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**Sexual expression and  
the romantic ideal**  
explored through an 'American'  
style of dance in dance-led  
dream ballets within Hollywood  
film musicals 1935-1956

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy in  
Film and Television Studies

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## Declaration

This thesis has not previously been submitted for examination at another institution. The thesis is the candidate's own work.

## Abstract

Dream ballets were a regular feature of Hollywood film musicals in the 1940s and 1950s, especially at Metro Goldwyn Mayer, but they have received limited academic study. An understanding and exploration of these dream ballets in the context of meaning created through dance and choreography is largely missing. There has been some critical debate about the nature of dream ballets within integrated film musicals but with limited understanding of dance as an abstract art form and its intention to communicate emotions. Mostly the existing scholarship offers psychoanalytic interpretation adapting ideas from Freud's dream theory.

Focusing on dream ballets, this thesis will explore through primary research in American film archives and textual analysis, the creation of a new style of 'American' choreography and musical performance as core syntax within the integrated narrative musical. This research will examine how this new style and creative process impacted on the representation of male and female genders in dance, how it determined the internal dream protagonist's perspective, and how the complex layering of codes was employed to avoid the Production Code Administration regulations. The first dream ballet identified within the corpus is a ballet featured in the *Broadway Melody of 1936* (1935) choreographed by Albertina Rasch. The final dream ballet identified within the corpus is 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet choreographed by Jerome Robbins for *The King and I* (1956). The corpus includes over twenty musical films that include dream ballets.

## Abbreviations

**AMPAS** – Academy of Moving Pictures Arts and Sciences

**IBD** – Internet Broadway Database

**IMDB** – Internet Movie Database

**L.A.** – Los Angeles

**MGM** – Metro Goldwyn Mayer

**MOMA** – Museum of Modern Art, New York

**MPAA** – Motion Pictures Arts America

**NYPAL** – New York Performing Arts Library

**PCA** – Production Code Administration

**RKO** – Radio Keith Orpheum Pictures

**TOFT** – Theatre on Film and Tape

**Todd-AO** – Todd American Optical film process

**UK** – United Kingdom

**USA** – United States of America

**USC** – University of Southern California

## Introduction

This Introduction outlines the scope and parameters of this thesis, and covers the following areas: Definition of 'dream ballet', Dance and style, Broadway and Hollywood, Psychoanalysis, Methodology, Areas of research and expertise, Scholarship, The corpus: Hollywood musicals with dance-led dream ballets 1935-56, Background: classical ballet on film, After 1956, Chapter structure, Research questions and my Anticipated contribution to current research.

### Definition of 'dream ballet'

Although not every dream sequence uses ballet in the strict choreographic sense, it's natural to refer to such interludes as dream ballets, since most of them do employ a narrative style of dance. The dream ballet as a set piece of the MGM musical of the 1940s and 1950s had its roots in Broadway musical comedy.<sup>1</sup>

The term 'dream ballet' carries different meanings depending on how and when it is used. There may be an assumption that such a dance sequence includes classical ballet, or that the sequence is attempting to replicate particular types of dreams, or that the sequence takes place in a dream world, or that it is a danced representation of a symbolic dream reflecting the popularity of psychoanalytic interpretation. The earliest reference to the term 'dream ballet' that I have found is by dancer, choreographer and future director Jerome Robbins, as quoted in a *Newsweek* article in 1945.<sup>2</sup> The first scholarly reference I am aware of is by Jerome Delamater who first used 'dream ballet'

<sup>1</sup> Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, (London: Macmillan, 1982), p.73.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome Robbins quoted in a feature on the opening of *On the Town* (28 December 1944 – 2 February 1946, 462 performances), choreographed by Jerome Robbins, *Newsweek*, 8 January 1945, Jerome Robbins Professional Papers, Series I: Theatrical Productions, 1944-2000 and n.d., *On the Town*, 1944-1995 and n.d., S\*MGZMD 130 Box 63 of 581, Folder 19, *On the Town* Production, New York Performing Arts Library (NYPAL), accessed January 2014.

as a term in 1978, to denote a dance sequence within a musical that takes place within a dream scenario.<sup>3</sup> Delamater states that ‘the somewhat ethereal quality of ballet movement, often spoken of in terms of weightlessness and height, lends itself to the nature of dreams.’<sup>4</sup>

At the time of their production, both on Broadway and in Hollywood, dream ballets were usually described simply as ballets by show and film producers and stars, as well as by the dance, theatre and film critics of the era.<sup>5</sup> This presents an added complication in framing a detailed definition for this study.

Dreams are of course so often used by filmmakers in every genre as ways of expressing unspoken emotions, to present clues to solve and to tap into a character’s thoughts. Film musicals have always used and continue to use dream scenarios within the diegesis to convey these kinds of meanings to audiences. In the dance-led Hollywood film musicals of the 1940s and 1950s in particular, through the innovative use of choreography and technology, I will argue that dream ballets could portray complex inner feelings relating to romance and sexual desire that subverted Production Code Administration (PCA) regulations. For a single clear example, we can take the ‘Laurey Makes Up Her Mind’ ballet in *Oklahoma!* (Fred Zinnemann, Twentieth Century Fox, 1955). In the dream ballet Laurey’s sexual curiosity leads her into a dangerous

<sup>3</sup> Jerome Delamater, *Dance in the Hollywood Film Musical* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1978, repr. 1981), p.103.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.102.

<sup>5</sup> Dance critics Sidney Marshall, Ivan Narodny, Leon Leonidoff writing in *The Dance* periodical from 1929, Betty Carue, W. Carranza, Ruth Eleanor Howard writing in *The American Dancer* in the 1930s, Adrienne L. McLean, ‘Flirting with Terpsichore: Dance, Class and Entertainment in 1930s Film Musicals’ in Steven Cohan, ed., *The Sound of Musicals* (London: BFI, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.67-81; theatre critics Brooks Atkinson writing in *The New York Times* and Burns Mantle writing in the *New York Daily News* in the 1930s, *Drama Critics Circle*, <[https://www.dramacritics.org/dc\\_history.html](https://www.dramacritics.org/dc_history.html)> accessed 17 February 2019; film critics Otis Ferguson writing in *The New Republic*, Cecelia Ager writing in *Variety* and the *New York Post Magazine*, in the 1930s, Library of America, <<https://www.loa.org/books/280-american-movie-critics-an-anthology-from-the-silents-until-now-paperback>> accessed 17 February 2019.

world with farmhand Jud, one where women of easy virtue taunt her and from which she cannot escape. This nightmare takes place against the backdrop of a coming tornado. On waking Laurey realises that romantic love and marriage to cowboy Curly is her true chosen path, as will be played out in the primary diegesis.

While men choreographed the majority of dream ballets, there is a subtle shift in emphasis and meanings depending on whether the dream ballet protagonist is male or female. When the dreamer is male, the narrative tends to be more romantic with an idealised view of the female persona. Alternatively male dreamers can express a fear of being trapped or tricked into a romantic relationship in those cases where the female is often portrayed as predatory. When the dreamer is female, the narrative is often more overtly sexual (though not necessarily explicitly so, in conformity with the PCA regulations) and may express a fascination or fear of sexual relations or commitment.

One central element of all dream sequences is how they distinguish themselves from the 'reality' in which the film is understood by its audience as taking place. For dream ballets cannot simply be defined by difference, that is by comparing them to inserted song and dance numbers within musicals. The project of this thesis is to focus on dance-led dream ballets or ones where dance is a predominant feature in the dream ballet, almost invariably a sequence that takes place within a stylised setting, distinct from the primary diegesis. This is my definition of dream ballets, one that makes clear their being distinct from dream sequences and dream worlds, as well as from the 'real world' of the film. My project is to examine their role and function within the musical genre.

One way of approaching this issue is to observe the point of transition between what is, and is not, a dream ballet. There is a moment in some film musicals whereby the protagonist, usually the male or female lead, moves into a dream ballet and it is necessary for the audience to understand that they are now entering a different space within the film. This transition usually appears as an entry into a waking daydream, night dream or nightmare, or as a direct result of an artificial inducement. For examples of the latter mode, see Ginger Rogers' character Amanda eating cheese and other specific foods to provoke a dream leading to the Astaire-Rogers dream ballet 'I Used to be Color Blind' in *Carefree* (Mark Sandrich, RKO, 1938), or Shirley Jones' character Laurey sniffing an elixir prior to the 'Laurey Makes Up Her Mind' dream ballet in *Oklahoma!*. Dream ballets perform different functions depending on their location in the film, and whether the protagonist is male or female. They usually take place at a point in the diegesis when the lead character must face making a decision that will bring about a significant life change, such as acknowledging the loss of love, choosing a romantic partner, and dealing with the emotions that accompany this, such as fear of the consequences of making such a decision or anxiety about growing up.

### **Dance and style**

Hollywood's dance-led dream ballets were governed by filmic conventions created by dancers, choreographers and directors, who were in turn inspired by the format's theatrical and classical ballet origins, presenting extended dance sequences that used multiple dance styles, music and visual aesthetics. Throughout this thesis I use the term 'dream ballet' to represent 'dance-led dream ballet' unless otherwise stated. These dream ballets offered opportunities for principal performers, ones who were already known to audiences as exceptional dancers (usually the film's male and/or female lead)



to develop sequences that functioned as spectacle yet were integrated into the narrative. My central argument is that the distinctiveness of dance-led dream ballets depended on the presentation of a visual manifestation of the dream protagonist's sub-conscious, usually accessed through day or night dreams, a manifestation that represented their complex emotions through an 'American' style of choreographed narrative dance storytelling. Appendix 1 Dance glossary explains all dance terminology referenced in this study.

All Hollywood film musicals that included dance sequences presented a range of different 'American' dance styles. I argue that dream ballets were significant contributors in presenting a newly defined and confident all-embracing 'American' cultural persona through dance that was and still is, distinct from European dance traditions and heritage. Dance by its very nature is an evolving art form rooted in centuries of tradition representing cultural distinctiveness. Dancers and choreographers have always been influenced by watching and working with other artists, and both sub-consciously and consciously appropriate steps and movements into their own work. The leading dance practitioners have always striven to create new work that is distinctive and ultimately recognisable. The continuing challenge and tension in relation to cultural appropriation, especially in America and particularly historically is where white artists have been accused of appropriating the work of black artists without credit, as was common practice in Classical Hollywood. This is particularly the case with reference to tap, jazz dance and vernacular dance (that is, native and homegrown dance that swings to the rhythms of jazz, pioneered by African-Americans), according to Marshall & Jean Stearns (1994).<sup>6</sup> I will analyse the 'Stormy Weather' dream ballet in the all black cast

<sup>6</sup> Marshall & Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (USA: First Da Capo Press, 1994), p.xvi.

*Stormy Weather* (Andrew L. Stone, Twentieth Century Fox, 1943), featuring anthropologist, choreographer and dancer Katherine Dunham and her dance company, with reference to ballet, contemporary and vernacular dance. I will examine cultural appropriation and misrepresentation through analysis of the dream ballet, 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet in *The King and I* (Walther Lang, Twentieth Century Fox, 1956), representing different Asian cultures.

### **Broadway and Hollywood**

Many of the leading practitioners involved in Hollywood musicals started out working in theatre, especially on Broadway, and it was standard practice for the studios to look to Broadway for talent and material. Dream ballets in Broadway musical shows were often either excised from their film adaptations, or changed dramatically, using different choreographers, music and star performers. In this thesis I examine Broadway's influence on Hollywood dream ballet production and make comparison to musicals with dream ballets that were specifically created for the screen.

The ways that ballets were named and identified is a significant issue. Each dream ballet was consistently credited, in both Broadway shows and Hollywood musicals. They often had a unique title, acknowledged in the theatre programme or in film credits, such as the 'Civil War Ballet' in *Bloomer Girl* (5 October 1944 – 27 April 1946, 654 performances) or 'A Day in New York Ballet' in *On the Town* (Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen, MGM, 1949).<sup>7</sup> Ballets that did

<sup>7</sup> *Bloomer Girl*, book by Sig Herzig and Fred Saidy, music by Harold Arlen, lyrics by E.Y. Harburgh, choreographed by Agnes de Mille, <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=1583>> accessed 31 December 2018. Ballet was usually included in the title of the dream ballet on Broadway but not necessarily on film and none of them included the term 'dream' in their title. Like dance routines, they were often allocated a name relevant to the narrative theme or the musical accompaniment.

not take place within a dream scenario were also classified in the same terms at the time of production, such as 'The Water Nymph Ballet' in *Goldwyn Follies* (George Marshall, Samuel Goldwyn Company, United Artists, 1938), choreographed by George Balanchine. Some dream ballets included the word 'Ballet' in their title and some did not, so there is no consistency in the use of the terminology; some titles refer to the film's title or the song title featured in the dream ballet, whereas others have generally a distinctive title not referenced elsewhere in the film or the theatrical production. Within this study I have used the titles given at the time of production where I have been able to find reference in archive material. Otherwise I have used the title that has been acknowledged in scholarly writing.

