which define and are necessary to opera. Wagner enthusiast (and *New York Herald-Tribune* music critic) Lawrence Gilman was virtually the only critic who didn’t complain about the recitatives. Fittingly for a Wagnerian opera critic, Gilman actually grumbled about the songs: ‘The song hits...scattered

²⁹¹ Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 87-104. See also Engel, 143.

²⁹² See Alpert Hollis, *The Life and Times of Porgy and Bess: The Story of an American Classic* (New York: Knopf, 1990).

²⁹³ Engel, 142.

²⁹⁴ Qtd. in Stempel, 143.

²⁹⁵ Qtd. in Stempel, 143.

²⁹⁶ Qtd. in Stempel, 143-4.

through his score... They mar it. They are its cardinal weakness. They are a blemish upon its musical integrity.”²⁹⁷ Gilman, judging Gershwin’s opera by traditional operatic standards, was disappointed by the songs, songs which adumbrated the structure of the musical. Gilman was certainly the exception, though; no less distinguished a critic than Kurt Weill took issue with the recitatives, complaining that “I found only one fault with *Porgy and Bess*, that being the tendency to tell everything in music.”²⁹⁸ And even the exceptionally adventurous Cheryl Crawford seemed to object to Gershwin’s use of recitative, producing—after Gershwin’s death—a revival of the piece in which much of the recitative was replaced with spoken dialogue. Such a revision indicates strongly how critics received Gershwin’s opera as an ‘overmusicalized musical comedy.’ As Larry Stempel rightly points out, “Even *Porgy and Bess* tended to coalesce around its songs and musical numbers, though it used recitative and so featured singing virtually nonstop from beginning to end.”²⁹⁹ Gershwin himself noted the presence of relatively discrete songs when he said that “without songs, my opera could be neither of the theatre nor entertaining.”³⁰⁰ Indeed, though *Porgy and Bess* is, on the one hand, technically an opera, its dependence on songs linked together with recitative bears a striking resemblance to the form of the musical itself (with its musical episodes yoked together by less engaging dialogue).

If *Porgy and Bess* operatically—but unsuccessfully—replaced dialogue with musical recitative, virtually all of the other celebrated “Broadway operas”—*Street Scene*, *The Most Happy Fella*, *Candide*, *The Cradle Will Rock*—contain dialogue (sometimes alongside recitative). As Larry Stempel usefully observes, “Broadway operas have appeared more rooted in the tradition of the musical than the music drama,” going on to suggest that an opera for Broadway is “one which attempts to emphasize the musical values in what is still considered chiefly a dramatic production, expanding the *episodic* musical forms of a musical play without thereby interfering with the ‘straight’ dramatic through-line of the plot.”³⁰¹ Many of these Broadway operas still retain this episodic quality of the musical, even as they seek to expand it.

If these “operas” still retain their un-operatic distinction between song and speech, we might wonder what reasons motivate their classification as “Broadway operas.” In the case of *Street Scene*, it’s the style of Weill’s music, which retained a European operatic flavor. The term “Broadway opera” (meaning anything close to the contemporary sense) seems to originate with Weill, who was working on the form as early as 1941, with *Lady in the Dark*, and had written to Lotte Lenya around 1944 of the problems with opera hybrids on Broadway (in the context of the failure surrounding *The Firebrand of Florence*).³⁰² However, as Stempel sharply points out, “one might suspect that what was operatic in Weill’s notion of ‘Broadway opera’ not only involved the structural integration of word and music, which he talked about, but also extended to something stylistic, which he did not. He never intended his brand of ‘Broadway opera’ to abandon the musical rhetoric associated with traditions of opera, operetta, and concert music in Europe.”³⁰³ *Street Scene* was the first work to be christened a “Broadway opera,” though even then Weill equivocated as to whether he should publicize it as a “dramatic musical.” This

²⁹⁷ Qtd. in Stempel, 143.

²⁹⁸ Qtd. in Larry Stempel, “*Street Scene* and the Enigma of Broadway Opera,” in Kim H. Kowalke, ed., *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 325.

²⁹⁹ Stempel, “The Musical Play Expands,” 152.

³⁰⁰ Qtd. in Stempel, “The Musical Play Expands,” 152.

³⁰¹ Qtd. in Stempel, 152, my emphasis.

³⁰² See Stempel, “*Street Scene* and the Enigma of Broadway Opera.”

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 326.

equivocation is especially interesting because though Weill may have hastened to call his piece a “Broadway opera” for both aesthetic and commercial reasons, he did not find the popular aspects of Broadway as inhibiting his goals. On the contrary, the most fascinating aspect of Weill’s forays on Broadway is that he saw Broadway not as limiting his freedom, but instead as enabling it: for him, Broadway was the only chance his fledgling opera form had to take root as a popular form, and though he was writing anything but folk operas, Weill was still decidedly interested in popular engagement. If that desire forced him to avoid using the nomenclature of opera, it also disinclined him to use recitative: as the composer noted, “I am not calling my work an opera. I would rather term it a dramatic musical. There are certain things one usually expects from opera which cannot be done in a Broadway production. For instance, . . . in order to preserve the realism, I cannot tell my whole story in music but must weave the spoken word with song for a blending of these effects.”³⁰⁴ However much Weill enjoyed operatic style, he still felt that Broadway productions demanded songs and not recitative.

Even in the most classically trained composer’s “Broadway opera,” then, speech remains—and with it remains the dis-integrated qualities of musical theatre. Speech remains, too, in Frank Loesser’s *The Most Happy Fella*, which Loesser argued was “a musical comedy expanded, not an opera cut down.”³⁰⁵ Loesser even marked some of his more serious music with the distinction “pseudo operatic,” with the ‘pseudo’ giving some sense of the Broadway orientation of the piece. Even as he aspired to operatic modes of storytelling, Loesser seemed unable to fully embrace the sensibility of opera; nonetheless, the sheer volume of music alone renders Loesser’s work operatic, as does the “pseudo operatic” performance style.

Thus, many Broadway operas retained the distinction between speech and song, a distinction that precludes the sense of “integration” that so often attends operatic works. These “Broadway operas” are really a subgenre of musical theatre; with music and dance sequestered to discrete moments in the narrative, musicals cannot really entertain the semblance of integration. Whether these ostensible Broadway operas are deemed operatic based on musical style, literary source, or performance convention, these shows taxonomically remain musicals if they do not contain the recitatives which distinguish opera from musicals. Furthermore, while opera with recitative might reasonably claim to be integrated, a piece like *Porgy and Bess*, the most genuinely operatic Broadway opera, retains in its structure songs that adumbrate the disintegrated structure of the American musical. Indeed, for spectators of musical comedy, the recitative-aria form of opera (with convoluted plots, to boot) was merely overmusicalized musical comedy.

Given, then, that musicals cannot be integrated, and that we have just seen how even opera with recitative might not be considered unequivocally integrated, integration might seem to be an impossible aesthetic category. In much of this dissertation, I have worked to show how previous perceptions of integration were unwarranted and were motivated by other concerns of critics. However, I wish to argue that two Broadway works, *Ballet Ballads* (1948) and *The Golden Apple* (1954), exemplify the conditions under which a hybrid Broadway opera might be considered to be ‘integrated.’ This integration is produced by a unique formal structure that takes the Broadway musical as far toward opera as is possible while still retaining the Broadway style and at least the vestiges of its episodic structure.

In 1948, New York’s Experimental Theatre company, an early off-Broadway company headed by Cheryl Crawford, mounted *Ballet Ballads*, a production which today is virtually

³⁰⁴ qtd. in Stempel, “*Street Scene* and the Enigma of Broadway Opera,” 322

³⁰⁵ qtd. in Stempel, “The Musical Play Expands,” 154.

forgotten—but which in its day was almost universally lauded by critics as being revolutionary in its integration of the various arts that compose the musical.³⁰⁶ As Walter Terry enthused in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, “*Ballet Ballads* is the first, or at least the most successful, experiment in fusing not two but three theatrical arts and maintaining that fusion, or at the minimum a concept of fusion, throughout an entire production.”³⁰⁷ Terry concluded his review by noting that “*Ballet Ballads* is an engaging production and an important one. It has given fresh focus to the concept of theater-art synthesis.” Richard Watts, Jr., similarly observed in the *New York Post* that “[n]othing I have seen all season in the vital field of the American musical show has had the imagination, creative freshness, and the theatrical intelligence revealed in the program of ‘Ballet Ballads’ with which the embattled Experimental Theatre richly justified its existence in its final bill at Maxine Elliott’s Sunday night.”³⁰⁸ Later in the same review, Watts noted that “what seems to me undeniable...is that all the talents involved in the enterprise have combined their achievements so cooperatively that the result is a winning amalgamation of three acts of the theatre into a finely integrated whole.”

Indeed, the contemporaneous critics were almost universal in their praise of *Ballet Ballads*, claiming that it had forged new ground in musical theatre. Unlike the other instances in this dissertation in which the rhetoric of integration was applied awkwardly to decidedly un-integrated musicals, this piece seems to have been unique in its approach to formal integration and deserving of the much celebrated term of “integration.” *Ballet Ballads* was a series of three pieces based on folk tales or legends: “Susanna and the Elders,” “Willie the Weeper,” and “The Eccentricities of Davy Crockett.”

Ballet Ballads was conceived by Jerome Moross and John Latouche. Latouche first gained national prominence when he wrote the libretto to the cantata *Ballad for Americans*, and after a brief stint working in radio, he wrote the lyrics for a number of memorable productions: *Banjo Eyes*, *Cabin in the Sky*, and the Duke Ellington-scored *Beggar’s Opera*.³⁰⁹

Remembered today principally for having composed the iconic score to the Western film *The Big Country*, Jerome Moross in fact saw his work in Hollywood as a necessary evil, sustaining his family until he could pursue more artistically satisfying work in the theatre. His first theatrical work was the 1935 Theatre Guild revue *Parade*, starring Jimmy Savo and Eve Arden. In an interview with Chris Reardon, Moross described it as “the first social revue...and [it] immediately had a whole series of imitators, *Pins and Needles* and the others...there were topical revues at the time, things like *As Thousands Cheer*...they were all about people’s stresses

³⁰⁶ *Ballet Ballads* is virtually forgotten in the secondary scholarship; the only mention to be found is a dismissive footnote in Larry Stempel’s “The Musical Play Expands,” in which he writes that “[a] non-Robbins work, *Ballet Ballads* (1948), did use dance throughout each of the three ‘dance plays’ that comprised the show, but the dance for each was by a different choreographer (Katherine Litz, Paul Godkin, Hanya Holm), and the show itself enjoyed only a brief run.” (Larry Stempel, “The Musical Play Expands,” *American Music* (Summer 1992): 168n59). Original performer Sharry Underwood recalls the details of the production in “Ballet Ballads,” *Dance Chronicle* 9:3 (1985): 279-327.

³⁰⁷ Walter Terry, “‘Ballet Ballads Is a Synthesis of Music, Dance, Dramatic Text,’” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 16 May 1948.

³⁰⁸ Richard Watts, Jr., “The Creative Freshness of ‘Ballet Ballads,’” *New York Post and the Home News*, 11 May 1948.

³⁰⁹ For more about Latouche, see Underwood, “Ballet Ballads.”

or things like that but here was a topical revue which was entirely on social things, on starvation and whatnot, on depression.”³¹⁰

Shortly before the New York run of *Porgy and Bess* was to end, George Gershwin got Moross a job playing pit piano for the final weeks of the New York run and then on tour. It was around this time, fresh off the heels of his work on one of Broadway’s first operas, that Moross began collaborating with Latouche on *Ballet Ballads*, the first episode of which, “Susanna and the Elders,” was composed by 1940.³¹¹ Latouche was then drafted into the Navy, and as he put it, “[t]he war came and bore me away to the murky wilds of the Belgian... Every now and then, during an elephant hunt, or lounging on a termite heap in the Ituri, I would think of some way to alternate action by dance or song, scribble and note and forget it...”³¹² By 1944, Moross and Latouche had conceived, at least in concept and outline, the *Ballet Ballads*; in 1945, impresario Mike Todd became interested and optioned the piece, but by the time the work was completed, Todd was bankrupt, leaving the authors with the unenviable position of trying to solicit commercial interest in a most unusual entertainment. As Moross wrote, “for two years, Latouche and I gave endless auditions of the work to prospective producers. It is difficult enough to sell a routine musical comedy, but to try to interest commercial producers in something for which they have no visual precedence is well nigh impossible.”³¹³ “Undaunted,” Moross wrote, “we went our merry way playing *Ballet Ballads* for group after group of bewildered theatre folk until we performed it for Cheryl Crawford, who at that time was executive producer of the Experimental Theatre, sponsored by ANTA. Our travail was ended and within six months, ‘Ballet Ballads’ were being performed in New York.”³¹⁴ The Experimental Theatre production at Maxine Elliot’s was such a rousing success that, according to newspaper reports, five producers were interested in transferring the production to a Broadway theatre. Ultimately, Alfred Stern and T. Edward Hambleton offered the money to mount the production, guaranteeing that all profits would return to ANTA. After negotiations with the various unions, a number of concessions were granted, although the musicians’ union refused to budge, requiring that twelve musicians be paid, even though the production was performed using only two pianos—an expenditure that imperiled the production’s ability to run and to return its investment.³¹⁵ However, during the very week that *Oklahoma!* finally closed, *Ballet Ballads*

³¹⁰ Jerome Moross, interview by Paul Snook, WRVR-New York, 1970, transcript in Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 9.

³¹¹ John Latouche to Jerry and Hazel Moross, 19 July 1940, Moross collection, Columbia University Library.

³¹² Latouche, “Items Called Ballet Ballads.” In the same article, Latouche notes that “I remember my surprise during a Batwa ceremonial dance, when I observed that those amiable pygmies had been using our ‘new form’ since the dawn of their culture. Later on I was reminded that the Hindu nurtaia and the Greek Dionysian rites had also beaten us to the punch by some few centuries. It still seemed a good idea.”

³¹³ Jerome Moross, “Ballet Ballads Revisited,” program notes for a production of *Ballet Ballads*, Moross collection. The original quotation notes that “...within six months three of the ‘Ballet Ballads’ were being performed onstage in New York.” The “three of” refers to a fourth ballad, “Red Ridinghood Revisited,” which was not performed but which was included in some subsequent versions of *Ballet Ballads*.

³¹⁴ See also John Latouche, “Items Called Ballet Ballads.”

³¹⁵ Louis Calta, “‘Ballet Ballads’ Due At Music Box,” Undated clipping, Moross collection.

opened at the Music Box.³¹⁶ As word of mouth spread, *Ballet Ballads* started to play to full houses, but the July heat ultimately brought down the final curtain, and *Ballet Ballads* closed on July 10.³¹⁷

As is often the case when considering adventurous pieces, the critics had a difficult time categorizing the show. As one reviewer put it, “Watching ‘Ballet Ballads’ is a lot easier than defining it...but however you define their finished product, librettist John Latouche and composer Jerome Moross have successfully compressed song, dancing, and legend into a sly and racy bit of theatre.”³¹⁸ Another reviewer also noted the taxonomic difficulties, observing that “there may be some question as to whether the proceedings belong technically under the head of ballet or musical comedy, but so far as I’m concerned, there is none that they are entertaining.”³¹⁹ Richard Watts claimed that the show was “a happy amalgamation of the gayest features of ballet, music, and folk drama.” Some reviewers characterized the shows as “acted-danced-sung interludes,”³²⁰ “a combination of song and dance which is ingratiating and refreshing,”³²¹ or “three lengthy pieces of popular Americana that blend song, dance, and pantomime.”³²² Others, meanwhile, emphasized the terpsichorean component of the piece by referring to *Ballet Ballads* as “dancing opera,”³²³ “dance dramas,”³²⁴ or “dance narratives.”³²⁵

However awkward these characterizations of the critics might have been, though, the underlying hybridity was anything but awkward. Nearly every review hailed the unprecedented interrelationship of the various components of *Ballet Ballads*. Dance critic Frances Herridge argued that *Ballet Ballads* is “an attempt to revive the ancient lyric theatre in modern idiom, to blend singing, dancing, acting, and decor into an integral art form, so that each is necessary to

³¹⁶ “Visitor Influx Hypothes Dented B’way,” *Variety*, undated clipping in scrapbook in Moross collection. Business was initially slow; in its first week, it grossed \$6500, while most other musical productions were grossing between \$25,000 and \$50,000. The cast, spurred by chorus member Ethel Madsen, began a furious campaign, distributing upwards of ten thousand handbills during the hour preceding the evening show. As Douglass Watt wrote in the *New York News*, “...the singing and dancing youngsters of ‘Ballet Ballads’ last week began a concerted effort to make nuisances of themselves all over the midtown area... Under the direction of Ethel Madsen, a sleepy-looking blonde singer of interesting design, 40 chorus kids set out every day with handbills and posters and all the gay of a company of underground agents distributing pamphlets praising the National Association of Manufacturers in the Soviet zone of Berlin... Miss Madsen, herself, got tossed off Jackie Eigen’s disc show in the Copacabana Lounge the other midnight for talking too enthusiastically on the subjects of sex and cocaine, two very dramatic topics which involve Sono Osato in an admirable dance sequence in ‘Ballet Ballads’...” (Douglas Watt, “‘Ballet Ballads,’ With 40 Kids Going For It; Nears Hit Class,” *New York News*, 14 June 1948.) Madsen’s efforts succeeded, bringing the second week grosses up to \$10,000.

³¹⁷ Louis Calta, “‘Ballet Ballads’ Ends Run Tonight,” *New York Times*, 10 July 1948.

³¹⁸ Mildred Norton, “Stage Review: ‘Ballet Ballads,’” *L.A. News*, 11 October 1950.

³¹⁹ Watts, 30.

³²⁰ Robert Garland, “‘Ballet Ballads: Fresh and Exciting with Bright Music,’” *New York Journal-American*, 10 May 1948.

³²¹ John Chapman, “Other Hits Might Have Won; ‘Sally’ Disappoints’ ‘Ballads’ Excites,” *New York Sunday News*, 16 May 1948.

³²² Robert Coleman, “‘Ballet Ballads’ Is Modern Dance Hit,” *New York Daily Mirror*, 28 May 1948.

³²³ William Hawkins, “3 Ballet Ballads Are Dancing Operas,” date unknown.

³²⁴ George Freedley, “‘Ballet Ballads’ Is Most Interesting ET Production,” *New York Morning Telegraph*, 11 May 1948.

³²⁵ Chapman.

the other.”³²⁶ Music critic Miles Kastendieck wrote in the *Journal-American* that “as a synthesis of story, song, and dance, ‘Ballet Ballads’ is a crystallization of something in the making for almost a quarter of a century—a new art form American in creation.”³²⁷

This was certainly what Moross and Latouche were intending to do. Just after the piece had opened, librettist Latouche wrote in the *New York Times* that “our intention was to blend several elements of the American theatrical, dance, and musical heritage into a pattern adapted for the contemporary stage.”³²⁸ Moross had written that the show was an attempt at a “new kind of amalgam of singing and dancing,” referring later in the same letter to a “fusion.”³²⁹ Indeed, the two men began their collaboration because of a shared interest in what Moross called “a new approach to the musical theatre.”³³⁰ When Paul Snook interviewed Moross in 1970, Snook mentioned *Ballet Ballads* and said that “[people] talk a lot about the integrated musical comedy today, but you were integrating long before it became fashionable.”³³¹ Moross replied that “as a matter of fact, the *Ballet Ballads* started the whole talk about integration. They were a seven-day wonder, and while their whole life in New York lasted eight weeks, it was, for the intellectuals in the city, very influential. And every time I go to a show now, I see something which developed out of *Ballet Ballads*.” While we know that integration had been on the scene since at least 1927, there is no doubt that Moross is correct insofar as *Ballet Ballads* offered a distinctly original—and in some sense genuinely integrated—kind of musical production. So what was so unique about *Ballet Ballads* that justified the encomia it received from critics and that endows it rightly with the term ‘integration’?