As this study focuses on dance-led musicals as opposed to song-led musicals, the definition of the term dream ballet needs further clarification. Dream ballets are identified here as extended dance sequences within musicals that explore a range of emotions and moods through narrative dance choreography, primarily without spoken dialogue and frequently without singing, but each with its own musical soundtrack representing a day or night dream of a lead character within the film.

Many academic texts on film musicals do reference dream ballets but are often dismissive of their significance, role and function in the light of their perceived rupture of the film's integrated narrative. Further, some academic writing has regarded dream ballets as merely prestige vehicles or vanity projects for stars and has offered limited critical detailed examination of the ballets themselves, and certainly limited understanding of dance as an art form. In this study I will attempt to broaden the understanding of how and why dream ballets were produced and how they worked. No academic survey has looked at dream

ballets in Hollywood film musicals as a corpus addressing the twenty-one-year period when they were at their peak in popularity in the 1930s-1950s. This study attempts to map and analyse the creative developments within the subject, from the early Broadway influences to the heyday in the 1940s and 1950s and the subsequent decline. The production of dream ballets overlapped with the focus on developing integrated film musicals whereby song and dance numbers helped to drive the narrative rather than functioning as separate interludes. This trend was first seen on Broadway with pioneering shows including *Show Boat* (27 December 1927 – 4 May 1929, 572 performances) and *Oklahoma!* (31 March 1943 – 29 May 1948, 2212 performances). In Hollywood Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM) director Vincente Minnelli is acknowledged by scholars as one of the pioneers of integrated narrative storytelling in musicals: *Meet Me in St Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1944) became a blueprint for narrative integration in the Arthur Freed Unit at MGM.<sup>8</sup> I examine how dream ballets were produced through this collective artistic aspiration for narrative integration. (I am not including discussion on camp codes within the work of the Arthur Freed Unit, as scholars Matthew Tinkcom and Steven Cohan have already examined this at length.)

I am focusing on Hollywood, although I will discuss the important influence of 'The Ballet of The Red Shoes' in the eponymous British film *The Red Shoes* (Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger, Archer Productions, 1948), choreographed by Robert Helpmann, starring prima ballerina Moira Shearer. I am aware that dream ballets have been a regular feature in Bollywood cinema

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (USA: Pantheon Books, 1988), p.371; Steven Cohan, *Incongruous Entertainment: Camp, Cultural Value, and the MGM Musical* (USA: Duke University Press, 2005), p.62; Joseph Andrew Casper, *Vincente Minnelli and the Film Musical* (USA: A.S. Barnes & Co, 1977), p.167; Stephen Harvey, *Directed by Vincente Minnelli* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), p.51.

for decades but as I do not possess a detailed understanding of the nuances of the different languages and dialects, history, culture and sub-cultures and the choreographic dance styles, these are not included in my corpus. The Bollywood canon is so vast that it would require a separate study.

### **Psychoanalysis**

Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* was originally published in German in 1899, dated 1900. The book and the field of psychoanalysis did not gain mass popularity in America until the 1930s when the book was more readily available in English translation. In this landmark book Freud stated that all dreams are forms of wish fulfillment, a theory that Feuer and other film scholars use as the basis of their analysis of dream ballets. Although Freud describes different types of dreams in his work, it is the 'symbolic dream' that garnered particular interest amongst film scholars using his psychoanalytic theory to analyse dream ballets as symbolic dreams. Film scholars often referenced Freud's sexual interpretation of dreams although no examples of sexual dreams were included in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. However even Freud insisted that daydreams function differently from night dreams as they follow a linear narrative and therefore cannot be interpreted in the same way. I am concerned with addressing the popular presentation of psychoanalysis in dream ballets, within the context of the burgeoning interest in psychology and psychoanalysis in early twentieth century America and its representation in popular culture. The logical, narrative driven dream ballets in Hollywood musicals are therefore not analysed here using psychoanalytic theory.

Real-life dreams are episodic, non-linear, illogical and open to multiple interpretations. Dream ballets have a linear narrative structure, unlike actual dreams, and are presented in ways that audiences can understand, even when

the film is using surrealism within the mise-en-scène, as in the 'Will You Marry Me?' dream ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1945). There have been critical interpretations of individual dream ballets, using Freudian theory, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, when this area was a popular methodology in analysing film, such as Dennis Giles' and Bruce Babington's separate interpretations of *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1953).<sup>9</sup> However very few of these interpretations address the basic principles of dance theory and therefore they either misunderstand or overlook choreographic intention. It is of course well known that some symbols, codes or tropes from psychoanalytic practice had passed during the period under scrutiny into popular usage, and were to be found in many kinds of popular culture. I argue that these codes or tropes were used in dream ballets in awareness that the adult audience would have no difficulty in grasping them, so that they became a way of expressing potentially complex situations and emotions for such audiences.

### **Methodology**

My methodology combines an integrated approach to textual analysis, genre study and theatrical, film and studio history with primary research in American film and dance archives. It covers scholarly writing on the Hollywood film musical genre including the development of integrated film musicals, the influence of Broadway theatrical musical production, the PCA and dance theory. It addresses the historical context in which these films were produced and developments in the field of dance as an art form in the early twentieth century. I also draw on relevant extracts from popular culture for information

<sup>9</sup> Dennis Giles, 'Show-making' in Rick Altman, ed. *Genre: The Musical* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1981), pp.85-101; Bruce Babington, 'Jumping on the Band Wagon Again: Oedipus Backstage in the Father and Mother of all Musicals' in Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell, eds., *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond*, (Exeter: Intellect Books, 2000), pp.31-40.

and context including non-academic historical studies of Broadway musicals, production histories of Hollywood film musicals, and the historical development of dance in America.

In using the term 'ballet' in dream ballets I refer to Beth Genné's description of the '*ballet d'action*', dance that 'tells a story or develops a character', as opposed to 'ballet' – 'a dance that uses the classical academic tradition called the *danse l'école*.'<sup>10</sup> In Western Europe the term 'ballet' signifies classical ballet; each national ballet school such as Russian, French, Danish and British present characteristic differences in style dependent on training and national cultural influences. In America the term 'ballet', particularly in the early twentieth century, was often used interchangeably to refer to classical ballet and to extended dance sequences that included a variety of different dance styles, such as ballroom, social, character dancing, folk, tap, hoofing, jazz, vernacular and classical ballet or toe-dancing. I employ dance theory analysis, with reference to texts on reading dance by scholars including Lynne Anne Blom & L. Tarin Chaplin, Beth Genné, Betsy Cooper, Mark Franko, Judith Lynne Hanna, Judith Mackrell and Sue Rickard, to examine choreographic intention and meaning when analysing dream ballets. Movements and gestures within dance can have multiple meanings and are open to interpretation by the viewer; an example would be the adaptation and integration of classical ballet traditions including the *pas de deux* (romantic duet between male and female lead dancers). Each individual movement or gesture does not necessarily have a direct translatable meaning, but forms part of a movement phrase that aims visually to represent a specific emotion or mood. Choreography and dance performed by trained dancers can visually represent physical desire, sexual

<sup>10</sup> Beth Genné, *Dance Me A Song: Astaire, Balanchine, Kelly and the American Film Musical* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2018), p193.

longing, sexual curiosity, the act of making love and the fear of sexual union in ways that can be understood by audiences but are not necessarily subject to censorship. I am interested in how the presentation of sexual expression and romance from the internal dream protagonist's perspective, using complex layering of codes within choreography was employed to subvert the strict regulations of the PCA at the time of production. I will consider the regulations that specifically applied to dance within the PCA, and will use archive materials to identify notable transgressions of the Code regulations, with detailed reference to *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen, MGM, 1952).

### **Areas of research and expertise**

My background has given me a good understanding of different styles of dance and choreography that are relevant to this study. I have an understanding of how dance is created, presented, promoted and received, both from personal experience and as a professional working in the arts for over twenty-five years. (I need to state that I am not a professional dancer or choreographer but have studied classical ballet and tap for many years as a child and classical ballet as an adult returner and I have taken classes in other dance styles including Latin and jazz.) I have also conducted additional dance research including ballet, jazz, tap, vernacular and ballroom dance and the historiography of dance in America in the early twentieth century, using texts by Agnes de Mille, Lincoln Kirstein, Jennifer Homans, Adrienne L. McLean, Gus Giordano and Marshall & Jean Stearns. These different elements are the background to the project of the thesis and support my analysis of layers of additional meanings within dream ballets that enhance the audience's understanding of the primary diegesis.



The thesis depends on large amounts of archive work from a significant range of major archives and a full list of the collections and archives is in Appendix 2. I have also drawn on considerable archive research during the writing of my Masters dissertation *The Role of Producer Arthur Freed at Metro Goldwyn Mayer 1948 to 1955* (2008). Unfortunately, I was not granted access to visit the University of Southern California Cinematic Arts Library for my visit in 2014 and having worked in the archive previously I know that there are additional materials that would have been useful for this study, particularly in relation to the MGM dream ballets. As is typical with scholarly work, what one is not able to access is as important as what one can access. At the Paley Center for Media, and the Theatre on Film and Tape Archive at the New York Performing Arts Library, I was able to watch and listen to recordings of interviews, performances and extracts of shows on radio, film and television that have never been broadcast in the UK. These have provided valuable insights into choreographers' work including that of Agnes de Mille, George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. For example I was able to view the original complete 'Louise's Ballet' from *Carousel* (19 April 1945 - 25 May 1947, 890 performances), choreographed by Agnes de Mille, which was an unauthorised black and white recording with the original cast and piano accompaniment, rather than the full orchestra filmed after an official performance. As a result, it has enabled me to make direct comparisons between the original theatrical presentation and the adaptation on film by choreographer Rod Alexander that I will discuss in Chapter Four.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> In the film adaptation of *Carousel* (Henry King, Twentieth Century Fox, 1956) the dances were credited as choreographed by Rod Alexander derived from the original by Agnes de Mille in the stage production, <[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049055/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049055/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast)> accessed 8 May 2016.

During my research I discovered that there are no choreographic records for any of the dream ballets within my corpus in any of the archives that I visited. This is because at the time of production there was no form of choreographic notation; dancers learned their parts by rote (habitual repetition).

Choreographers developed detailed story outlines, undertook their own research and developed dances in conjunction with, and 'on' dancers. Even without choreographic notation, through my primary research I have collected a broad range of materials that allow me to explore in depth specific dream ballets, for example the original story outline and Dialogue Cutting Continuity report for 'The American in Paris Ballet' in *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1951). This material outlines in detail all elements of the dream ballet production process from story development, casting, rehearsal and production timings, to the technical camera positions, correspondence with the PCA and budgets. Additional material relating to the production of dream ballets including extensive memos, letters, press cuttings, interviews and technical information have helped me to form a detailed analysis of some of the dream ballets and their critical and commercial reception at the time of production. Sadly, not every dream ballet is the subject of comprehensive, or accessible archive material.

### **Scholarship**

This study makes reference to the considerable body of scholarly writing on Hollywood film musicals since the 1960s by scholars such as Jane Feuer, Rick Altman, Richard Dyer, Thomas Schatz, Steven Cohan, Arlene Croce, Beth Genné and John Mueller, among others. It engages with the critical debate about the nature of dream ballets within integrated film musicals through the understanding of dance as an abstract art form and its intention to communicate emotions, rather than simply as a literal translation of particular

individual gestures and/or analysis of mise-en-scène. This study contributes to the scholarly field through the exploration of the elements I have laid out, reevaluating the role, function and interpretation of dream ballets.

The discourse surrounding the concept of disruptive narratives is explored through reference to academic texts discussing integration of film musicals, looking at the relationship between musical numbers and narrative. I have chosen to use Jerome Delamater's approach to integration, as I believe it is the only scholarly approach that addresses the holistic process from an understanding of the relationship between dance, choreography and filmmaking.<sup>12</sup> I also make reference to Martin Rubin's work on the tradition of spectacle in musicals.<sup>13</sup> MGM produced more dream ballets than any other Hollywood film studio and I address the reasons behind this; in particular, how dominance in this area influenced other studios through the role of star power, the MGM Arthur Freed Unit 'house style' and its focus on integrated musicals.

### **The corpus: Hollywood musicals with dance-led dream ballets 1935-1956**

This study covers the twenty-one-year period 1935–1956 from the first Hollywood musical with a dream ballet that I have identified – *Broadway Melody of 1936* (Roy Del Ruth, MGM, 1935) to the last within this cycle – *The King and I* (Walter Lang, Twentieth Century Fox, 1956). The resulting corpus includes over twenty films with identified dream ballets; some films have more than one dream ballet. The majority of dream ballets within my corpus are MGM films, with a smaller number produced by Twentieth Century Fox, (the

<sup>12</sup> Jerome Delamater, *Dance in the Hollywood Film Musical* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1978, repr. 1981).

<sup>13</sup> Martin Rubin, *Showstoppers: Busby Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

latter were mostly Broadway stage adaptations), and one by RKO. A full list of the films is included in the Filmography.