Significantly, Moross through-composed the piece, thereby eliminating the divisions between speech and song which had, to that point, given the musical its constitutive sensibility of schizophrenic alternation between narrative and spectacle. Every word of the libretto was set to music—and there were no independent ‘numbers’ of which to speak, although the piece, drawing on American song forms, was ultimately a mosaic of songs. Writing to Latouche in 1947 regarding another project, Moross indicated his attitude toward dialogue when he complained about the artificiality of alternating song and speech.³³² In fact, Moross saw himself as writing a kind of hybrid genre in which he would “make the theatre operatic.”³³³ In a 1962 article, Moross refers to *Ballet Ballads* as “an attempt at a new approach to musical theatre,” describing the approach in part as being through-sung: “Every word in it is sung, and the score runs the gamut

³²⁶ Frances Herridge, “‘Ballet Ballads’ Is At Home on B’way,” *PM*, 23 May 1948.

³²⁷ Miles Kastendieck, “‘Ballet Ballads’: Three Artistic Worlds in One,” *New York Journal-American*, 19 May 1948.

³²⁸ John Latouche, “Items Called ‘Ballet Ballads’: Some Notes on Their Prolonged Journey to the Music Box,” *New York Times*, 6 June 1948.

³²⁹ Jerome Moross, “Ballet Ballads Revisited,” production notes for a revival of *Ballet Ballads*, located in the Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library. It is worth noting that the word ‘singing’ takes the place of the word ‘music,’ which is scratched out.

³³⁰ Jack Gaver, “Jerome Moross Is Selective About His Theatre Projects,” *New York Morning Telegraph*, 5 April 1962.

³³¹ Jerome Moross, interview by Paul Snook, WRVR-New York, 1970, transcript in Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 15.

³³² See Jerome Moross to John Latouche, 16 February 1947, Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

³³³ Jerome Moross, interview by John Caps, 31 August 1979, transcript in Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

of musical styles.”³³⁴ By eliminating the eruptive element of musical theatre song, yet retaining the conventions of song style, Moross created a kind of Broadway opera—or operatic musical—that could lay claim to being integrated.

The eruptive element of dance, too, was eliminated. Rather than featuring danced interludes, *Ballet Ballads* was through-choreographed. Unsurprisingly, the critical plaudits for the choreography are virtually unparalleled.³³⁵ Walter Terry was among the most ecstatic,

³³⁴ Jack Gaver, “Jerome Moross Is Selective About His Theatre Projects,” *New York Morning Telegraph*, 5 April 1962.

³³⁵ The balletic implications of the show’s title, however, were altogether another issue, causing great frustration to author and producer alike. As far as the uniqueness of the piece, the title itself gives some sense of what made the piece so distinctive—even though the title was a source of anxiety for the writers and producers. Not long into its run at the Music Box Theatre on Broadway, theatre columns were debating the liabilities of the name. “Should *Ballet Ballads* change its name?” asked *PM*. (“Should Ballet Ballads Change Its Name?” *PM*, 1 June 1948.) “That’s the question the 45th Street Sidewalk Forum of Show Business Experts is currently pondering,” it continued, going on to note that “the song and dance show...received excellent notices but has not been doing the business such notices might lead one to expect.” The newspaper explained that “one school of thought argues that the title of the production is too longhair and scares the populace away. Ticket brokers, in particular, have had trouble convincing their customers that the entertainment is more musical comedy than ‘Ballet’ or ‘Ballad.’” Librettist John Latouche told the *New York Times* that *Ballet Ballads* was supposed to be only a working title and that “if he had foreseen events he would have preferred to call the show ‘Triple Decker’ or ‘Promenade.’” (“News and Gossip of the Rialto,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1948.) Another column found producers T. Edward Hambleton and Alfred R. Stern even soliciting the public for suggestions for a new title. (“Should *Ballet Ballads* change its name?” *New York PM*, 1 June 1948.) Bert McCord noted in the *Herald-Tribune* that “not only was “Ballet Ballads” a hard name to sell but it didn’t even reflect the quality of this song and dance piece.” (Bert McCord, “News of the Theatre: ‘Ballet Ballads’ Survives,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 11 June 1948.) A particularly telling anecdote was recounted by Walter Terry in the *Herald-Tribune*: “A young man appearing on a radio quiz program was asked the usual question about his occupation. Unwilling, apparently, to let the answer go with the statement that he was an usher in a theater, he reported that he was an usher at the theater where ‘Ballet Ballads’ was playing. He said this with considerable pride, murmured something to the effect that it was a fine show, and hastened to add that the production was not really ballet but actually a group of musical comedies. He had guessed, no doubt accurately, that his listeners would be more likely to buy tickets for three musical comedies rolled into one production than for something purporting to feature ballet.” Terry went on to note that “it would be foolish...to claim for ballet or the theatre of modern dance the same popular support accorded to drama, musical comedy, or revue.” “Ballet,” he continued, “is not as popular as these other theatre forms because a great many individuals are convinced they do not understand it, are unwilling to try to understand it, or are, quite honestly, incapable of understanding it.” After observing that “the mere thought that dancers do not ordinarily speak on the stage is enough to convince many that they could not hope to understand a theater piece which lacked dialogue,” Terry noted the centrality of expressive movement in the ‘legitimate’ theatre, drawing on the examples of Judith Anderson and Katharine Cornell to support his point. He concluded by observing that “‘Ballet Ballads’ has not only succeeded in arriving at an important and exciting form of theatre, synthesizing three major arts, but it has also served to promote the cause of theatre dance itself. Because of such Broadway adventures into real creativeness, because of the dancers’ own experiments in the concert field with text and dance combined and because of the collegiate dance education now available to many students, the future of dance in America appears to be very bright indeed. Theatre ushers of a later day will probably speak of ballet or dance without apology and will assume, quite rightly, that the language of movement is as familiar as the vocabulary of the English tongue.” (Walter Terry, “What’s In A Name? Dance Good Under Many Aliases,” *New York*

announcing that “‘Ballet Ballads’ has been a long time coming. Ever since Agnes de Mille created the now-historical dances for ‘Oklahoma!’ our theatre has been reaching toward a form which might be described as choreographed folk opera.”³³⁶ “It has even achieved something of the sort in two or three musical comedies,” he continued, “but the Experimental Theatre’s new production has come closest to arriving at the desired integration of drama, song, and dance.” Miles Kastendieck similarly hailed *Ballet Ballads* when he claimed that “ever since ballet first broke into the Broadway show, it has been groping for the right outlet. This is it. As a synthesis of story, song, and dance, *Ballet Ballads* provide both entertainment and art in the same package.”³³⁷ Richard Watts, too, wrote of the ways in which *Ballet Ballads* had finally created a kind of integration through its unique deployment of the choreographed body: “I suppose,” Watts wrote,

that Jerome Robbins’ Keystone Comedy number in ‘High Button Shoes’ has done more than anything else, including the pioneering work of Agnes de Mille in ‘Oklahoma!’ to make ballet fit comfortably into the musical comedy. But it required ‘Ballet Ballads’ to provide a form of stage entertainment in which the ballet would be neither an intrusion nor an interlude but an authentically component part of a complete amalgamation of drama, dance, and music in a new form of American art.³³⁸

The idea of dance being neither an intrusion nor an interlude is nothing short of the effect of integration. The sense that dance—and music—functioned neither as an intrusion nor an interlude stood in direct opposition to the musical’s most distinctive feature: the sense that, at any moment, the performers could break into song and dance.

The seamless quality of the piece emerges from the way in which the piece always features music and dance, yet foregrounds one of the various arts as it becomes more useful than the others in furthering the narrative. Since the show is both through-choreographed and through-composed, every moment is both musicalized and choreographed—and, according to the critics, these two elements were balanced in an unusually sensitive manner. Attempting to articulate precisely how the various arts melded, Walter Terry argued that the aim of *Ballet Ballads* was

to demonstrate the theater’s desire for collaboration of the arts and to prove something that every one has known for several millennia and that is that a single theme or idea may, during its unfolding, require the theatrical efficiency of dance at one point, the spoken (or sung) word at another and music at yet another. Certain aspects of ideas or emotions may best be expressed by movement. Dancers know this. Musicians also know that music can convey impressions and emotional impulses for which no adequate words exist. The dramatist and the poet esteem, of course, the exactitude, the power, the memory-values of language.

Herald-Tribune, 20 June 1948.) Terry’s column testifies to the difficulties that inhered in a piece whose title suggested ballet so strongly.

³³⁶ Walter Terry, “The Ballet,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, undated clipping in the files of the Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library. (The clipping actually refers to Agnes de Mille’s ballets for “Oakland!” but if one searches the annals of theatre for such a musical, there is alas no there there. Terry surely meant *Oklahoma!*)

³³⁷ Miles Kastendieck, “‘Ballet Ballads’: Three Artistic Worlds in One,” *New York Journal-American*, 19 May 1968.

³³⁸ Richard Watts, Jr., “Some Additional Praise for ‘Ballet Ballads,’” *New York Post*, 8 June 1948.