My corpus films are set variously in the present, the past and in non-date specific stylised foreign locations. Arguably the most famous dream ballets are (i) 'The American in Paris Ballet', choreographed by and starring Gene Kelly, with Leslie Caron in *An American in Paris*, (ii) 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain* choreographed by and starring Gene Kelly, with Cyd Charisse, and (iii) the 'Laurey Makes Up Her Mind' ballet in *Oklahoma!*, choreographed by Agnes de Mille, starring Bambi Linn, James Mitchell and Rod Steiger. It would be remiss to exclude these from my corpus and therefore they are three of my major case study examples. The others are (iv) the 'Lucky Star Ballet' in *Broadway Melody of 1936*, choreographed by Albertina Rasch and starring Eleanor Powell, (v) 'A Day in New York' ballet from *On the Town*, choreographed by and starring Gene Kelly, (vi) the 'Guardian Angel Daydream' ballet and (vii) the 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' nightmare ballet in *Daddy Long Legs* (Jean Negulesco, Twentieth Century Fox, 1955), choreographed by Roland Petit and Fred Astaire, starring Astaire with Leslie Caron, (viii) the 'Girl Hunt' ballet in *The Band Wagon* choreographed by Michael Kidd and starring Astaire and Cyd Charisse, (ix) 'Stormy Weather' in *Stormy Weather*, choreographed by and starring Katherine Dunham, and (x) 'Louise's Ballet' in *Carousel*, choreographed by Rod Alexander and starring Susan Luckey. My minor case study example addressing the particular thematic discourse on cultural appropriation is 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas Ballet' in *The King and I* (Walter Lang, Twentieth Century Fox, 1956), choreographed by Jerome Robbins and narrated by Rita Moreno.<sup>14</sup> My other minor case study examples

<sup>14</sup> Astaire never took a choreographer credit on any of his films.

addressing discourse on popular representations of psychoanalysis in popular culture are (i) the 'I Used To Be Color Blind' ballet in *Carefree*, choreographed by Fred Astaire and Hermes Pan, starring Astaire and Ginger Rogers (although Hermes Pan did not receive an official choreographer credit), (ii) the 'Mack the Black' ballet in *The Pirate* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1948), choreographed by Robert Alton and Gene Kelly (though Kelly did not receive a choreographer credit), starring Kelly, (iii) the 'Will You Marry Me?' ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief*, choreographed by Eugene Loring and Fred Astaire (though Astaire did not receive a choreographer credit), starring Astaire and Lucille Bremer and (iv) 'Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo' ballet in *Lili* (Charles Walters, MGM, 1953), choreographed by Charles Walters, with Jack Cole as the dance coach and starring Leslie Caron.

My selections from within the larger corpus have been governed by my concern with dance-led dream ballets in Hollywood film musicals that epitomise American culture, even when the dream ballets portray non-American subject matter. It has been important to include dream ballets that are from both a male and a female perspective to be able to make comparisons in choreographic intention and narrative style. Women choreographed only three dream ballets on film within this timeframe: the 'Lucky Star Ballet' in *Broadway Melody of 1936* by Albertina Rasch, which was credited in the film's opening credits, the 'Stormy Weather' ballet in *Stormy Weather*, choreographed and performed by Katherine Dunham and credited within the primary diegesis, and the 'Laurey Makes up Her Mind' ballet in *Oklahoma!* by Agnes de Mille. I will analyse all three dream ballets in detail as they all feature female characters as the female dreamers.<sup>15</sup> Agnes de Mille's choreography for 'Laurey Makes Up Her Mind'

<sup>15</sup> Singer and actor Lena Horne, the female dreamer in *Stormy Weather* does not appear in the dream ballet 'Stormy Weather', whereas Shirley Jones (Laurey) is replaced by Bambi Linn as Dream Laurey in the 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' dream ballet in *Oklahoma!*.

closely resembles her work for the original stage production, according to her writings and dancers from the original stage production, although only a few seconds of original footage of the stage production's dream ballet have survived.

Over the twenty-one-year period of my corpus dream ballets became more elaborate, more expensive and longer, peaking with the Technicolor seventeen-minute 'The American in Paris Ballet' which featured in the film's opening credits and theatrical trailer. All dream ballets after 1951 were shorter, and no subsequent dream ballet garnered the critical praise that singled out 'The An American in Paris Ballet'. The following year 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain*, though shorter, was even more expensive than its predecessor at \$600,000 in comparison to \$542,000. This moment marked the last dream ballet that Gene Kelly produced and starred in on film.

A small number of dream ballets have an internal voiceover narration, though not during the dance sequences, such as 'Limehouse Blues' in *Ziegfeld Follies* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1945) and the 'Girl Hunt' ballet in *The Band Wagon*. One anomaly within my corpus is 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas Ballet' in *The King and I*. The ballet does not take place within the format of a character's dream or daydream but does represent a character's unspoken feelings through the use of narrative dance metaphor. The choreographer Jerome Robbins identified this as a dream ballet at the time of its original production as a stage musical, and when it was adapted for the screen, stating in an interview

'dream ballets were the things you did back then' and therefore I have included it.<sup>16</sup>

### **Background: classical ballet on film**

Classical ballet featured in films as early as the silent era, such as *The Ballet Girl* (George Irving, William A. Brady Picture Plays, 1916), *Bobbie of the Ballet* (Joseph De Grasse, Universal, 1916), and *The Dumb Girl of Portici* (Phillips Smalley & Lois Weber, Universal, 1916) starring prima ballerina Anna Pavlova. During the 1940s and 1950s ballet as a feature of the narrative in film reached its heyday with a series of films in Hollywood and the UK that featured professional ballet dancers, such as Margot Fonteyn, Vera Zorina, Tamara Toumanova and Moira Shearer, or dancers who had trained in classical ballet but were now signed to Hollywood studios, including Cyd Charisse and Leslie Caron at MGM. Many of these films included ballet dancers as lead characters performing classical ballet sequences but did not include dream ballets and are therefore outside my corpus. Examples include: *I Was an Adventuress* (Gregory Ratoff, Twentieth Century Fox, 1940) starring Vera Zorina, *The Unfinished Dance* (Henry Koster, MGM, 1947) starring Cyd Charisse, *The Little Ballerina* (Lewis Gilbert, GB Instructional Films, 1947) featuring Margot Fonteyn, *Never Let Me Go* (Delmer Davies, MGM, 1953) with an uncredited Cyd Charisse, *Gaby* (Curtis Bernhardt, MGM, 1956) starring Leslie Caron, and *Invitation to the Dance* (Gene Kelly, MGM, 1956) featuring Tamara Toumanova.

<sup>16</sup> Audio interview with Jerome Robbins, 22 May 1988 with reference to *The King and I*'s original stage production in 1951, Theatre on Film and Tape (TOFT), \*MGZTL 4-3100, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

My definition of dream ballets excludes the spectacular water-based fantasy sequences, otherwise known as aqua-ballets. The term covers Esther Williams's musicals for MGM from *Bathing Beauty* (George Sidney, MGM, 1944) to *Jupiter Darling* (George Sidney, MGM, 1955). A similar exclusion applies to the ice dance sequences of Sonja Henie's films from *One in a Million* (Sidney Lanfield, Twentieth Century Fox, 1936) to *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Frederick de Cordova, Universal Pictures, 1948).<sup>17</sup> These films were designed to showcase the physical talents of these former sportswomen, rather than to develop the narrative or express specific emotions through dance choreography.

This study also excludes animated musicals of the 1930s to 1950s, such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (William Cottrell, David Hand, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, Perce Pearce, Ben Sharpsteen, Disney, 1937), *Fantasia* (Disney, 1940), *Cinderella* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, Disney, 1950) and *Sleeping Beauty* (Clyde Geronimi, Disney, 1959). The lack of nuance in the generic styling of the animation at that time excludes the films due to the inability to isolate individual choreographic dance moves in the same manner as live action. Teams of animators created the individual animated characters and their movements, including the dance sequences. Despite the attention to detail and the concentration on humanising animated characters (including animals), this presentation of dance is a reflection of the animator in response to the writer's script and is not representative of a choreographer's work. Animators often used live models to help with reproducing movements and mannerisms of some lead human characters, but there are no

<sup>17</sup> A dream ballet on ice does feature in *Snow White and the Three Stooges* (Walter Lang, Twentieth Century Fox, 1961) starring champion ice skater Carol Heiss but it is not covered within the period of my corpus and Heiss herself acknowledged that she was not a dancer, <<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0374707/bio>> accessed 8 September 2019.



choreographer credits for these films. This is in contrast to the human expression of complex emotions expressed through the creation, interpretation and delivery of choreography and dance via an individual dancer's body. The only exception to this is the dream ballet in *Anchors Aweigh* (George Sidney, MGM, 1945) where Gene Kelly dances 'within' animated settings with the animated Jerry Mouse in 'The Worry Song', although Kelly choreographed the routine. The sequence results from Kelly's character telling a fairy story to a group of schoolchildren and the camera tracks forward onto the face of Donald (Dean Stockwell), so the audience sees his visualisation of the story, though he does not feature in the sequence.

Musical films where the majority of the film takes place within a clearly identified dream world such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, MGM, 1939), *Cabin in The Sky* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1943), *The 5000 Fingers of Dr T* (Roy Rowland, Columbia 1953) and *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1954) are also not included in my corpus. These are set in otherworldly fantasy locations including an imaginary land, heaven, a sci-fi landscape and a Scottish town that only appears every 200 years. The effect of the setting is that the song and dance numbers within these films do not function as narrative dream ballets but form part of the film's primary diegesis.

However, as I will explore in this thesis, not all dream sequences in musicals are dream ballets, particularly in the case of song-led dream sequences. There are some musicals that do include multiple dream sequences such as *Lady in the Dark* (Mitchell Leisen, Paramount Pictures, 1944), *What a Way to Go!* (J. Lee Thompson, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 1964) and *On a Clear Day You Can See*

*Forever* (Vincente Minnelli, Paramount Pictures, 1970).<sup>18</sup> In each film there are dream sequences that feature linear narrative, dialogue and song-led dance numbers. These are not included in my corpus as the dream sequences are song-led or dialogue-led, rather than dance-led. All of them occur as a result of the lead female character having a medical consultation with a male psychiatrist; the premise that psychoanalysis enables the leading women to find solutions to their romantic problems.

The large body of non-musical films that include dream scenarios such as *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, Selznick International Pictures, 1945) are not included or referenced in my corpus. As I argued earlier, dream ballets within Hollywood film musicals do not conform to actual dream logic in that they offer a linear narrative that internal and external audiences can easily follow. Hollywood and Western cinema mostly treated dream sequences conventionally as if they were dreams, and therefore were operating within different conventions to dream ballets. In Classical Hollywood films of the 1930s-1950s such as *Spellbound*, the dream functions as a plot device in part, a complex puzzle for the lead characters to solve.

### **After 1956**

Dream ballets have continued to feature in film and television in America since 1956, but they occur sporadically, are usually considerably shorter with less elaborate production values and are often produced as homage or comic parody to the golden age of musicals. Examples include *Flower Drum Song* (Henry Koster, Universal International, 1961), *All that Jazz* (Bob Fosse, Columbia Pictures Corporation & Twentieth Century Fox 1979), *She's Gotta*

<sup>18</sup> Gene Kelly played Pinky Benson in *What a Way to Go!*, a comic parody of his Don Lockwood character in *Singin' in the Rain*.

*Have It* (Spike Lee, 40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks, 1986) and *La La Land* (Damien Chazelle, Summit Entertainment, Black Label Media, TIK Films, Imposter Pictures, Gilbert Films & Marc Platt Productions, 2016). I discuss some of these dream ballets briefly in my conclusion but to discuss these at length would involve consideration of the degree to which modern musicals are homages to the musicals of the past and raises complex issues regarding the relationship between the two. A list of some of these identified dream ballets in film and television post 1956 is included in the Filmography, but this does not claim to be a comprehensive record.

### **Chapter structure**

The main body of the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first, 'Origins of the Dream Ballet: From Broadway to Hollywood' considers how and why MGM produced so many dream ballets from 1935 through to 1956 and how the relationship between Hollywood and Broadway resulted in reciprocal innovation, choreography, stylisation and talent development. It identifies the most significant dance practitioners on Broadway and in Hollywood and how the dream ballet became a regular feature on stage and screen. Plotting the cycle across the corpus I explore how technology and dance practice evolved to enable the increasing sophistication of dream ballet production and presentation, with an analysis of the 'Lucky Star Ballet' in *Broadway Melody of 1936* as a starting point.

The second chapter, 'An 'American' style' addresses how the 'American' style of choreography and dance is based on an accumulation of a variety of borrowed styles that are changed, reframed and embellished to create a particular 'American' style. I argue that some artists used dream ballets as a way to break down perceived class barriers by bringing classical ballet and

other dance forms to mass audiences and thereby democratising dance to create a recognisable 'American' style. The early part of the twentieth century, particularly pre-World War Two, was one of many periods in the development of contemporary American popular culture, of moving away from the influence of dominant European classical traditions across all art forms, not just dance. The case studies employed in the first section of this chapter are (i) the 'Laurey Makes Up Her Mind' ballet in *Oklahoma!* and (ii) 'The American in Paris Ballet' in *An American in Paris*. Both choreographers had worked on Broadway, prior to Hollywood but present very different styles of dance reflecting their own training, gender and choreographic intentions. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II were attempting to produce a faithful adaptation of their Broadway smash hit *Oklahoma!* on the screen, whereas *An American in Paris* was developed specifically for the screen and its star. This chapter also questions the role cultural appropriation of ethnic dance and the grafting of different dance styles played in influencing and creating core syntax in American choreography and dance, as presented in the dream ballets of Hollywood film musicals. The minor case study is 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet in *The King and I* adapted from the Broadway show by the same choreographer. The mise-en-abîme structure of 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet is set in a fictional stylised world that features in the primary narrative, with an internal viewing audience. The ballet is narrated by the internal protagonist Tuptim, as a way to express her repressed feelings towards her lover and the feeling of being enslaved by the King of Siam. As the narrator Tuptim creates another reading of the story creating an additional layer of interpretation.

The third chapter 'Integrated narrative and spectacle, Dream analysis and Popular Freudian psychology' explores the tension between integration and

spectacle through the detailed analysis of (i) the 'Guardian Angel Daydream' ballet and (ii) the 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' nightmare ballet in *Daddy Long Legs* and (iii) the 'A Day in New York' ballet in *On the Town*. There has been considerable academic discourse on the subject of integration in film musicals. Through the examination and interpretation of the choreography and dance styles in the dream ballets, I explore whether what we find is a complementary and/or integrated narrative to the primary diegesis or an unnecessary disruption. This chapter also examines how dreams were used as a narrative device to develop the diegesis and how popular ideas relating to Freud's dream theory were adapted to make them accessible to mainstream audiences. The minor case study texts are (i) the 'I Used to Be Color Blind' ballet in *Carefree* and (ii) the 'Will You Marry Me?' ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief*. In *Carefree* Fred Astaire portrays a psychiatrist who uses the analysis of dreams as part of his treatment of his patients. It is the only dream ballet to be performed entirely in slow motion in black and white and is the only time that a dream ballet features in an Astaire and Rogers musical. In *Yolanda and the Thief* Astaire plays a con man that unwittingly falls in love with his target victim and dreams about being ensnared by her, within a surrealistic version of the fantasy town.

The fourth chapter, 'Male and female perspectives and the Production Code Administration' addresses how the complex layering of codes within dream ballet choreography were employed to avoid the strict regulations of the PCA, with specific examples garnered from archival research, dance theory and textual analysis. The case study texts are (i) 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain*, (ii) the 'Girl Hunt' ballet in *The Band Wagon*, (iii) the 'Stormy Weather' ballet in *Stormy Weather*, and (iv) 'Louise's Ballet' in *Carousel*. I address the difference in dream ballets articulated from a female perspective and a male perspective in relation to narrative and choreographic meaning; and how these

dual sensibilities allow both innocent and sophisticated viewings of dream ballets whilst keeping within the boundaries of the PCA regulations.

### **Research questions**

A series of questions guide this study. What is meant by an 'American' style of dance choreography and presentation within dream ballets? How was this 'American' style created to specifically express feelings, memories, wishes, sexual desires, fears, loss and ambition in a way that could not be fully articulated in shorter non-dream ballet dance sequences? How did first and second-generation American artists and European émigrés in the early twentieth century influence and originate new styles of dance that represented particular tropes of American culture, creating this 'American' style of dance, on Broadway, in classical ballet, modern dance and in Hollywood that was manifest in dream ballets? Was cultural appropriation & grafting of dance moves significant in the development of American dance? How much did gender impact on choreographic intention? Does the narrative style of dance in dream ballets negatively affect the integrated nature of the musicals within my corpus through unnecessary diegetic transitions, creating a third state, as identified by Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans, or did these dream ballets create a new level of meaning?<sup>19</sup> Did the PCA see but choose to ignore the transgressions or were the dream ballets so coded that the transgressions were not visible, or did the producers negotiate these challenges through employing particular styles of choreography? How has academic discourse furthered the understanding of dream ballets' function within musicals? Is there a way to group dream ballets according to the studio, director, star or another

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans, *Blue Skies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Film Musical* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p.197.

option, and if so, what are the theoretical concepts that run across such groupings?

My studies of dream ballets do not propose simply to interrogate previous readings or to negate existing interpretations, but seek to make a stronger connection between an understanding of dance with the scholarly interpretation of film. They challenge preconceived notions of how viewers interpret dance on film, and articulate the complex relationships between choreography, performance, star power, the Hollywood studio system and technical prowess. The films in this study express the manifestation of the 'American' style of dance; the character underpinnings of Altman's dual-focus narrative; how integration and spectacle can cohere; and how choreography was employed to deliver meanings to audiences. I argue that dance-led dream ballets in Hollywood film musicals were significant in their contribution to all of these issues.

I commented earlier that academic writing has often dismissed dream ballets as either interruption to the integrated narrative or vanity projects for star performers. In this thesis I will look at the work dream ballets do in addressing issues and problems identified within the primary diegesis and why they are integral to the films in which they are deployed.

### **Anticipated contribution to current research**

My focus on dance-led analysis of dream ballets produced by three different studios is a departure from previous research relating to discourse on the different definitions of dream ballets in Hollywood film musicals. Rather than use elements of psychoanalytic theory, I focus on the perceived meanings attributed through choreography and dance movement, and the codes and

tropes associated with the representation of Freudian psychology as expressed in popular culture. My in-depth analysis garnered from primary research in American film and dance archives and reading of the films within my corpus, compares and contrasts the cinematic practices of the three Hollywood studios that produced the majority of dream ballets at the height of their popularity, and their critical reception at the time of production. Although there has been considerable previous research relating to some of the better-known dream ballets within my corpus, my cross-disciplinary approach to the analysis aims to shed new light on the understanding of these texts. My study includes other texts that are often overlooked or are usually placed only within a specific field of thematic analysis, such as cultural appropriation, and therefore enables them to be reexamined within the context of choreographic intention.

In other words, I attempt to uncover the original choreographic intentions and the director's original artistic vision made available through analysis of the texts in my corpus, supported by archival research, within the context of the house style of each Hollywood studio. I reflect on how these complex sequences balanced the inherent tensions between integrated narrative and spectacle to create additional layers of meaning for audiences. This extended focus on the meanings and emotions embedded in dance and choreography across my study aims to create a more in-depth understanding of the potential role, function and significance of dream ballets. By focusing on dance and choreography, the study offers an interconnected relationship between choreographer, performer and audience.

The overarching intention of this thesis is therefore to rescue the dream ballet from its dismissal as mere vanity project or spectacle that creates an unnecessary rupture to the primary narrative, and to demonstrate its artistic,



technological, historical and cultural value and significance, deeming the dream ballet worthy of re-evaluation and further study.

## Review of the Literature

### **The genre of musicals, Dreams & dream ballets, Interpretation of dance, & Popular culture writing**

In this Review of the Literature I shall begin by laying out the general areas of scholarly writing and then will return to these to discuss the relevant arguments mounted in particular texts.

There are general texts on the subject of musicals that either do not directly address dream ballets or reference them briefly within the context of discourse on musicals as a genre. The first section of this literature review explores the scholarly field of writing dating from the 1970s to the present day centred on the Hollywood film musical genre. These texts include critical surveys of the Hollywood film musical as a genre, scholarly writing on the leading protagonists in terms of studios, directors and star performers, theoretically based analyses of different types of musical styles, and thematic discourses on subject matter including music and sound, visual style and mise-en-scène, cultural appropriation and race, Classical Hollywood and cinematic practice and hidden homosexual codes.

There are a number of full-length studies that set out to provide overarching critical analysis of Hollywood musicals in the twentieth century, such as Jane Feuer's *The Hollywood Musical* (1982), Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans's *Blue Skies and Silver Linings* (1985), Rick Altman's *The American Film Musical* (1987), Michael Dunne's *American Film Musical and Forms* (2004), and Raymond Knapp's *The American Musical and The Performance of*

*Personal Identity* (2006).<sup>20</sup> There are also numerous collections of essays relating to specific aspects of musicals, edited by academics including Steven Cohan, Bill Marshall & Robyn Stillwell, Robert Lawson-Peebles and Rick Altman.<sup>21</sup> Richard Dyer and Barry Keith Grant have both produced studies foregrounding the role of music within the Hollywood film musical.<sup>22</sup> Susan Smith and Desirée J. Garcia have both produced full-length studies on race and identity in relation to Hollywood film musicals; while Carol J. Clover's essay 'Dancin' in the Rain' explores racially displaced ethnic influences on the cultural appropriation of music and dance deployed in musicals.<sup>23</sup> Richard Dyer, Steven Cohan and Matthew Tinkcom have all explored the hidden homosexual and camp codes within musicals.<sup>24</sup>

The scholarly field also includes an examination of critical writing on the influence of Broadway theatrical musical production on Hollywood film musical production, with particular reference to specific choreographers and dancers including Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, Agnes de Mille and Jerome Robbins.<sup>25</sup> Beth

<sup>20</sup> Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982); Babington and Evans, *Blue Skies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Musical*; Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); Michael Dunne, *American Film Musical Themes and Forms* (USA: McFarland & Company Ltd, 2004); Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Steven Cohan, ed., *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader* (USA: Routledge, 2002, repr.2004); Steven Cohan, ed., *The Sound of Musicals*; Bill Marshall & Robynn Stilwell, eds., *Musicals: Hollywood & Beyond* (Exeter: Intellect Books Ltd, 2000); Robert Lawson-Peebles, ed., *Approaches to the American Musical* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996); Rick Altman, ed., *Genre: The Musical* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1981).

<sup>22</sup> Richard Dyer, *In the Space of a Song: The Uses of Song in Film* (Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2012); Barry Keith Grant, *The Hollywood Film Musical* (Malaysia: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Susan Smith, *The Musical: Race, Gender and Performance* (Great Britain, Wallflower Press, 2005); Desirée J. Garcia, *The Migration of Musical Film: From Ethnic Margins to American Mainstream* (USA: Rutgers University Press, 2014); Carol J. Clover, 'Dancin' in the Rain' in Steven Cohan, ed., *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, pp.157-173.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 1992); Steven Cohan, *Incongruous Entertainment Camp, Cultural Value, and the MGM Musical*; Matthew Tinkcom, "'Working like a Homosexual": Camp Visual Codes and the Labor of Gay Subjects in the MGM Freed Unit' in Steven Cohan, ed., *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, pp.115-129.

<sup>25</sup> Shelley C. Berg, 'Saving a Legacy: Agnes de Mille's 'Gold Rush'', *Dance Research, The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (Summer 2001), pp.60-90; Frank W.D. Ries, 'The Agony of Agnes', *Dance Chronicle*, 21:1, (1998), pp.161-7; J.P. Telotte, 'Ideology and the Kelly-Donen Musicals', *Film Criticism*, 8, 3, (Spring 1984), pp.36-46.

Genné's (2018) study *Dance Me a Song* includes a detailed discussion of the musicals of former Broadway artists Vincente Minnelli, Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen working at MGM, and the synergies between choreographers and directors, music and the moving image.<sup>26</sup>

There has been and continues to be considerable academic discourse on the relationship between integration and spectacle in film musicals. John Mueller argues that the dance sequences created by Fred Astaire in the Astaire-Rogers musicals of the 1930s were the first attempt at integration of dance into the primary diegesis, in his essay 'Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical' (1984) and his full length study of Astaire in the following year.<sup>27</sup> Thomas Schatz in *Hollywood Genres* argues that even integrated musicals 'never lost sight of the primary importance of the 'show'', whether as 'onstage' presentation or "natural' expression of a musically inclined community.'<sup>28</sup>

The second group of texts in this literature review relate directly to what has been written about dream ballets, dream sequences and dream worlds within musicals, with reference to specific dream ballets. The basics of Freudian dream analysis theory are included here in order to understand the use of codes and tropes in the popular representation of psychology in dream ballets.<sup>29</sup> Feuer's interpretation of dream worlds, dream stages and dream ballets in the chapter titled 'Dream Worlds and Dream Stages' uses Freud's psychoanalytic model. In a chapter titled 'Dreaming in Dance: Astaire, Minnelli, Kelly and Donen', dance and art historian Beth Genné explores the era in film

<sup>26</sup> Genné, pp.193-226.

<sup>27</sup> John Mueller, 'Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical' in *Cinema Journal*, Vol.24, No.1, (Autumn, 1984), pp.28-40; John Mueller, *Astaire Dancing: The Musical Films* (USA: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1985).

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres*, (USA: McGraw-Hill, 1981), p.193.