‘Ballet Ballads’ is an engrossing experiment in the application of three different but not inimicable artistic truths.³³⁹

Most Broadway musicals feature musical and terpsichorean interludes in which music and dance work simultaneously in opposition to narrative. In *Ballet Ballads*, by contrast, these two distinctly spectacular elements are deployed simultaneously and yet in varying proportions—and in service not merely of spectacle but of narrative as well. Walter Terry went on to remark that choreographer Hanya Holm “has done a magnificent job of the choreography, highlighting dance when action was required and subduing movement when it was right for the song or acting to take the lead.” Critic William Hawkins perceived the same intent, arguing that “the theory has been to produce theatrical pieces which would make no specialty of dancing or singing but would mix them willfully as the material required.”³⁴⁰ Thus, the sense of integration discerned in *Ballet Ballads* seems to derive at least partly from the manner fact that the various arts were *always* simultaneously in play; instead of the usual alternation, though, the various arts were subordinated or privileged, depending on the facility of the art to depict or to evoke a component of the broader narrative. In other words, a significant component of this effect of integration was produced by the fact that the story was told continuously using the arts of song, dance, and pantomime—albeit in changing proportions. The importance of this quality becomes clear when we realized that this effect was in fact thematized within the production itself. As the authors phrased it in a production note:

The BALLET BALLADS were produced in New York as dance-operas; they were intended to fuse the arts of text, music, and dance into a new dramatic unity. When performed in sequence, the fusion takes place gradually, proceeding from SUSANNA AND THE ELDERS, which suggests the typical choral-ballet until the chorus is drawn into the action, to the ECCENTRICITIES OF DAVY CROCKETT, where the action and characters move independently of logical space and time.³⁴¹

Thus, the piece begins with “Susanna and the Elders,” in which the title character is portrayed by both a singer and a dancer. This piece thematizes the ability of the chorus to function as actors in the drama. As Latouche observed, “[a]t first, the congregation are spectators, with certain members acting out the text with the improvised solemnity of a Sunday school pageant. Gradually, however, their collective imagination transforms them into the children of Israel, and they come downstage to participate in the action.”³⁴² The title character of the second piece, “Willie the Weeper,” is also portrayed by two performers, although Latouche claims that at certain points, the singing Willie and dancing Willie sync up and become “fused.” As for the chorus in this piece, “the singers and dancers are freely intermingled,” and are therefore increasingly portrayed as individual characters.³⁴³ According to Latouche, “‘The Eccentricities of Davy Crockett’ integrates the use of song and dance still further. Here the chorus arbitrarily portrays frontiersmen, the singing walls of a house, trees, Congressmen, and whatever else is

³³⁹ Walter Terry, “‘Ballet Ballads’ Is a Synthesis of Music, Dance, Dramatic Text,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 16 May 1948.

³⁴⁰ William Hawkins, “3 ‘Ballet Ballads’ Are Dancing Operas,” undated clipping in the Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

³⁴¹ Jerome Moross and John Latouche, *Ballet Ballads* (New York: Chappell & Co., 1949).

³⁴² John Latouche, “Items Called ‘Ballet Ballads’: Some Notes on Their Prolonged Journey to the Music Box,” *New York Times*, 6 June 1948.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

necessary; the dancers communicate the plot; Davey and his wife both sing and dance their roles. In this final piece there is a completely free use of all the theatrical elements....”³⁴⁴ As opposed to the use of a singing title character who served as something like the shadow of the dancing title character, the title character of the third is portrayed by what we would now refer to as a “triple threat,” a performer adept in acting, singing, and dancing. Thus, while the first act transgresses only minorly the conventional use of one chorus for singing and another for dancing, by the third act the entire chorus is acting, singing, and dancing—an integration all its own which mirrors the formal integration of the piece.

Critics seemed to discern the uniquely “integrated” quality of the “Davy Crockett” piece, with *Sun* critic Irving Kolodin writing that “the best of the works is unquestioningly ‘Davy Crockett,’” later noting that “[i]f ‘Susanna’ is predominantly a dance piece and ‘Willie’ more of a musical one, ‘The Eccentricities of Davy Crockett’ plainly has the happiest balance of the three.”³⁴⁵ Looking back at the Experimental Theatre’s 1948 season, *Brooklyn Eagle* critic George Currie noted that the production of *Ballet Ballads* “added a tasty touch of interest and really introduced something close to the sensational in ‘The Eccentricities of Davy Crockett.’”³⁴⁶ Walter Terry heaped similar praise on “Davy,” arguing that “[i]n ‘The Eccentricities of Davy Crockett,’ the most successful of the three works, one was rarely aware of switches from one medium of theatre expression to another. Transitions were smooth, for a phrase of acting, a gesture expanded logically into dance or the lift of a dance movement extended itself into song.”³⁴⁷ He concluded by arguing that “‘The Eccentricities of Davy Crockett’ had integrity of form, a new form in which three major arts united to create compelling theatre.” In a different piece, Terry tried to pin down the source of Davy’s charm, suggesting that “[i]n ‘The Eccentricities of Davy Crockett,’ told by himself and danced by Ted Lawrie, there’s freshness, excitement, and Americanism that none of the others so overwhelmingly achieves. Much of these attributes are to be credited to the acting-dancing-singing abilities of Mr. Lawrie, who’s as right as right in the exacting title role.”³⁴⁸ These critics’ astute perceptions that Davey was the most ‘integrated’ of the three pieces no doubt stems from the fact that this piece thematized the integration of the arts in the single body of its titular character.

The use of actor-singer-dancers as both principals *and* chorus members is one of *Ballet Ballads*’ greatest innovations, all the moreso since it thematizes, through the progression of the three pieces, the deployment of the arts in a single human body. If *Ballet Ballads* achieved a new formal structure, its performers embodied that change in their bodily deployment of song and dance. The novelty of this approach can be seen in a Mildred Norton column in the *Los Angeles Daily News*:

Moross had long objected to the immobility of the usual chorus, so that ‘ballad’ singers were taught to move as part of the dancing, although their chores were certainly less demanding. The first time a line of singers was asked to take a ‘fall,’ two of the members dislocated their knee-caps but they persevered until now the

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Irving Kolodin, “‘Ballet Ballads’ At the Music Box,” *New York Sun*, 19 May 1948.

³⁴⁶ George Currie, “Off Stage: Theater’s Experiments This Year Have Amply Rewarded Enthusiasts,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, 16 May 1948.

³⁴⁷ Walter Terry, “‘Ballet Ballads Is a Synthesis of Music, Dance, Dramatic Text,’” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 16 May 1948.

³⁴⁸ Robert Garland, “Ballet Ballads: Fresh and Exciting with Bright Music,” *New York Journal-American*, 10 May 1948.

entire ensemble appears to be both singing and dancing as an indivisible unit. This increased mobility, Moross feels, is likely to be one of the major features of the future's footlight entertainment."³⁴⁹

Norton's ultimate line testifies to the uniqueness of this presentation, a uniqueness also noted in William Hawkins' comment that *Ballet Ballads* is "demanding work for the ensemble as well as the principals, because they are expected to act, sing, and dance, often all at the same time."³⁵⁰

In Paul Snook's 1970 interview with Moross, the composer emphasized this 'integrated' quality of the performers, telling Snook that "the *Ballet Ballads* were an attempt by John Latouche and myself to create a multimedia, or mixture, so that you wouldn't know who were the dancers, who were the singers. The singers had to move and mix with the dancers. The idea was to do a stage work in which the whole story was told through dance and song but so mixed up that it was not the usual pattern of singers at the side."³⁵¹ Moross expressed a similar sentiment in a 1944 letter to Latouche about *Ballet Ballads* in which he enthused about the integration of the chorus.³⁵²

And integration it was. Eliminating the ruptures between speech and song, *Ballet Ballads* opened up the possibility of expanding musical theatre into a through-composed—and through-choreographed—vernacular operatic form. By uniting the arts of pantomime, song, and dance in the bodies of the performers—the chorus of which had long segregated such tasks—the show insisted on the integrated nature of the arts by thematizing their integration within the performers themselves. As performers sang and danced simultaneously—without interrupting such moments for speech and thereby creating the bifurcated spectacle/narrative mode—it became possible to see the arts as being integrated. Song and dance, which had always been the markers of the spectacular mode, were being deployed for narrative purposes. The absence of 'book' scenes precluded any sense of understanding of these moments as detached or merely spectacular.

By June of 1949, the newspapers announced that Cheryl Crawford would be producing another Moross-Latouche collaboration, *The Golden Apple*. As the newspaper announcement suggested, "in style, it will be comparable to last year's 'Ballet Ballads,' the Latouche-Moross collaboration which relied heavily on dance and music."³⁵³ However, it would be another five years before *The Golden Apple* would reach Broadway, due largely to John Latouche's dilatory work habits. Both authors received Guggenheim fellowships to compose the work, and five years (and over a hundred auditions) later, *The Golden Apple* was being produced by Norris Houghton's and T. Edward Hambleton's Phoenix Theatre, a non-profit theatre company that sought to produce creative theatrical pieces that were unlikely candidates for commercial production.³⁵⁴ The piece was a full-length show based on the work of *Ballet Ballads*, and as such it is our first true Broadway opera.

³⁴⁹ Mildred Norton, "Mildred Norton," *Los Angeles Daily News*, 15 June 1948.

³⁵⁰ William Hawkins, "3 Ballet Ballads Are Dancing Operas," date unknown.

³⁵¹ Jerome Moross, interview by Paul Snook, WRVR-New York, 1970, transcript in Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 14.

³⁵² Jerome Moross to John Latouche, 10 August 1944, Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

³⁵³ Unattributed, "Homer Inspires Musical," 10 June 1949, clipping in Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

³⁵⁴ As the producers wrote of their company, "in bringing this new theatre into being we are prompted by a conviction that some release must be found for actors, directors, playwrights, and designers from the

The Golden Apple, without any doubt, was an ideal candidate for the Phoenix. The show was an attempt to rework the Homeric epics into a musical comedy with a decidedly American vernacular. In this retelling, Helen becomes a town squeeze who is kidnapped by traveling salesman Paris, who absconds with her in his hot air balloon. Ulysses and his men, freshly back from the Spanish-American War, go out in search for Helen, their travels eventually helping them appreciate anew the joys of home.

Noting the continuity between *Ballet Ballads* and *The Golden Apple*, composer Moross noted that “the short pieces that made up ‘Ballet Ballads’ were an attempt at a new approach to musical theatre, and you don’t do that overnight. ‘The Golden Apple,’ of course, was much tougher because that was a full-length piece expanding the ‘Ballet Ballads’ pattern. Every word in it, you know, is sung, and the score runs the gamut of American musical styles.”³⁵⁵ Critics, too, noted the continuity between *Ballet Ballads* and *The Golden Apple*, with Richard Watts, Jr., asking readers,

Do you, by any chance, remember the charming ‘Ballet Ballads’ of several seasons ago? In that critically admired but not popularly supported show, the same authors took such wildly assorted legends...and turned them into three enchanting musical tales, done entirely in song and dance. In ‘The Golden Apple,’ which is also without spoken interludes, they have used the same method on Homer, but this time I think they have added showmanship to the amalgamation, and their new work is likely to have the popular acclaim the three shorter ones missed.³⁵⁶

The production was such a success that, like *Ballet Ballads*, it transferred to Broadway, this time to the Alvin Theatre, for an extended run. (It even garnered the coveted Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical, a feat all the more exceptional given that off-Broadway had only marginal credibility and respect in those days.) In extending the insights and experimentations of *Ballet Ballads* to a full-length piece, Moross, Latouche, and Holm created the first genuinely integrated piece of musical theatre.

During an interview with Moross in 1970, Paul Snook invoked the highbrow provenance of *The Golden Apple*, referring to it as “the only musical comedy that’s been written on a

pressures forced on them by the hit-or-flop pattern of Broadway, a pattern that too often has limited their power to create.” (Phoenix Theatre Handbill, files of the Theatre Collection, *New York Public Library*.) The Phoenix was the first major off-Broadway company, and the novelty of off-Broadway can be seen in the titles of newspaper articles on *The Golden Apple*—titles such as “Theatre-Goers Finding A Way to Second Avenue,” in which the impresarios try to convince readers of the accessibility of downtown Manhattan (in particular, the 2nd Avenue & 12th Street home of the Phoenix). “Our major problem,” reported Hambleton, “is getting people to know where we are and to arouse enough interest to get them to come down to Second Avenue instead of heading for Times Square”—while Houghton mused that “among our greatest supporters are cab drivers...Second Avenue is one way, southbound, and once you have a green light, the trip is non-stop from the East 50’s on staggered lights.” (Robert Wahls, “Theatre-Goers Finding A Way to Second Avenue,” *New York Sunday News*, 14 March 1954.) Brooks Atkinson was amazed, writing, “Put this down as a remarkable record for a new art theatre. By now thousands of theatergoers have found their way safely to Second Avenue and Twelfth Street without losing either their dignity or their way.” (Brooks Atkinson, “‘The Threepenny Opera,’ ‘The Golden Apple’ in Off-Broadway Houses,” *New York Times*, 21 March 1954.)

³⁵⁵ Qtd. in Jack Gaver, “Jerome Moross Is Selective About His Theatre Projects,” *New York Morning Telegraph*, 5 April 1962.

³⁵⁶ Richard Watts, Jr., “Some Virtues of ‘The Golden Apple,’” *New York Post*, 21 March 1954.

Guggenheim fellowship,” to which Moross responded that he “would hardly call it a musical comedy.” Snook agreed, saying that “it’s a new genre, really,” prompting Moross to discuss this “new genre”:

Yeah...I wanted to fool around with the opera form. I love to fool around with the opera form. I think it’s a great form and I’ve done a good deal of experimenting with it. And the idea was to do a Broadway piece using idioms that would not push the audience out, you know...make them feel part of it...and still utilize the opera form to present our ideas on hate, good and evil, and the rest of it...and actually write an opera for Broadway, and we did just that.³⁵⁷

After noting that he and Latouche had attempted that very same goal in *Ballet Ballads*, he attempted to distinguish *The Golden Apple* from opera: “Operas had been done on Broadway...but they were grand operas which happened to be produced on Broadway. But this was something to utilize the Broadway forms and the opera forms. For instance, in the second act, we decided we would use all the elements of the revue and so the wanderings of Ulysses are done as a revue with a master of ceremonies.” In an interview nine years later with John Caps, Moross said that “the ‘Golden Apple’ was pure opera for Broadway. It’s completely sung through and no dialogue. And it worked, it ran on- and off-Broadway for five months, which is, you know, kind of unusual for an opera.”³⁵⁸ Moross’ idea of making the theatre operatic, of course, was not entirely new. As we have seen, other composers had attempted “Broadway operas,” though they were plagued by thematic and formal issues. Moross and Latouche’s novel subject matter and treatment negotiate almost cartoonishly the dangers of elitism which had plagued opera in the past. Their subject matter—the Homeric epics—was as classical as could be, yet they insisted on modulating that remote subject matter into the setting of an American town (Mt. Olympus, Washington, USA), with the characters becoming recognizable figures in small-town life (Paris, for example, becomes a traveling salesman). The song styles were a panoply of distinctly American folk and show business styles, with the various episodes of the men’s travels (Circe, the Sirens, and so forth) being treated as a vaudeville revue. Though it might have been through-composed, no one could accuse *The Golden Apple* of being elitist.

As we saw earlier, if some Broadway operas were stymied by their subject matter, yet more were the victim of difficult formal concerns: how to avoid the musical’s constitutive sense of alternating moments of dialogue and musical eruption. Moross, Latouche, and Holm seem to have negotiated this balance perfectly, drawing on their sensitively executed *Ballet Ballads*. The degree to which their work—as opposed to those Broadway operas that came before and after—successfully avoided any sense of plodding recitative can be seen in one 1962 reviewer’s comment that “*The Golden Apple* is the darling of many musical theatre fans for another reason: Every word of the book is painstakingly set to music (by Jerome Moross). Not too many operas, with their frequent recitatives, can boast as much.”³⁵⁹ This reviewer, much like the ones we encountered earlier, also views recitative as being like speech. However, the reviewer, by claiming *The Golden Apple* is unlike operas with recitative because it is through-sung, celebrates

³⁵⁷ Jerome Moross, interview by Paul Snook, WRVR-New York, 1970, transcript in Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 18.

³⁵⁸ Jerome Moross, interview by John Caps, 31 August 1979, transcript in Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 4.

³⁵⁹ Unattributed, “Music Is Bright and Memorable In Revival of Modern Ulysses Tale,” *National Observer*, 18 February 1962. Perhaps the operative word is “painstakingly”!

The Golden Apple's appearing operatic (i.e., through-composed) without feeling like an opera. It is a genuine hybrid.

Reconsidering the Moross-Latouche-Holm collaborations reorients not only our understanding of integration, but also gives us a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between Broadway opera and the related genre of dance-ballets. First, the Moross-Latouche collaborations call into question the development of a structural attempt at integration. As we have seen, *Show Boat* and *Oklahoma!* were not integrated, for their interludes of song and dance were still, as before, discrete moments of spectacle within a broader narrative. What many claimed was a new *form* of musical comedy was more often than not a new *subject matter* for musical comedy, as anti-heroes and dark subject matter became acceptable fodder for musicalization. Looking back, it becomes rather clear that *Pal Joey*, sometimes thought to be the musical that adumbrated the revolution of *Oklahoma!*, is as structurally clunky as any work of the 1940's—but it has a cad for a title character.

As we have seen, the motivations for obscuring these rather obvious divisions between narrative and spectacle range from the rather obvious to the subtle. For some, obscuring the moment of 'going into song' endowed the musical with the legitimacy of the spoken play and disavowed the musical's beginnings in the lowbrow entertainments of vaudeville and burlesque. In the case of *Show Boat*, it also seemed to be a response to the reorganization of the human sensorium by the burgeoning medium of sound film. But *Show Boat* was not integrated, as it thrived, just as *Oklahoma!* did, on moments of detached spectacle. Any "integration" was impossible so long as the various modes of entertainment alternated, following each other sequentially. *Ballet Ballads* and *The Golden Apple*, on the other hand, were attempts to modulate the Broadway form into an operatic dimension. Its solution was not to write a conventional opera with (Broadway-style) songs and recitatives, as did Gershwin with *Porgy and Bess*. Nor did Latouche and Moross essay a musical with operatic music (as did Weill with *Street Scene*, or Bernstein with *Candide*), or concede to the form and intermix dialogue and recitative (as Loesser did in *Most Happy Fella*). As we have seen, dialogue and recitative were, for some spectators and critics, virtually interchangeable. Instead, Moross and Latouche created a form in which a narrative was composed of songs and dances that were linked together by musically-provoked kinetic pantomime. Thus, if the discourse of integration began with the coming of movies, it was finally realized once the musical attained the "all-singin', all-dancin'" quality long advertised by—but which never materialized in—the movies. It is incredible to think that that contemporary critics have virtually ignored the show which can most legitimately claim to be integrated. Other than brief appearances in chronicles of the American theatre, *Ballet Ballads* appears in only one scholarly article, and there as a dismissive footnote.³⁶⁰ Any history of the musical theatre must integrate *Ballet Ballads* and *The Golden Apple* into its annals if it is to represent fully and accurately the development of an integrated musical.³⁶¹

Ballet Ballads and *The Golden Apple* also require us to reconsider the narrative potential of dance in musical theatre. When Miles Kastendieck writes that "[i]n 'Ballet Ballads,' the dance becomes articulate," we find some confirmation that dance has taken over the qualities of articulation that once belonged to the dialogue. Kastendieck's next line, "The abstraction of

³⁶⁰ Larry Stempel, "The Musical Play Expands," *American Music*, Summer 1992, 168n59.