<sup>29</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1997).

when 'a 'ballet' – often a dream ballet – became a standard feature of musicals.'<sup>30</sup>

Given the nature of this study, the field incorporates dance theory to assist in the interpretation of dance from classical to modern styles. The interpretation of dance within dream ballets, particularly relating to choreographic intent, significant gestures and movement metaphors is an essential element of this study. In the third section of this Literature Review I refer to texts on dance theory, classical ballet and other relevant dance styles. For dance historiography, texts include *Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing*, by dance impresario Lincoln Kirstein (1935), and his *The Classic Ballet: Basic Technique and Terminology* (1952), Mary Clarke & Clement Crisp, *Ballet: An Illustrated History* (1973) and Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* (2010). To ensure accuracy in referencing dance vocabulary and how to read dance and choreography, I refer to texts including Robert Gottlieb, *Reading Dance* (2008), Lynne Anne Blom & L. Tarin Chaplin, *The Intimate Act of Choreography* (1982), Judith Mackrell, *Reading Dance* (1997), Marshall & Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (1968) and *Dance on Its Own Terms: Histories and Methodologies*, edited by Melanie Bales & Karen Eliot (2013).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Genné, p.193.

<sup>31</sup> Lincoln Kirstein, *Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing* (New York: Dance Horizons, Incorporated, 1935, Third repr.1974); Lincoln Kirstein, *The Classical Ballet: Basic Technique and Terminology* (Florida, University Press of Florida, by arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, 1952, Tenth repr. 1998); Mary Clarke & Clement Crisp, *Ballet: An Illustrated History* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1973, repr. 1992); Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* (London: Granta Publications, 2010); Robert Gottlieb, *Reading Dance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008); Lynne Anne Blom & L. Tarin Chaplin, *The Intimate Act of Choreography* (USA: University of Press, 1982, repr.1989), Judith Mackrell, *Reading Dance* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1997); Stearns, *Jazz Dance*; Melanie Bales & Karen Eliot, eds., *Dance on Its Own Terms: Histories and Methodologies* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2013).

In this study I also reference popular culture writing including non-academic studies on the history of film musicals, Broadway musicals, the Production Code Administration (PCA), the historical development of dance in early twentieth century America, and biographies that provide background information.<sup>32</sup> These provide context for the fashion for dream ballets from their development in the 1930s to their demise in the 1950s, and the adaptation of stage musicals to the screen. They include David Ewen *The Complete Book of the American Musical Theater* (1958), Robert Matthew-Walker's *Broadway to Hollywood*, (1996), Mark N. Grant *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical* (2004), and Thomas S. Hischak *Through the Screen Door: What Happened to the Broadway Musical When it Went to Hollywood* (2004) and Hischak's *American Plays & Musicals on Screen* directory (2005).<sup>33</sup>

There is considerable literature on film censorship and the PCA. I will not be addressing much of this literature directly but will mostly use primary research and one directly relevant text to understand how censorship worked in this historical period and what was most significant in relation to dream ballets. Thomas Doherty's in-depth examination of the workings of the PCA, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen & The Production Code Administration* (2007), coupled with web-based research and archive research provides the framework for my analysis of individual dream ballets in relation to potential Code violations.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> I am aware that there is no dividing line between non-academic and academic work. This thesis takes in a range of materials, some of which were written for more popular audiences.  
<sup>33</sup> David Ewen, *The Complete Book of American Musical Theater* (USA: Henry Holt & Company, 1958); Robert Matthew-Walker, *Broadway to Hollywood* (London: Penguin Group, 1996); Mark N. Grant, *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical* (USA: University Press of New England, 2004); Thomas S. Hischak, *Through the Screen Door: What Happened to the Broadway Musical When it Went to Hollywood* (USA: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004); Thomas S. Hischak, *American Plays and Musicals on Screen* (USA: McFarland & Company Ltd, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen & The Production Code Administration* New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); The Motion Picture Production Code, <[https://productioncode.dhwritings.com/multipleframes\\_productioncode.php](https://productioncode.dhwritings.com/multipleframes_productioncode.php)> accessed 29 March 2018.

This study also makes extensive use of primary research from film and dance archives in the USA, as referenced in Appendix 2.

### **The genre of musicals**

In his chapter on musicals in *Hollywood Genres*, Thomas Schatz details the inherent tension between the internal logic of the film musical and the atmosphere of illusion asking the ultimate question – ‘what is real?’<sup>35</sup> Schatz’s argument is that as the musical genre changed it ‘sacrificed *plausibility* for *internal narrative logic*’.<sup>36</sup> This then allowed the genre to expand its ‘basis in fantasy and artifice’ and therefore expand ‘its narrative, visual, and visual expression.’<sup>37</sup> He discusses the challenge of combining popular entertainment with highbrow culture, particularly with reference to the MGM Freed Unit, and the dream ballet in *An American in Paris*. Jane Feuer contributes to this discourse with reference to music in *The Hollywood Musical*, in her chapter titled ‘The Celebration of Popular Song’.<sup>38</sup> According to Feuer ‘those musicals which do raise the classical/popular conflict to a central position in the film’s plot show the triumphant victory of the popular style.’<sup>39</sup> Dream ballets attempted to smooth over the inherent tensions between highbrow and lowbrow culture through their narrative approach to storytelling using a mix of dance styles, often including classical ballet and jazz dance.

One of the central strategies of the scholarly field here is to address the three main types of musicals as identified by Rick Altman in *The American Film Musical*: ‘The Folk Musical’, ‘The Fairy Tale Musical’ and ‘The Show Musical’.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Schatz, *Hollywood Genres*, pp186-220.

<sup>36</sup> Italics are the author’s own, *ibid*, p.194.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.203, pp.211-2; Feuer, pp.49-65.

<sup>39</sup> Feuer, p.56.

<sup>40</sup> Altman, *The American Film Musical*, pp.129-271.

Altman's discussion of the dual-focus narrative in 'The Structure of the American Film Musical' chapter argues for an important dynamic that explores the relationship between the main characters.<sup>41</sup> Altman explains that 'the key technique in the musical's approach to meaning is repetition, across the genre as well as within individual films [...] by transferring the male-female duality to every aspect of the film experience, the musical sets up a redundant pattern that eventually serves as a model for the film's thematic oppositions.'<sup>42</sup> In other words each separate section of the film repeats the film's overall duality. He states 'each musical finds its own specific thematic pairing to support the main male-female coupling.'<sup>43</sup> Altman uses the term 'dream device' to identify the style of sequence as an alternative to the backstage musical's production number or to present material 'so clearly divorced from reality that we feel it to be like a dream'.<sup>44</sup> In his section on The Folk Musical, Altman places the dream ballet within the folk musical tradition, with reference to Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals. Altman states 'with the forties, the dream ballet became an almost required interlude with the folk music tradition, thanks largely to the success of Agnes de Mille's choreography for the 1943 stage production of *Oklahoma!*, reproduced nearly intact for the 1955 film version.'<sup>45</sup> Altman identifies the musical's use of dream sequences to 'blend the real and the ideal or imaginary' and explores how music and dance convey personal emotions in addition to their role as signifiers of romantic triumph. However he does not explore these ideas in the context of dream ballets specifically and no case is made as to how they differ from non-dream ballet dance sequences.<sup>46</sup> As Altman places dream ballets in the Folk Musical category he ignores their

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.16-27.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, pp.32-3.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, pp.48-9.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, pp.61-2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.284

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.62.



presence in other types of musicals, namely fairy tale and show musicals.

Altman's work makes no distinction between dream worlds, dream sequences and dream ballets and does not address the multiple reasons for the existence of the dream ballet.

Richard Dyer's *Only Entertainment* (1998) is an essential text in that it challenges preconceptions of the term 'entertainment'. In his chapter 'Entertainment and Utopia', Dyer discusses the significance of an audience's emotional connection to performance demonstrating an understanding missing in much academic discourse relating to dance in musicals.<sup>47</sup> He argues that accepted ideas of entertainment as 'escapism' and 'wish-fulfillment' allude to an ideal of utopianism; however utopianism has a direct correlation to emotional feelings rather than utopian worlds, which is significant when it relates to dance performance. Dyer argues that emotional signification relates to entertainment forms through categories including: energy, abundance, intensity, transparency and community, making reference to performance in specific musicals.<sup>48</sup> Dyer addresses the potentially complex layers of meanings in performance, particularly in relation to dance in dream ballets, a critical approach often missing in discussions of musicals and specifically dream ballets.

Both Thomas Schatz (1998) and Douglas Gomery (2005) have produced detailed examinations of the Hollywood studio system, which provide important contexts for MGM's studio dominance in the production of musicals.<sup>49</sup> Arthur

<sup>47</sup> Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, pp.17-34, 'Entertainment and Utopia' was originally published as an essay in *Movie 24*, Spring 1977.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, pp.18-23.

<sup>49</sup> Schatz, *Hollywood Genres*; Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*; Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History* (London: British Film Institute, 2005).

Freed at MGM produced the majority of dream ballets in musicals. These texts highlight the differences between each studio's approach to production and talent development, and aim to explain why the 'Freed Unit' was so commercially and critically successful. Schatz describes the Freed Unit under the title, 'Studio as Auteur', though he does acknowledge that the musical 'relies on the film industry's collaborative production system.'<sup>50</sup> Schatz identifies Vincente Minnelli as the 'premiere director during MGM's peak years' due to his 'sense of visual expression and capacity to incorporate highbrow forms (particularly ballet and classical music) into what was then considered a middlebrow medium.'<sup>51</sup> Shatz suggests that Freed's success was due to his 'musical and cinematic sensibilities [that] were complemented by his administrative, executive, and financial savvy.'<sup>52</sup> Gomery attributes the success of the musicals at MGM, particularly those produced by Freed in the late 1940s and early 1950s, to Production Manager Dore Schary leaving Freed alone 'to work with the Stanley Donens and Gene Kellys to create some of the greatest musical cinema Hollywood has ever known.'<sup>53</sup> Freed's approach to producing musicals relied on a repertory style of working with a core team of production staff, designers, musicians, writers, directors and star performers repeatedly, many of whom had initially trained in theatre, especially on Broadway.

In a chapter titled 'Improbable Stuff: Camp and the MGM House Style' in *Incongruous Entertainment: Camp, Cultural Value, and the MGM Musical* Cohan argues that the MGM house style, the presentation of glamour and stars, and the hidden camp codes employed in the production of mass-market

<sup>50</sup> Schatz, *Hollywood Genres* p.202.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.203.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pp.203-4.

<sup>53</sup> Gomery, p.110.

popular musicals are not incongruous, but part of their mass appeal.<sup>54</sup> Angela Dalle-Vacche's detailed examination of Vincente Minnelli's visual style in *An American in Paris* in her 1992 essay argues that he stands on the 'threshold between cinema and painting' and that the influence of 'Art' on American culture creates an inherent conflict in creating work for mass cinema audiences.<sup>55</sup> There is no doubt that the influence of other art forms on the production of dream ballets was significant. In particular, Minnelli's art direction and theatrical design background greatly informed the storytelling and mise-en-scène in the films and dream ballets that he directed.

Andrea Most and Bruce McConachie discuss the politics of race in Rodgers and Hammerstein's musicals set in the East.<sup>56</sup> With additional reference to primary research in film and dance archives and texts relating to specific choreography and dance styles, I shall critically analyse 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas Ballet' in *The King and I* within the context of Most and McConachie and other academics' discourse on cultural appropriation, representation of different cultures and 'grafting' of dance movements.

This study focuses on the interpretation of dance within dream ballets, but an understanding of the role of music and its relationship with dance is fundamental to the interpretation of dream ballets. Barry Keith Grant in *The Hollywood Film Musical* (2012) argues for the importance of classical music and the 'Great American Songbook' and other popular music at the time of production in making connections with audiences. This is exemplified by his

<sup>54</sup> Cohan, *Incongruous Entertainment*, pp.41-87.

<sup>55</sup> Angela Dalle-Vacche, 'A Painter in Hollywood: Vincente Minnelli's *An American in Paris*', *Cinema Journal*, 32 (1992), pp.62-83.

<sup>56</sup> Andrea Most, 'You've Got to Be Carefully Taught': The Politics of Race in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*, *Theatre Journal*, 52, (2000), pp.307-337; Bruce A. McConachie, 'The 'Oriental' Musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein and the U.S. War in Southeast Asia', *Theatre Journal*, 46:3, (1994), pp.385-398.

reading of *The Pirate* and how the 'film's fantastic style functions as a visualization of its heroine's repressed desire.'<sup>57</sup> Although music was often adapted to suit choreographic needs, especially in dream ballets, Grant's arguments contribute to my exploration of how music is critical in helping audiences to understand moods and emotions within the dream ballets as part of the holistic mise-en-scène.