³⁶¹ I do not know of any other shows that follow from *The Golden Apple*, though Ethan Mordden's description of Michel Legrand's *Amour* (2002) suggests that it may bear some similarity to the structure of *The Golden Apple*. See Ethan Mordden, *The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen: The Last Twenty-Five Years of the Broadway Musical* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

miming finds voice in the singing of individuals and a chorus,” speaks to the way in which the choreographed acting between the songs is clarified, and (mutually) supported by the relations it engendered with singing. The notion of dance becoming articulate is found also in Walter Terry’s comment that “the ushers of a later day will probably speak of ballet or dance without apology and will assume, quite rightly, that the language of movement is as familiar as the vocabulary of the English tongue.”³⁶² Another review referred to the piece as “an amplification of dance patterns,” and this phrasing may help better characterize the unique centrality of dance to *Ballet Ballads* and *The Golden Apple*. In these works, dance—theretofore the index of the episodic nature of the genre—was used to link the songs together. As the musically inflected pantomime advanced the dramatic narrative, songs enriched the action—quite literally, in this case—but did so in fundamentally continuous ways, elevating both the musical and terpsichorean dimensions—but seamlessly. By insisting upon the continuity between pantomime and dance, *The Golden Apple* cultivated a mode of spectatorship that yoked narrative to elements which, to that point, had been almost exclusively spectacular. (The alternation between book scenes and musical numbers had created a binary between the two, emphasizing the differences between the two modes of spectatorship.)

Such an approach bears some resemblance to the mode that Louis Biancolli discerned when he reviewed the 1944 *On The Town*, which Bernstein, Comden & Green, and Jerome Robbins derived from a ballet. As Biancolli wrote,

My feeling was that ‘On the Town’ had been planned, worked out, and delivered in a ballet key. By that I mean the sense of kinetic action is felt even where ballet isn’t the featured factor. Dialogue and song often appear geared to a dynamic pattern, as if any moment things will blaze again into dance...[B]allet is as much embedded in the fabric as the music—maybe more so. Ordinarily, in a standard musical, you’re not surprised when talk suddenly modulates to song. Anyone can break out singing in a nostalgic monologue or romantic duet, and you feel that’s the way it should be. Song becomes a kind of heightened speech—set by the mood and surroundings. In ‘On the Town’ you feel that way about the dance.³⁶³

Robbins’ approach goes some of the way towards foregrounding the bodily, kinetic element of the musical theatre. However, it still holds the musical element in reserve, restricting the presence of music except in certain highly charged moments, and thus reinforcing the sense of subordination that enables some dance to be heightened or diminished based on the presence of music. In *The Golden Apple*, by contrast, music and dance are presented always and only in concert, with no attempt made to create effects through the introduction or withholding of certain arts. Because dance is omnipresent, there is no sense that “at any moment” a character could break into dance. There is no sense that a character may “break into song” because the singing permeates the piece. This is integration.

The distance between this kind of integration and the purported integration of Rodgers & Hammerstein can be gleaned from some of the writing of *New York Times* critic John Martin, who claimed that

There is almost nothing in “The Golden Apple” that looks like a dance “routine,” yet Miss Holm’s mark is strong upon the whole production. The direction is not

³⁶² Walter Terry, “What’s In A Name? Dance Good Under Many Aliases,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 20 June 1948.

³⁶³ Louis Biancolli, “‘On the Town’ Ballet Dusts Off Tradition,” *New York World-Telegram & Sun*, 3 February 1945), repr. in Stempel, “The Musical Play Expands,” 157.

credited to her, but it has manifestly felt her shaping influence... There is in the first act a charming little dance, formal and full of style, celebrating the return of the soldiers on the Village Green... and the Circe scene, though you would never suspect it, so closely is it integrated into the action, could be taken out as it stands as a separate dance.³⁶⁴

This way of understanding integration certainly runs counter to the way it was used regarding other shows. The general usage of the term suggests a piece so tightly bound to the surrounding scenes that it could not be extricated. Here, however, Martin is claiming, seemingly paradoxically, that Hanya Holm's dances are so 'integrated' that they could be removed. This testifies to the uniquely integrated quality of *The Golden Apple*: it retained the episodic structure of the musical while using its spectacular modes of address in new, dramatic ways. By integrating the arts vertically—in other words, diminishing hierarchies between song, dance, and pantomime—*The Golden Apple* was able to integrate the arts, horizontally. Once the arts unite to tell a story, that is, it is easy to see the piece as integrated. Indeed, as soon as the various arts indisputably relate to each other and define themselves through mutual relation (rather than discrete alternation), they can work in a genuinely and continuously narrative manner, escaping the almost exclusively spectacular burdens placed on them by the form of musical comedy. Only once the musical can be understood in this way as being fused can it be considered to be integrated.

Understanding *The Golden Apple* and *Ballet Ballads* in this way also requires us to consider anew the importance of choreographer Hanya Holm to the development of the integrated musical. There can be little doubt that Holm's influence was felt on the entire proceedings; after the credited director, Norman Lloyd, was fired, Holm took over the reins of the show, and her choreography was without any question the emulsifier for the unique integration that these two pieces enacted.³⁶⁵ Reflecting on her first encounter with the script of *Ballet Ballads*, Holm remembered that

I looked through the script and could accept the libretto and music but not the stage direction, which were done from a purely literary point of view. I had to have something more three-dimensional. John Latouche had a different stage conception from what I thought Davey Crockett should look like, but he was very quickly convinced that the way I wanted to do it was the better way of doing it. I encountered no difficulties; on the contrary, I received the best cooperation imaginable from everyone concerned."³⁶⁶

Her centrality to the concept of *The Golden Apple* can be seen in her comment that "the whole thing was danced from the beginning to the end, it was inevitable to visualize and plan each phase from a choreographic point of view."³⁶⁷ Her attitude seemed to carry over to the rest of the design team, with scenic designer Jean Eckart noting that "[e]verything flew in and out and

³⁶⁴ John Martin, "The Dance: Choreographers Creating for Broadway With Skill Beyond the Call of Duty," *New York Times*, 2 May 1954.

³⁶⁵ Andrew B. Harris, *The Performing Set: The Broadway Designs of William & Jean Eckart* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2006), 28.

³⁶⁶ Qtd. in Walter Sorrell, *Hanya Holm: The Biography of An Artist* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 109. See also Claudia Gitelman, "Finding a Place for Hanya Holm," *Dance* 23:1 (2000): 49-71.

³⁶⁷ Qtd. in Sorrell, 131.

moved in sight of the audience and traveled and galloped around so that it was really like staging scenery to the music, as you would stage actors or choreograph dancers.”³⁶⁸

Ballet Ballads and *The Golden Apple* also call into question some of the taxonomies which have proved useful to theatre historians. Larry Stempel, probably the most knowledgeable critic when it comes to discussing hybrid genres, writes that

West Side Story is clearly a work in the tradition of the musical play, both for the respect it accords its literary source and for the thoroughbred integration of the elements with which it translates that source to the contemporary musical stage. Yet the translation is accomplished not by words or music, or in song or dance alone. It is achieved through shifting combinations of all of these according to a new Broadway musical poetic: a concept of stage production that makes dynamic patterns of movement essential to the intelligibility of whatever is spoken or sung.³⁶⁹

However, as we have seen, these notions of “shifting combinations” and of “dynamic patterns of movement essential to the intelligibility of whatever is spoken or sung” were not innovations. Hanya Holm had featured them prominently in *Ballet Ballads* and had ably amplified them in *The Golden Apple*.

And so long as we’re examining Stempel’s work, it is perhaps worth noting that in his influential discussion of the expansion of the hybrid forms on Broadway in the 1950’s, Stempel examines three new genres: the Broadway opera, the ballet-opera, and the play-musical. Given that Holm choreographed *My Fair Lady*, the quintessential play-musical, and single-handedly developed the first ballet-opera and the most organic Broadway opera, it seems fair to note that Holm has long been underappreciated as one of the most revolutionary forces in modern musical theatre—no less revolutionary a force than Hammerstein.

While Holm’s contributions must be emphasized, the integration of *Ballet Ballads* and *The Golden Apple* was the dream—and work—of many theatre artists, but none moreso than Moross. In fact, he had been working at an integrated form since the mid 1930’s, when he began collaborating with Lynn Riggs on a folk opera derived from Riggs’ play *Green Grow the Lilacs*, which had been produced by the Theatre Guild. Owning the rights to the play, the Guild refused to let Riggs participate in the musicalization of the play, instead allowing Richard Rodgers to purchase the rights to do so. Rodgers’ result was none other than *Oklahoma!*. Yet however much Rodgers’ attempt at integration may have proven popular, there can be no doubt that Moross’ work laid the groundwork for the greater domain of musical theatre that was to distinguish the genre in the late 20th century. The full story of integration has not yet been told; though I have spent much of this dissertation arguing that musical theatre historiography has spent far too much time on integration, I conclude by noting that it has spent far too little time on it as well. Hopefully these chapters will contribute to a new history of the American musical theatre, a history that properly integrates the crucial, inventive work of Jerome Moross, John Latouche, and Hanya Holm. This history would also celebrate the other shows, but it would do so without ever foisting upon them the sense of “integration” which is so foreign to the wonderful pleasures that those pieces offer us.

³⁶⁸ qtd. in Harris, 27.

³⁶⁹ Stempel, “The Musical Play Expands,” 162.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbate, Carolyn. *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- . “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?” *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Spring 2004): 505-536.
- Abbott, George. *Mister Abbott*. New York: Random House, 1963.
- Agawu, V. Kofi. *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Allen, Robert C. *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.
- Alperson, Philip. “On Musical Improvisation.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (1984): 17-29;
- Amberg, George. *Ballet in America: The Emergence of an American Art*. New York: Duell, 1949.
- Atkinson, Brooks. “‘The Threepenny Opera,’ ‘The Golden Apple’ in Off-Broadway Houses,” *New York Times*, 21 March 1954.
- Atkinson, J. Brooks. “‘Show Boat’ As Good As New.” *New York Times*. 20 May 1932.
- Auslander, Philip. “Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto.” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 14:1 (2004): 6.
- . “Musical Personae.” *TDR: The Drama Review* 50:1 (Spring 2006): 100-119.
- Balanchine, George. “Notes on Choreography.” *Dance Index* 4:2 (February-March 1945): 20-31.
- Barker, Barbara. *Ballet or Ballyhoo: The American Careers of Maria Bonfanti, Rita Sangalli, and Giuseppina Morlacchi*. New York: Dance Horizons, 1984.
- Barnes, Clive. “Alvin May Have a Hit in Lean Season.” *New York Times*. 27 April 1970.
- Barnes, Howard. “Lilacs to ‘Oklahoma.’” *New York Herald-Tribune*. 1 April 1943.
- . “The Theatre: Old Season Sets Pace For New.” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 August 1944.
- . “The Theater: Greatest of All Musical Comedies.” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 13 January 1946.

- Barras, Charles. *The Black Crook*. In *Nineteenth Century American Plays*, edited by Myron Matlaw. New York: Applause, 1967.
- Berger, Karol. "Narrative and Lyric: Fundamental Poetic Forms of Composition." In *Musical Humanism and Its Legacy: Essays in Honor of Claude V. Palisca*, edited by Nancy Kovaleff Baker and Barbara Russano Hanning. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1992.
- . "Diegesis and Mimesis: The Poetic Modes and the Matter of Artistic Presentation." *Journal of Musicology* 12:4 (Fall 1994): 407-433.
- Bernstein, Leonard. *The Joy of Music*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959.
- Benchley, Robert. "'Hearts in Dixie': (The First Real Talking Picture)." *Opportunity* (April 1929): 122-124.
- Biancolli, Louis. "'On the Town' Ballet Dusts Off Tradition." *New York World-Telegram & Sun*, 3 February 1945.
- Blacking, John. *How Musical Is Man?*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973.
- . "Ethnography of Musical Performance." In *Report on the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley*, edited by Dan Hertz and Bonnie C. Wade. Kassel: Barenreiter, 1988.
- Block, Geoffrey. *Enchanted Evenings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Bordman, Gerald. *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Bowen, Jose. "The History of Remembered Innovations: Tradition and Its Role in the Relationship Between Musical Works and Their Performances." *Journal of Musicology* 11:2 (Spring 1993): 139-173.
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Translated & edited by John Willett. New York: Hill & Wang, 1964.
- Burkholder, J. Peter. "Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years." *Journal of Musicology* 2 (1983): 115-134.
- Calta, Louis. "'Ballet Ballads' Due At Music Box." Undated clipping.
- . "'Ballet Ballads' Ends Run Tonight." *New York Times*. 10 July 1948.
- Chapman, John. untitled column. *New York World Telegram*. May 17 1946.
- . "'Other Hits Might Have Won; 'Sally' Disappoints' 'Ballads' Excites." *New York Sunday News*. 16 May 1948.

- . “Henderson, Coward and Ferrer in the Groove in Grand Musical.” *New York Daily News*. 9 December 1963.
- Coleman, Robert. “‘Ballet Ballads’ Is Modern Dance Hit.” *New York Daily Mirror*. 28 May 1948.
- . “‘The Girl in Pink Tights’ Is A Tuneful Frolic.” *New York Daily Mirror*. 8 March 1954.
- Cone, Edward T. *The Composer’s Voice*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.
- . “Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story—or a Brahms Intermezzo.” *Georgia Review* 31:3 (1977): 554-574;
- . “Schubert’s Promissory Note: An Essay in Musical Hermeneutics.” *Nineteenth Century Music* 5:3 (Spring 1982): 233-241.
- Cooper, H.E. “The Black Crook.” *The Dance* (September 1926): 10.
- Copeland, Roger. “Broadway Dance.” *Dance Magazine* (November 1974): 30-41.
- Cripps, Thomas. *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Currie, George. “Off Stage: Theater’s Experiments This Year Have Amply Rewarded Enthusiasts.” *Brooklyn Eagle*. 16 May 1948.
- David, John Russell. “The Genesis of the Variety Theatre: The Black Crook Comes to St. Louis.” *Missouri Historical Review* (January, 1970): 143.
- Davis, Lee. *Scandals and Follies: The Rise and Fall of the Great Broadway Revue*. New York: Limelight, 2000.
- Cusick, Suzanne G. “Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem.” *Perspectives of New Music* 32:1 (Winter 1994): 8-27.
- . “On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex.” In *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music*. Edited by Elaine Barkin & Lydia Hamessley. Zurich: Carciofoli, 1999.
- Dahlhaus, Carl. *Foundations of Music History*. Translated by J.B. Robinson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Dunsby, Jonathan. “Musical Performance Studies as a ‘Discipline.’” In *Performing Music: Shared Concerns*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Engel, Lehman. *The American Musical Theater: A Consideration*. New York: CBS Legacy,

1967.

Freedley, George. "'Ballet Ballads' Is Most Interesting ET Production." *New York Morning Telegraph*. 11 May 1948.

———. "The Black Crook and The White Fawn." In *Chronicles of the American Dance: From the Shakers to Martha Graham*, edited by Paul Magriel. New York: Da Capo, 1978.

Frith, Simon. *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Funke, Lewis. "The Theater: Shipshape Show Boat." *New York Times*. 22 June 1956.

Gabbard, Krin. "The Ethnic Oedipus: *The Jazz Singer* and Its Remakes." In *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and American Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Garland, Robert. "Master's Hand Makes Ferber's Novel Glitter." *New York Telegram*. 28 December 1927.

———. "'Ballet Ballads: Fresh and Exciting with Bright Music.'" *New York Journal-American*. 10 May 1948.

Gaver, Jack. "Jerome Moross Is Selective About His Theatre Projects." *New York Morning Telegraph*. 5 April 1962.

Gintautiene, Kristina. "The Black Crook: Ballet in the Gilded Age (1866-1876)." Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1984.

Gitelmanm, Claudia. "Finding a Place for Hanya Holm." *Dance* 23:1 (2000): 49-71.

Goehr, Lydia. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Goldberg, Albert. "'Show Boat' Revival Opens to Full House." *Los Angeles Times*. 16 August 1960.

Golden, Eve. *Anna Held and the Birth of Ziegfeld's Broadway*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

Graf, Herbert. "Opera on Broadway." In *Opera for the People*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951.

Green, Stanley. *Musical Comedy: Told Through the Careers of Its Foremost Composers and Lyricists*. New York: A.S. Barnes, 1969.

Gubar, Susan. "Spirit-Murder at the Movies: Blackface Lynching." In *White Skin, Black Face in*

- American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Guernsey, Otis L., Jr., ed. *Broadway Song and Story: Playwrights/Lyricists/Composers Discuss Their Hits*. New York: Dodd Mead, 1986.
- Hall, Mordaunt. "Al Jolson and the Vitaphone." *New York Times*. 7 October 1927.
- Harris, Andrew B. *The Performing Set: The Broadway Designs of William & Jean Eckart*. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2006.
- Hawkins, William. "'Oklahoma!' Revisited Is Still a Great Show." *New York World-Telegram*. 24 December 1947.
- . "3 'Ballet Ballads' Are Dancing Operas." undated clipping.
- Herridge, Frances. "'Ballet Ballads' Is At Home on B'way." *PM*. 23 May 1948.
- . "Dance Differences in Two Musicals." *New York Post*. 26 April 1954.
- Hollis, Alpert. *The Life and Times of Porgy and Bess: The Story of an American Classic*. New York: Knopf, 1990.
- "Homer Inspires Musical," 10 June 1949, unattributed source.
- Hood, Mantle. "The Challenge of 'Bi-Musicality.'" *Ethnomusicology* 4:2 (May 1960): 55-59.
- Isherwood, Charles. "Patti's Turn, if Not Rose's." *New York Times*. 5 August 2007.
- "The Jazz Singer," *Variety*, 12 October 1927.
- Johnson, Fred. "'Show Boat' Given Opulent Production at Curran." *San Francisco Call Bulletin*. 1 November 1933.
- Johnson, Willis Fletcher. "Niblo's Black Crook." *Boston Globe*. 24 March 1929.
- Jones, John Bush. *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003.
- Kauffmann, Stanley. "Theater: 'Show Boat' Back With All Those Songs." *New York Times*. 20 July 1966.
- Kastendieck, Miles. "'Ballet Ballads': Three Artistic Worlds in One." *New York Journal-American*. 19 May 1948.
- Keil, Charles. "Call and Response: Applied Sociomusicology and Performance Studies." *Ethnomusicology* 42:2 (Spring/Summer 1998): 303-312.

- Kenrick, John. *Musical Theatre: A History*. New York: Continuum, 2008.
- Kerr, Walter. "The Girl Who Came To Supper." *New York Herald Tribune*. 9 December 1963.
- . "'Coco': About Coco—or Kate?." *New York Times*. 28 December 1969.
- . "'Company': Original and Uncompromising." *New York Times*. 3 May 1970.
- Kibler, Alison. *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- Kirle, Bruce. *Unfinished Show Business: Broadway Musicals as Works-in-Process*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006.
- Kislan, Richard. *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theatre*. New York: Applause, 1995.
- Kisliuk, Michelle. *Seize the Dance!*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Knapp, Margaret. "Integration of Elements as a Viable Standard for Judging Musical Theatre." In *Focus on Popular Theatre in America*, edited by Henry F. Salerno. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1978.
- Knapp, Raymond. *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Knight, Arthur. *Disintegrating the Musical: Black Performance and American Musical Film*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Kolodin, Irving. "'Ballet Ballads' At the Music Box." *New York Sun*. 19 May 1948.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. "The Mass Ornament." In *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, edited by Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Kramer, Lawrence. "Musical Narratology: A Theoretical Outline." *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 141-162.
- Lamb, Andrew. *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Latham, Angela J. *Posing A Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920s*. Wesleyan: Wesleyan University Press, 2000.
- Latouche, John. "Items Called 'Ballet Ballads': Some Notes on Their Prolonged Journey to the Music Box." *New York Times*. 6 June 1948.