Jerome Delamater has written the only comprehensive academic text to fully examine the role of dance integration within a holistic production process in *Dance in the Hollywood Musical* (1978). He understands the significance and influence of a broad range of dance styles on the creation of an 'American' style of dance in the film musical. He explores how dance performs a unique role in expressing emotion and conveying popular culture and highbrow culture to a mass-market audience. Delamater devotes a chapter to the 'Integrated Dance Musical' identifying how creative talent such as choreographers, performers and directors were encouraged to test new ideas, take risks and pursue the desire to create integrated dance-led musicals, particularly, but not exclusively, at MGM.<sup>58</sup> Delamater analyses a number of dream ballets but only within the wider context of dance in film musicals. He identifies Gene Kelly as the main innovator in the creation of the integrated dance musical. In a chapter devoted to Kelly, Delamater explores his intellectual approach to dance and integration and how his in-depth understanding of the complete film production process led to experimentation in capturing part of the essence of the kinetic energy of live dance performance. Delamater's theoretical approach to integration is the most relevant for my study because of his emphasis on the

<sup>57</sup> Grant, p.87.

<sup>58</sup> Delamater, pp.97-132.

understanding of dance. However, Delamater largely ignores the significant influence of Broadway choreography on the development of dance in film.

Lauren Pattullo (2007) compares Busby Berkeley's choreography with that of Gene Kelly's and their different approaches to narrative and spectacle. She argues that Berkeley's 'show within a show' structure treated narrative and spectacle as 'two separate worlds', whereas Kelly emphasised the 'integration of dance into the film's primary narrative structure'. Pattullo argues that the dream world in *An American in Paris* 'grows from the narrative'.<sup>59</sup>

### **Dreams and dream ballets**

Famously Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* explores the central idea that all dreams are a form of wish-fulfillment, a way for the unconscious to resolve conflicts, and that dreams can contain images or symbols that may have multiple meanings and therefore require interpretation. Leslie Halpern explores the distortion of science and the prioritising of art in the depiction of dreams on film and uses theories by Freud and Carl Jung to analyse dream sequences in *Dreams on Film: The Cinematic Struggle Between Art & Science* (2003).<sup>60</sup> Halpern makes no reference to any dream ballets within my corpus but does include a mention of the death dream in *All That Jazz*, although with no reference to it being a dream ballet. There are academic interpretations of film musicals using psychoanalytic theory, some of which do reference dream ballets specifically, such as Dennis Giles' (1982) essay, 'Show-making' exploring sexuality and the musical'; and Bruce Babington's essay 'Jumping on

<sup>59</sup> Lauren Pattullo, 'Narrative and Spectacle in the Hollywood Musical: contrasting the choreography of Busby Berkeley and Gene Kelly', *Research in Dance Education*, 8, (2007), pp.73-85.

<sup>60</sup> Leslie Halpern, *Dreams on Film: The Cinematic Struggle Between Art and Science* (USA: Macfarland & Company Ltd, 2003).

the Band Wagon Again: Oedipus Backstage in the Father and Mother of all Musicals' (2000).<sup>61</sup> Giles states that 'the ballet narrative reworks both the Psychic and Aesthetic Oedipus through parodying hardboiled novels.'<sup>62</sup> Giles concludes his essay thus:

Oedipus is only apparently banished, returning to haunt the action in another German-American interchange, psychoanalysis and the Freudianised Hollywood melodrama, providing in *The Band Wagon* an inflection of the Oedipal Romance which articulates contemporary sex and gender instabilities and simultaneously reasserts the musical's aesthetic complexity.<sup>63</sup>

As a result of the increasing popularising of psychoanalysis in the USA in the early Twentieth century, the use of basic codes and tropes as they had been incorporated into popular culture is evident in some dream ballets. The codes and tropes featured particularly in the 1930s and 1940s and were often used as a symbolic way of expressing sexual desire, for example, the use of swinging phallic swords in the 'Mack the Black' ballet in *The Pirate*. Such substitutions had the advantage that they were not identified as impermissible sexual imagery by the PCA. Feuer states that:

Dream ballets in MGM musicals emphasize the wish of the dreamer (the *Pirate* ballet, the first dream ballet in *Lili*) or they represent a tentative working out of the problems of the primary narrative (*Yolanda and the Thief*, 'A Day in New York' in *On the Town*, the 'American in Paris' ballet, the second dream in *Lili*).<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Dennis Giles, 'Show-making' in Altman, ed., *Genre: The Musical*, pp.85-102; Bruce Babington, 'Jumping on the Band Wagon Again: Oedipus Backstage in the Father and Mother of all Musicals' in Marshall and Stilwell, eds., *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond*, pp.31-40.

<sup>62</sup> Giles, 'Show-making' in Altman, ed., *Genre: The Musical*, p.35.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, pp.38-9.

<sup>64</sup> Feuer, p.74.

Feuer's argument is that there is a direct correlation between the narrative of the dream and the narrative resolution of the primary diegesis of the film; however, that is not always the case. Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans in *Blue Skies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Musical* (1985) criticise Feuer's Freudian approach to dream ballet analysis using Freud's dream theory through a detailed examination of the dream ballet in *Carousel*, in a chapter titled 'Carousel (1956) and the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical'.<sup>65</sup> They state:

The comparison between dream sequences in musicals and Freud's theory of 'dream work' is made by Jane Feuer in *The Hollywood Musical*. Where we find her argument unsatisfactory is in her model of the workings of these sequences which, though it may be adequate to the very simplest instances (for instance the completely unmysterious 'Miss Turnstiles' sequence in *On the Town*), or the simplest moments of the more complex instances, is incapable of comprehending the dream ballets in *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*.<sup>66</sup>

Feuer's reliance on Freud's psychoanalytic theory thereby ignores the role and purpose of dance as a way to express complex emotions within the interpretation. In discussion of dream ballets Feuer and other academics ignore the fact that dream ballets do not function like dreams.

In *Alternative Worlds in Hollywood Cinema* (2008), James Walters writes about three different types of worlds, some of which are present in film musicals: Imagined Worlds referencing *Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, MGM, 1939), Potential Worlds, and Other Worlds referencing *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1954). Walters makes no direct reference to dream ballets but does provide detailed definitions of each alternative world that contributes towards

<sup>65</sup> Babington and Evans, *Blue Skies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Musical*, pp.199-204.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p.199.

my understanding of how to define dream ballets.<sup>67</sup> Walter's work is important in establishing why psychoanalytic theory is not at the centre of the interpretation of dream ballets within this study.

Steve Bruhm's reading of the 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' dream ballet in *Oklahoma!* makes a case for its interpretation using the concept of the gothic to explain why and how Laurey has to make a decision between marrying her 'white knight' and resisting the urges of her 'gothic villain.'<sup>68</sup> He examines the use of particular dance styles and the use of signifiers for the audience, such as classical ballet motifs as conventional romance, the high-kicking Can-Can dancers denoting female sexual power and the aggressive sexual expression from the intimate bodily contact of the Polka.

There are readings of four dream ballets in Michael Dunne's *American Film Musical Themes and Forms* (2004), two within the chapter titled 'Dance as a Narrative Agent' – 'I Used to be Color Blind' in *Carefree* and 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' in *Oklahoma!*, one within the chapter titled 'Fred and Gene in Never Never Land' – the 'Will You Marry Me?' dream ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief*, and one within the chapter titled 'Intertextual Musicals' – the 'Girl Hunt' ballet in *The Band Wagon*.<sup>69</sup> None of these readings employ any dance theory but explore how dance functions as character and plot development, and how a fantasy setting affects the narrative of the dream ballet and the resolution of the primary diegesis.

<sup>67</sup> James Walters, *Alternative Worlds in Hollywood Cinema* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008).

<sup>68</sup> Steve Bruhm, 'Gothic *Oklahoma!*: The Dream Ballet', *English Language Notes*, 48, 1, (2010), pp.101-109.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Dunne, *American Film Musical Themes and Forms*, pp.67-86, pp.107-125, pp.156-159.



Arlene Croce's comprehensive study of the Astaire-Rogers films *The Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers Book* (1972) includes a chapter on *Carefree*.<sup>70</sup> Croce highlights the anomalies in the dream ballet in comparison to all other Astaire-Rogers dance numbers. She states that the sequence 'is a short floating duet in a mock pastoral setting and a total surprise – not just because it's in slow motion but because so much of it takes place in the air.'<sup>71</sup> Croce explains that Astaire usually avoided lifts in dances yet the ballet contains many supported jumps for Rogers, a lift and a tandem leap, plus a long kiss – the first time Astaire and Rogers had kissed in their films to date.<sup>72</sup>

Peter Wollen in his study of *Singin' in the Rain* (1992) examines the development of dream ballets from stage to screen prior to a discussion of 'The Broadway Ballet'.<sup>73</sup> Wollen states:

The dream ballet became the favoured form for integrating numbers into stage musicals, both by relating them to the plot situation and psychology of the dreamer and, at the same time, moving out of the diegetic world of the drama into another and totally fantastic realm.<sup>74</sup>

Making a comparison to *The Red Shoes*, Wollen describes the 'Veil Dance' within 'The Broadway Ballet' thus 'Kelly [...] magically transforms stubborn technical ingenuity and immense physical effort into an ethereal dream.'<sup>75</sup>

While Genné acknowledges the difference between film ballets and dream ballets, she is not consistent in differentiating the two when discussing dream

<sup>70</sup> Arlene Croce, *The Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers Book* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Ltd, 1972, repr.1973).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p.146.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, pp.146-7.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Wollen, *Singin' in the Rain* (London: British Film Institute, 1992; repr.1997).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p.35.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p.43.

ballets; her preferred descriptor is 'film-dance ballet', or '*ballet d'action*'.<sup>76</sup> In fact out of the seven MGM dream ballets she analyses the only ballet that she identifies as a dream ballet, is the 'Will You Marry Me?' dream ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief*, and even in this case she does not refer to its title, preferring the terminology 'dance-drama dream sequence'.<sup>77</sup> However Genné's in-depth study is a culmination of years of primary research in dance, theatre and film archives from the perspective of the history of art, dance history and musicology. Her work focuses on close visual and musical readings of each film. Genné describes how 'sound and moving image (with both the dancer and the camera moving) were synergized to convey a story or reveal a character's state of mind'.<sup>78</sup> Her analysis of seven of the dream ballets within my corpus is one of very few texts that I have come across that demonstrates a detailed understanding of dance and choreography in film musicals. I will be discussing this further in my own analyses.

### **Interpretation of dance**

Adrienne L. McLean in *Dying Swans and Madmen: Ballet, the Body and Narrative Cinema* (2008), explores how the pairing of classical and contemporary dance styles plus high culture and popular culture led to new accessible presentations of dance on screen.<sup>79</sup> She focuses on the development and perceptions of ballet and ballet performers and argues that Hollywood and British films repeatedly used stereotypical tropes when presenting ballet on film. In a chapter titled 'If you can disregard the plot: *The*

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.219.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, pp.201-2. Genné analyses the following dream ballets in this chapter in addition to 'Will You Marry Me?' in *Yolanda and Thief*: 'Limehouse Blues' in *Ziegfeld Follies*, 'Mack the Black' in *The Pirate*, 'A Day in New York' in *On the Town*, 'The American in Paris Ballet' in *An American in Paris*, 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain* and the 'Girl Hunt Ballet' in *The Band Wagon*, pp.193-226.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p.193.

<sup>79</sup> Adrienne L. McLean, *Dying Swans and Madmen: Ballet, the Body and Narrative Cinema* (USA: Rutgers Press, 2008).

*Red Shoes* in an American context', McLean argues for the significance and influence of *The Red Shoes* on the creation and development of dream ballets in Hollywood, and especially those produced at MGM by Gene Kelly and the Freed Unit.<sup>80</sup> She also attributes the popularity of classical ballet and dream ballets in the UK and America in theatre and on film, partially to the widespread influence of *The Red Shoes*.<sup>81</sup> McLean's essay 'Flirting with Terpsichore: Dance, Class and Entertainment in 1930s Musicals' (2010), provides useful background context detailing the growth in popularity of ballet, tap and ballroom in America as a direct result of the commercial success of 1930s musicals.<sup>82</sup>

Mark Franko in *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s* (2002) argues that there is a direct relationship between theatrical dancing and labour movements during that period in America, particularly in relation to social class.<sup>83</sup> Franko examines how different dance styles influenced the broader development of the art form at a formative time for the development of dance in America. In 'The Ballet-versus-Modern Wars as Ideology' chapter Franko argues that the opposition set up between classical ballet and modern dance was an ideological conflict 'between capital and labor embodied by the chorus girl's opposition to the radical modern dancer.'<sup>84</sup> Artists such as Gene Kelly were aware of this perceived tension between classical ballet and modern dance, which according to Franko associated genre with class. Franko argues that particular tropes in dance are signifiers for audiences that relate to class. He states:

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, pp.133-171.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Adrienne L. McLean, 'Flirting with Terpsichore: Dance, Class and Entertainment in 1930s Musicals' in Cohan ed., *The Sound of Musicals*, pp.67-81.

<sup>83</sup> Mark Franko, *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p.15.

Since neither ballet nor modern [dance] were situated unequivocally as 'high' or 'low', any historically informed comparison between them raises issues of class in relation to performance. Ballet maintained its 'high' status by appearing to be 'low' (popular), and radical modern dance was perceived as 'high' by deprecating the commodifications of popular culture in favor of the working-class audience.<sup>85</sup>

Franko's genre and class-based approach emphasises the ideological differences between classical and modern styles, although they may not have been consciously evident to audiences at the time.

Judith Lynne Hanna in *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire* (1988) critically appraises dance as a sexual art form detailing the inherent gender differences between men and women dancers and the expression of their roles and sexual identities.<sup>86</sup> Hanna argues that dance challenges or confirms social and cultural constructions of gender, and that ethnic dance, classical ballet and modern dance influence the presentation of gendered sex roles. Hanna's detailed exploration of the significance of movement metaphors and gestures to identify gender patterns in dance draws on semiotic and psychological theories and dance criticism. Hanna explains that 'the dancer (encoder) makes ideas and feelings known to another (decoder) by means of a code held in common.'<sup>87</sup> This gender stereotyping inherent in dance, particularly within classical ballet underpins my interpretation of gender roles and original choreographic intent within dream ballets. This is also relevant to the gender of the choreographers, as all of the dream ballet choreographers with three exceptions were male, as well as to the gender of the dream protagonists.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p.123.

<sup>86</sup> Judith Lynne Hanna, *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p.5.

In 'Movies in Disguise: Negotiating Censorship and Patriarchy Through the Dances of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' (1996), Sue Rickard argues for the ways in which their dances employed hidden codes and movement metaphors to avoid the strict PCA regulations forbidding any representation of sexual desire.<sup>88</sup> Rickard argues that it is the individual spectator rather than the filmmaker that determines the meaning of a film, thereby creating ambiguous texts.

### **Popular culture writing**

There are a number of non-academic texts that relate to individual film musicals and adaptations of Broadway productions that include dream ballets, as well as the work of individual stars, directors and producers. These include: Donald Knox's *The Magic Factory: How MGM Made An American in Paris* (1973), Hugh Fordin's comprehensive production study of the Arthur Freed Unit, *MGM's Greatest Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit* (1975), Hess & Dabholkar, *Singin' in the Rain: The Making of an American Masterpiece* (2009), and Fehr and Vogel *Lullabies of Hollywood: Movie Music and the Movie Musical 1915-1992* (1993).<sup>89</sup> Hess & Dabholkar's analysis of the making of *Singin' in the Rain* makes extensive reference to archive material, unpublished oral histories and assessments of film scholars. There is a chapter titled 'Gotta Dance' that includes a detailed description of the making of the ballet and the background to its inception.

<sup>88</sup> Sue Rickard, 'Movies in Disguise: Negotiating Censorship and Patriarchy Through the Dances of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' in Lawson-Peebles, ed., *Approaches to the American Musical*, pp.72-88.

<sup>89</sup> Donald Knox, *The Magic Factory: How MGM Made An American in Paris* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973); Hugh Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit* (New York: First Da Capo Press, 1975; repr. 1996); Earl J. Hess & Pratibha A. Dabholkar, *'Singin' in the Rain: The Making of an American Masterpiece* (USA: University Press of Kansas, 2009); Richard Fehr and Frederick G. Vogel, *Lullabies of Hollywood: Movie Music and the Movie Musical 1915-1992* (USA: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1993).

Donald Knox's collection of oral history interviews with members of the production team, including the stars and the director of *An American in Paris*, although recorded twenty years after the film's release, provides an in-depth overview of how the film was conceived through to its production, presentation and legacy, and includes a chapter on the ballet.<sup>90</sup> In Knox, with reference to the dream ballet Minnelli states that 'you can't have a story, because if it's a new story, that's bewildering. [...] If you retell the story we've been telling it becomes redundant. [...] It has to be something to do with emotions'.<sup>91</sup> Whilst this is a useful text there are some inconsistencies in comparison to original archive material, which are also reproduced in the BFI Film Classics publication on the film by Sue Harris (2015), though there is a dedicated chapter on the ballet in the latter text.<sup>92</sup> I will expand on this in my own discussion of the dream ballet in Chapter Two.

Hugh Fordin's detailed examination of the career of Arthur Freed *MGM's Greatest Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit (1975)* references extensive background archive production material for every film he produced at MGM including those with dream ballets – *Ziegfeld Follies*, *Yolanda and the Thief*, *The Pirate*, *On the Town*, *An American in Paris*, *Singin' in the Rain* and *The Band Wagon*.<sup>93</sup> Fordin uses primary material from film archives across the USA and Europe, and interviews with individuals involved in the making of many of the films to examine the production process through to box office receipts. Materials include production notes, inter-office memos, letters, art department visuals, photographs, newspaper cuttings and reviews.

<sup>90</sup> Knox, pp.138-166.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, pp.138-9; 'An American in Paris' Ballet Complete, 9-6-50, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>92</sup> Sue Harris, *An American in Paris BFI Film Classics* (London: Palgrave, 2015), pp.86-102.

<sup>93</sup> Fordin, *MGM's Greatest Musicals*, pp.120-146, pp.162-172, pp.203-13, pp.256-270, pp.306-333, pp.347-362, pp.397-419.

Tim Carter's *Oklahoma!* (2007) is a detailed description of the production process for *Oklahoma!*, from its inception to the first Broadway presentation in 1943 through to its film adaptation in 1955.<sup>94</sup> The book includes reference to original Broadway archive material including the development of the dream ballet in a section titled 'The Dream Ballet' in the chapter 'Creative Processes.'<sup>95</sup> Carter argues that 'one of the striking features about Hammerstein's draft librettos is the extent to which he and Rodgers incorporated opportunities for dance, which from the start (if not surprisingly) seems to have been conceived as an essential part of the show.'<sup>96</sup> He continues that 'the place and design of the dream-ballet has proven more contentious.'<sup>97</sup> He identifies the inconsistencies in Agnes de Mille's later autobiographical accounts of the dream ballet's inception and development, in comparison to archive material he sourced from The Theatre Guild, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection and the Richard Rodgers Collection from the Library of Congress.

<sup>94</sup> Tim Carter, *Oklahoma! The Making of an American Musical* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.121-136.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.121.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 1

### Origins of the dance-led dream ballet: from Broadway to Hollywood

The year after *Oklahoma!* premiered on stage, twelve out of twenty-one musicals produced on Broadway included a ballet number; 'during the next three and a half years, forty-six included ballet, and twenty-one offered dream ballets, some of staggering ineptitude', according to Gerald Bordman.<sup>98</sup>

#### Introduction

In this chapter I explore the origins of dream ballets tracing their development from vaudeville through to Broadway and Hollywood musicals in chronological order. I will introduce the main figures that are important in the establishment and development of the dream ballet and I will examine why dream ballets were most prevalent in MGM and Twentieth Century Fox musicals during the period 1935-1956. I will discuss whether there were similar models of approach between studios in terms of the inclusion and production of dream ballets, how they changed over the twenty-one-year period, how changes in technology impacted on their production and what contributed to their demise. I will explore the potential narrative function and meanings of dream ballets and provide an analysis of the earliest film example, the 'Lucky Star Ballet' in *The Broadway Melody of 1936* and a minor case study of the second dream ballet 'Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo' in *Lili*.

#### Setting the context for Ballet in America

International ballet companies, including particularly French and Russian troupes toured America from the 1800s.<sup>99</sup> Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova was

<sup>98</sup> Gerald Bordman, *American Operetta* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), as quoted in Wollen, p.35.

<sup>99</sup> Homans, pp.450-451.



the first solo ballerina to tour internationally and became famous for her solo portrayal of *The Dying Swan*, performed *en pointe* and choreographed by Imperial Russian Ballet choreographer Michel Fokine in 1905, and this was first performed in New York in 1910 (figure 1.1).<sup>100</sup> Dream sequences within classical ballet have been a regular feature since the nineteenth century, usually focusing on a narrative of lovers dancing together in an extended *pas de deux*.<sup>101</sup> These include the complete second act of *Giselle* (premiered in 1841), originally choreographed by Jules Perrot and Jean Coralli, described as a ‘visual poem’ or ‘living dream’ by cultural historian and former dancer Jennifer Homans (2010); the ‘Ballet of the Shades’ in *La Bayadère* (premiered in 1877), originally choreographed by Marius Petipa; the final scene in *Swan Lake* (premiered in 1877), originally choreographed by Julius Reisinger; and the second act of *The Nutcracker* (premiered in 1892), originally choreographed by Marius Petipa.<sup>102</sup>

**Figure 1.1. Anna Pavlova as *The Dying Swan*<sup>103</sup>**

The European classical ballet style had been the predominant high cultural form of dance in Europe from the 1700s with major ballet companies in France, Italy, Denmark and Russia supported by the aristocracy, and from the early

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p.451. Pavlova performed the piece 4,000 times telling the story of a swan in the last moments of life. *The Dying Swan* was inspired by a poem by Alfred Tennyson, Russian Ballet History, <<http://www.russianballethistory.com/annapavlovathelegend.htm>> accessed 3 May 2016. The music for *The Dying Swan* was composed by Camille Saint-Saens as the 13<sup>th</sup> and penultimate movement of his *The Carnival of the Animals*, and was the only movement he allowed to be played in public during his lifetime, Classical.net, <<http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/saint-saens.php>> accessed 3 May 2016.

<sup>101</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>102</sup> Homans, p170; *Giselle* was made famous by Marius Petipa’s adaptation in 1884, Royal Opera House, <<https://www.roh.org.uk/productions/giselle-by-peter-wright>> accessed 4 March 2019, *La Bayadère*, Royal Opera House, <<https://www.roh.org.uk/productions/la-bayadere-by-natalia-makarova>> accessed 4 March 2019, *Swan Lake*, made famous by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov’s reworked version in 1895, *Thoughtco.com* <<https://www.thoughtco.com/history-of-tchaikovskys-swan-lake-724173>> accessed 4 March 2019, *The Nutcracker* <<https://www.nutcracker.com/about-us/history-of-nutcracker>> accessed 4 March 2019.

<sup>103</sup> Anna Pavlova, *The Dying Swan* (1905), National Portrait Gallery, <<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw251012/Anna-Pavlova-in-The-Dying-Swan>> accessed 6 August 2019.

1900s in the UK. Despite the influx of Russian and French ballet companies touring America, and in particular the various Ballet Russes companies, classical ballet did not become widely popular in America until after the Second World War when ballet became 'a prominent American art and an icon of high modernism'.<sup>104</sup> In 1909 Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russes company ushered in a new modern style of ballet in Europe. This new style was not steeped in the classical ballet tradition of choreographers such as Marius Petipa of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres. That style celebrated the female principal ballerina *en pointe*, usually costumed in a tutu, and the ballet's narrative reflected the court and class Imperial system.<sup>105</sup> This new style was a precursor to the 'avant-garde explosion of the early 1910s' in Russia when the 'dominant traditions of Russian Realism' embedded in social ideals were overturned by a new generation of younger artists striving to create new styles aligned to European art, literature, dance, fashion and film movements.<sup>106</sup>

Diaghilev caused considerable controversy in Paris in 1913 amongst critics and audiences with the modern ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps* choreographed in an angular style by principal male dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, rejecting the flowing lines of traditional classical ballet (figure 1.2).<sup>107</sup> Igor Stravinsky wrote the accompanying discordant music score with folk-inspired heavy costuming and a modernist set by Nicholas Roerich.<sup>108</sup> The influence of the Ballet Russes extended beyond Europe to American dancers and choreographers such as

<sup>104</sup> Homans, pp.450-451.

<sup>105</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary; John E. Bowlt, Zelfira Tregulova and Nathalie Rosticher Giordano, eds. *Etonne-Moi: Sergei Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes* (Milan: Skira Europe Italy, 2009), p.15, p.21.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p.15.

<sup>107</sup> The first production took place in May 1913 at the new *Theatre des Champs-Elysees* in Paris in front of an invited audience, Philip Hensher, 'Rite of Passage', *The Guardian*, 13 April, 2013, Review, p.16.

<sup>108</sup> Alston Purvis, Peter Rand and Anna Winestein, eds. *The Ballets Russes and the Art of Design*, (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2009), p.24.

Martha Graham and Agnes de Mille, both of whom cited the company as a significant influence on their own work in the development of a modern style of contemporary American dance.<sup>109</sup> Following the death of Diaghilev in 1929, the Ballet Russes struggled to continue and competing companies were formed and toured internationally.

### Figure 1.2 Ballet Russes' *The Rite of Spring*<sup>110</sup>

#### Dance on Broadway pre 1927

Ballet or 'toe-dancing' (*en pointe*) had been a featured act within vaudeville in America and in the UK Music Hall, and subsequently was a regular feature in Broadway revues and musical comedy shows.<sup>111</sup> The increasing popularity of vaudeville with audiences across America overlapped with the birth of the Broadway musical comedy show that originated in New York.<sup>112</sup> Many performers from vaudeville such as Fred and Adele Astaire also worked on the Broadway stage, and others transferred to Broadway and film following the demise of vaudeville, such as dancers Buddy and Vilma Ebsen, who appeared in *The Broadway Melody of 1936*.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Homans, pp.450-1.