- Laurents, Arthur. *Mainly On Directing: Gypsy, West Side Story, and Other Musicals*. New York: Knopf, 2009.
- LeGuin, Elisabeth. "One Says That One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep: Sensible, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini's Chamber Music." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55 (Summer 2002): 207-254.
- . *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
- Leavitt, M.B. *Fifty Years in Theatrical Management*. New York: Broadway Publishing, 1912.
- Levine, Lawrence. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Lewis, David H. *Broadway Musicals: A Hundred Year History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002.
- Logan, Olive. *Apropos of Women and Theatres, With A Paper or Two on Parisian Topics*. New York: Carleton, 1869.
- Lomax, Alan. *Folk Song Style and Culture*. Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1968.
- Marks, Edward B. *They All Had Glamour: From the Swedish Nightingale to the Naked Lady*. New York: Julian Messner, 1944.
- Martin, John. "The Dance: Choreographers Creating for Broadway With Skill Beyond the Call of Duty." *New York Times*. 2 May 1954.
- Marx, Samuel, and Jan Clayton. *Rodgers & Hart: Bewitched, Bothered, and Bedevilled*. London: W. H. Allen, 1977.
- Mast, Gerald. *Can't Help Singin': The American Musical on Stage and Screen*. Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1987.
- Mates, Julian. "The *Black Crook* Myth." *Theatre Survey* 17 (1966): 31-32.
- . *America's Musical Stage: Two Hundred Years of Musical Theatre*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985.
- Maurice, Alice. "'Cinema at Its Source': Synchronizing Race and Sound in the Early Talkies." *Camera Obscura* 17:1 (2002): 31-71.
- Maus, Fred. "Music as Narrative." *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 1-34.

- . “Classical Instrumental Music and Narrative.” In *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- McCarren, Felicia. *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- McCord, Bert. “News of the Theatre: ‘Ballet Ballads’ Survives.” *New York Herald-Tribune*. 11 June 1948.
- McLeod, Norma. “Ethnomusicological Research and Anthropology.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 3 (1974): 99-115.
- McLeod, Norma, and Marcia Herndon, ed. *The Ethnography of Musical Performance*. Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1980.
- Miller, D.A. *A Place for Us: An Essay on the Broadway Musical*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Miller, Scott. *The Musical as Drama: A Study of the Principles and Conventions Behind Musical Shows from Kern to Sondheim*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Millstein, Gilbert. “How The First Musical Was Born.” unattributed clipping.
- Mizejewski, Linda. *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Mordden, Ethan. *The Happiest Corpse I’ve Ever Seen: The Last Twenty-Five Years of the Broadway Musical*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004.
- Morley, Christopher. “Hoboken Nights.” *Saturday Evening Post*. 13 July 1929.
- Moross, Jerome. “Ballet Ballads Revisited.” Program notes for a production of *Ballet Ballads*, located in the Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
- . Interview by Paul Snook, WRVR-New York. 1970. Transcript in Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
- . Interview by John Caps. 31 August 1979. Transcript in Moross collection, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
- Moross, Jerome, and John Latouche. *Ballet Ballads*. New York: Chappell & Co., 1949.
- Moulton, Robert D. “Choreography in Musical Comedy and Revue on the New York Stage from 1925 Through 1950.” Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1957.

- “Music Is Bright and Memorable In Revival of Modern Ulysses Tale,” *National Observer*, 18 February 1962.
- Nathan, George Jean. “Theatre Week: The Show in Split Tights.” *New York Journal-American*. 28 March 1954.
- Nattiez, Jean-Jacques. “Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?.” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 115 (1990): 240-257.
- Nettl, Bruno. “Introduction: An Art Neglected in Scholarship.” In *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Newcomb, Anthony. “Once More ‘Between Absolute and Program Music’: Schumann’s Second Symphony.” *Nineteenth Century Music* 7:3 (April 1984): 233-250.
- . “Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies.” *Nineteenth Century Music* 11:2 (Fall 1987): 164-174.
- . “Narrative Archetypes and Mahler’s 9th Symphony.” In *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, edited by S. Scher. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . “Action and Agency in Mahler’s 9th Symphony, 2nd Movement.” In *Music & Meaning*, edited by Jenefer Robinson. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- “News and Gossip of the Rialto,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1948.
- Nichols, Lewis. “‘Oklahoma!’ a Musical Hailed as Delightful, Based on ‘Green Grow the Lilacs,’ Opens Here at the St. James Theatre.” *New York Post*. 1 April 1943.
- Norton, Mildred. “Mildred Norton.” *Los Angeles Daily News*. 15 June 1948.
- . “Stage Review: ‘Ballet Ballads.’” *L.A. News*. 11 October 1950.
- Odell, George C.D. *Annals of the New York Stage*. Vol. 8. New York: Columbia University Press, 1936.
- O’Grady, Terence J. “Interpretive Freedom and the Composer-Performer Relationship.” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 14:2 (April 1980): 55-67.
- Pollak, Robert. “Oklahoma flows on like river of delight.” *Chicago Sunday Times*. 5 December 1943.
- Rascoe, Burton. “The Guild’s Oklahoma Opens at the St. James.” *New York World-Telegram*. 1 April 1943.

- Riddle, Peter H. *The American Musical: History and Development*. Oakville: Mosaic Press, 2003.
- Rodgers, Richard. *Musical Stages: An Autobiography*. New York: Random House, 1975.
- Rogin, Michael. *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants and the Hollywood Melting Pot*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- “Should Ballet Ballads Change Its Name?” *PM*, 1 June 1948.
- “‘Show Boat’ Makes Bow at Curran With Huge Cast.” *San Francisco Examiner*. 31 October 1933.
- “‘Show Boat,’” *New York American*, 27 December 1927.
- Simon, Robert. “Jerome Kern.” *Modern Music* (Feb 1929): 21.
- Small, Christopher. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Wesleyan: Wesleyan University Press, 1998.
- Smith, Cecil. *Musical Comedy in America*. New York: Theatre Arts, 1950.
- . “‘Show Boat’ Drops Anchor at 1st and Grand.” *Los Angeles Times*. 21 September 1967.
- Smith, Paul Gerard. “Drama and Music: Show Boat.” *Rob Wagner’s Script*. 9 December 1933.
- Sorrell, Walter. *Hanya Holm: The Biography of An Artist*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1969.
- Steir, Rachel. *Striptease: The Untold History of the Girlie Show*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Stempel, Larry. “‘Street Scene’ and the Enigma of Broadway Opera.” In *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.
- . “The Musical Play Expands.” *American Music* (Summer 1992): 152.
- Steyn, Mark. *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight: Musicals Then and Now*. Boston: Faber & Faber, 1997.
- Suskin, Steven. *Opening Nights on Broadway*. New York: Schirmer, 1990.
- Swain, Joseph P. *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002.
- Taruskin, Richard. *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

- Taubman, Howard. "Theater: 'The Girl Who Came to Supper' in Premiere." *New York Times*. 9 December 1963.
- Terry, Walter. "Dance: 'Golden Apple,' 'Pink Tights.'" *New York Herald-Tribune*. 21 March 1954.
- . "'Ballet Ballads Is a Synthesis of Music, Dance, Dramatic Text.'" *New York Herald-Tribune*. 16 May 1948.
- . "What's In A Name? Dance Good Under Many Aliases." *New York Herald-Tribune*. 20 June 1948.
- . "The Ballet." *New York Herald-Tribune*, undated clipping.
- Treitler, Leo. "Mozart and the Idea of Absolute Music." In *Music and the Historical Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Twain, Mark. *Mark Twain's Travels with Mr. Brown*. Edited by Franklin Walker and G. Esra Dane. New York: Knopf, 1940.
- Underwood, Sharry. "Ballet Ballads." *Dance Chronicle* 9:3 (1985): 279-327.
- van der Merwe, Ann Ommen. *The Ziegfeld Follies: A History in Song*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009.
- "Visitor Influx Hypothesized B'way," *Variety*, undated clipping.
- Von Blon, Katherine T. "'Show Boat' in Hollywood." *Los Angeles Times*. 15 December 1933.
- Wagner, Richard. *Opera and Drama*. Vol. 1. Translated by Edwin Evans, Sr. London: W.M. Reeves, 1913.
- . *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*. Vol. 1. Translated and edited by Francis Hueffer. London: H. Grevel, 1888.
- Watt, Douglas. "'Ballet Ballads,' With 40 Kids Going For It; Nears Hit Class." *New York News*. 14 June 1948.
- Watts, Richard, Jr. "The Creative Freshness of 'Ballet Ballads.'" *New York Post and the Home News*. 11 May 1948.
- . "Some Additional Praise for 'Ballet Ballads.'" *New York Post*. 8 June 1948.
- . "Some Virtues of 'The Golden Apple.'" *New York Post*. 21 March 1954.

- . “Return of an Old Favorite.” *New York Post*. 20 January 1971.
- Weber, William. “Mass Culture and the Reshaping of European Musical Taste, 1770-1870.” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 8 (1977): 5-21.
- . “The Contemporaneity of Eighteenth-Century Musical Taste.” *Musical Quarterly* 70:2 (1984): 175-194.
- Weiss, Piero, and Richard Taruskin, ed. *Music in the Western World*. Belmont: Schirmer, 1984.
- White, Harry. “‘If It’s Baroque, Don’t Fix It’: Reflections on Lydia Goehr’s ‘Work-Concept’ and the Historical Integrity of Musical Composition.” *Acta Musicologica* 69:1 (1997): 94-104.
- Whitton, Joseph. *The Naked Truth!: The Inside Story of the Black Crook*. Philadelphia: H.W. Shaw, 1897.
- Williams, Linda. *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.