<sup>110</sup> Unknown, scanned from Thomas F. Kelly, *First Nights: Five Musical Premieres* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). Originally published in London, 1913, in the magazine *The Sketch*. A posed group of dancers in the original production of Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*, showing costumes and backdrop by Nicholas Roerich. The dancers are (left to right) Julitska, Ramberg (Marie Rambert), Jejerska, Boni, Boniecka, Faithful, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Rite\\_of\\_Spring#/media/File:RiteofSpringDancers.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rite_of_Spring#/media/File:RiteofSpringDancers.jpg)> accessed 30 June 2019.

<sup>111</sup> Grant, pp.215-217; Vaudeville is credited with starting in America in the 1830s and comprised of a mix of performers delivering routines including dance, comedy, music, song, circus and specialty acts. In 1881 a less bawdy version of traditional vaudeville became popular with middle class audiences, thus expanding its appeal beyond the working class. Vaudeville finally died out in the early 1930s due to the burgeoning popularity of radio, film and other forms of entertainment. There were different classifications of touring circuits across the country and the Palace Theater in New York was the most prestigious venue, Robert W. Synder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, repr. 2000), p.xviii, p.12.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), p.223; Buddy Ebsen also featured in *Broadway Melody of 1938* (Roy del Ruth, MGM, 1937).

'Tom shows' inspired by Harriet Beecher Stowe's bestselling novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were a phenomenon from 1852 to the early 1900s.<sup>114</sup> The novel was adapted many times, mostly as a play but some adaptations also included songs, and whilst not a musical these did depend on the concept of a play with music. In 1860 theatre owner and producer Laura Keene produced a new 'musical burlesque extravaganza' *The Seven Sisters* (26 November 1860 -10 August 1861, 253 performances).<sup>115</sup> The bawdy and risqué show included singing actresses and dancers and was altered during its run to include new songs and elements in response to the political backdrop of the American Civil War.<sup>116</sup>

*The Black Crook* (12 September 1866 – 4 January 1868, 475 performances) with ballet choreography by Italian ballet master Davide Costa is identified by Mark N. Grant (2004) as the first blockbuster American musical comprising song and dance numbers.<sup>117</sup> Charles Dickens on viewing the show in New York described it as 'the most preposterous peg to hang ballets on that was ever seen.'<sup>118</sup> According to Grant, choreography for musicals 'evolved as a blending

<sup>114</sup> Stephen Forster, 'People & Events: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Takes the Nation by Storm', *The American Experience*, PBS, as quoted in <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom\\_show](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_show)> accessed 5 May 2016; Five versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were produced at the following theatres in New York between 1852-1907: Purdy's New National, National Theatre, Olympic Theatre, Academy of Music, Majestic Theatre, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-show/uncle-toms-cabin-10224>> accessed 24 March 2019. Producer George Aiken's adaptation ran for 325 performances from 8 August 1853 to 13 May 1854, Mark Steyn, *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight: Musicals Then and Now* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.3, as quoted in <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Broadway\\_shows\\_that\\_have\\_held\\_title\\_of\\_longest-running\\_show](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Broadway_shows_that_have_held_title_of_longest-running_show)> accessed 5 May 2016.

<sup>115</sup> *The Seven Sisters*, written by Robert Jones, music by Thomas Baker, <<http://www.ibdb.com/Production/View/424885>> accessed 5 May 2016.

<sup>116</sup> John Creahan, *The Life of Laura Keene* (USA: Rodgers Publishing Company, 1887), p.23 as quoted in <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Seven\\_Sisters\\_%28play%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Seven_Sisters_%28play%29)> accessed 5 May 2016.

<sup>117</sup> *The Black Crook*, written by Charles M. Barras, music by Thomas Baker, additional music by George Bicknell, lyrics by Theodore Kennick, 1866, <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=12518>> accessed 5 May 2016; Grant, p.216.

<sup>118</sup> Larry Stempel, *Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theater* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), p.45; Dickens viewed the show in 1866 and wrote his comments in a letter to a friend, <<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ajXwxJuYd5gC&pg=PA40&lpg=PA40&dq=Charles+Dickens+review+of+The+Black+Crook&source=bl&ots=yBjwuYMdoX&sig=3sB8v2Epsa9GBjGM9kRHj>>

of ballet steps and vaudeville hoofing – with a soupçon of modern dance.’<sup>119</sup>

The inclusion of a large ballet troupe in *The Black Crook* was due to a fire in the Academy of Music in New York and as the producers were paying for the imported French ballet troupe, they needed to feature them in another show to recoup their investment.<sup>120</sup> The show was so commercially successful that a sequel was produced the following year titled *The White Fawn*, also featuring ballet choreography by Costa. Agnes de Mille and her husband, dancer Warren Leonard, danced in the 1929 revival of *The Black Crook*.<sup>121</sup>

On Broadway Marilyn Miller was a protégée of producer Florenz Ziegfeld from 1918 and performed toe dances in shows including *Ziegfeld Follies of 1918* (18 June 1918, closing date and number of performances unknown), *Ziegfeld Follies of 1919* (16 June – 6 December 1919, 171 performances), and ‘The Butterfly Ballet’ in *Sally* (21 December 1920 – 22 April 1922, 561 performances).<sup>122</sup> Broadway producers viewed Miller as a ballet dancer as well as a singer and so ballet toe dances were inserted into shows in which she starred to highlight her artistic talent.<sup>123</sup> The inclusion of ballet sequences also signified the character’s upward mobility described by Lewis A. Erenberg (1981) as the ‘Cinderella Myth’.<sup>124</sup> The popular trope of the working class aspirational hooper dreaming of her name in lights above a Broadway theatre

J0FzQ4&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiSiojFhr7MAhUHVVRQKHVUCekQ6AEIJTAB#v=onepage&q&f=false> accessed 3 May 2016.

<sup>119</sup> Grant, p.217; See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>120</sup> Stempel, p.45.

<sup>121</sup> Grant, p.216.

<sup>122</sup> *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1918*, Revue, Book and Lyrics by Channing Pollock, Rennold Wolf and Gene Buck, Music by Louis A. Hirsch and Dave Stamper, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/ziegfeld-follies-of-1918-8313>> accessed 27 May 2019; *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1919*, Sketches by Gene Buck, Dave Stamper and Rennold Wolf, Music and Lyrics by Irving Berlin, Gene Buck, Joseph McCarthy, Dave Stamper, Harry Tierney and Rennold Wolf, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/ziegfeld-follies-of-1919-394721>> accessed 27 May 2019; ‘The Butterfly Ballet’ in *Sally*, Book by Guy Bolton, Music by Jerome Kern, ‘Butterfly Ballet’ music by Victor Herbert, Lyrics by Clifford Grey and B.G. DeSylva, Staged by Edward Royce, Produced by Florenz Ziegfeld Jr., <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/sally-9011/#opennightcredit>> accessed 27 May 2019.

<sup>123</sup> Ewen, p.145.

<sup>124</sup> Erenberg, p.223.

was featured regularly in Broadway musical comedies, and later in early Hollywood backstage musicals. Audiences understood that a character's rise from hooper to ballet performer represented stardom and success, achievement against the odds and the movement across class barriers.

Early Broadway shows from 1866–1927 were staged as revues, follies, European inspired operettas or musical comedies. A variety of dance styles were featured including ballet, tap or hoofing, ballroom, jazz and high-kicking chorus lines of young beautiful female dancers, as seen in *The George White Scandals* (1925-28) and *Ziegfeld Follies* (1907-43).<sup>125</sup> The vast majority of shows made no attempt to integrate dancing into the narratives of these operettas or musical comedies during the 1920s and 1930s, as dance was either intended as a showcase for star performers or as an interlude between scenes.<sup>126</sup>

### **The impact of the 'through narrative' music score & American popular song**

It was not until performers such as Fred and Adele Astaire, Ann Pennington (a Ziegfeld protégée) and Marilyn Miller in the late 1920s, that dance took on a new function expressing character within the musical comedy genre. However, this was reliant on the development of the 'through narrative' music score by composers and lyricists such as George and Ira Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II.<sup>127</sup> Their innovation was in creating music scores, rather than a series of unconnected songs,

<sup>125</sup> *George White Scandals 1925* (22 June – 14 November 1925, 169 performances), Book by William K. Wells, George White, Music by Ray Henderson, Lyrics by Lew Brown, B.G. DeSylva, Musical Staging Albertina Rasch, <<http://www.ibdb.com/show.php?id=10047>> accessed 29 December 2018. Albertina Rasch staged the dances for the Ziegfeld Follies of 1931 <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/ziegfeld-follies-of-1931-11389>> accessed 10 July 2019.

<sup>126</sup> Bruhm, p.102.

<sup>127</sup> Stempel, pp.216-222.

thereby creating a through narrative not interrupted by specialty acts, comedy set pieces or unrelated dance sequences.<sup>128</sup> For example the critical and commercial success of Hammerstein II's first attempt at musical integration in the Broadway operetta *Rose-Marie* (2 September 1924 – 16 January 1926, 557 performances) inspired him to work with Jerome Kern on adapting Edna Ferber's *Show Boat* into a musical.<sup>129</sup> The score for *Show Boat* (27 December 1927 – 4 May 1929, 572 performances), provided opportunities for song and dance performances related to each core character, as well as the ensemble cast. Following the composing of the book for the show, choreographer Sammy Lee had to build dances into the story performed by the appropriate characters rather than as separate sequences performed by different dancers.<sup>130</sup> On its initial release producer Ziegfeld billed the show as 'An All-American Musical Comedy'.<sup>131</sup> *Show Boat* was the first musical to introduce serious themes such as miscegenation and gambling, relating to individual lead characters and was therefore newly designated as musical theatre or musical play by critics of the era, rather than musical comedy. Both Kern and Hammerstein II were interested in creating a new style of musical entertainment with 'a melodramatic plot and a cast of players who were called upon to actually sing the music [...] not just talk through the lyrics and then go into a dance,' as stated by Hammerstein.<sup>132</sup> *Show Boat*'s musical influences ranged from nineteenth century minstrel shows and African American (Negro) spirituals to Tin Pan Alley and 1920s jazz.

<sup>128</sup> Grant pp.61-66.

<sup>129</sup> *Rose-Marie*, Book, Music and Lyrics by Otto Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein II, <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=9564>> accessed 29 December 2018.

<sup>130</sup> *Show Boat*, Book by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, Music by Jerome Kern, Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=10538>> accessed 29 December 2018; Mordden, *Broadway Babies*, p.132.

<sup>131</sup> Stempel, p.194, p.198; the show grossed approximately \$50,000 per week for almost two years in New York and was deemed by Robert Garland, a critic at the time, as an 'American Masterpiece.' Ewen, pp.174-5.

<sup>132</sup> Oscar Hammerstein as quoted in Stempel, p.193.

Adrienne L. McLean (2010) details the emergence and popularity of dance in America through the increase in dance teachers setting up their own dance schools in New York and Los Angeles, and the development of the critical dance press in the 1930s.<sup>133</sup> McLean attributes this shaping of popular opinion towards dance to the success of the Broadway musical comedy in the 1920s, the popularity of dance halls and ballroom dancing and the development of the Hollywood musical following the success of *Broadway Melody* (Harry Beaumont, MGM, 1929).<sup>134</sup> According to McLean, the 1920s marked the publication of the first dance periodicals in the USA and by 1930 'Los Angeles was being heralded as 'The New Mecca of the Dance World''.<sup>135</sup>

### **Conflict between high art and popular art in early Hollywood musicals**

The year 1927 was also that of the first film with sound, *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, Warner Brothers, 1927), featuring vaudeville and Broadway musical star performer Al Jolson. From 1929-31 Hollywood studios produced many musicals based on the Broadway backstage musical format including the first 'talking, singing, dancing' musical *The Broadway Melody*, with music by Nacio Herb Brown and lyrics by Arthur Freed, which won the Best Picture Academy Award.<sup>136</sup>

The development of dream ballets provided an opportunity to fuse high art (classical ballet) and popular art (folk, jazz, tap, ballroom, modern) to create a new form of American dance style and expression and bring a more contemporary and therefore populist style of dance to new audiences. The

<sup>133</sup> McLean, 'Flirting with Terpsichore: Dance, Class and Entertainment in 1930s Musicals' in Cohan ed. *The Sound of Musicals*, pp.67-69.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, pp.68-69.

<sup>136</sup> Billed by MGM as the first 'talking, singing, dancing dramatic sensation' in the advertising for the film, *The Broadway Melody* <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0019729/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0019729/?ref_=nv_sr_1?ref_=nv_sr_1)> accessed 26 May 2019.



terms 'high art' and 'popular art' or 'low art' were terms used by critics and academics to distinguish between different styles of dance, music, performance and art, creating binary oppositions between the European classical traditions of music, ballet and opera as high art and the American grassroots development of Tin Pan Alley songwriting, jazz, tap, modern dance and ballroom as popular art. The movement between high art and popular art is often related directly to class structures of high society and working-class culture, and between young people and older generations, though never described in dialogue as such. The political and social critic Dwight MacDonald writing in 1962, criticised musicals such as *Oklahoma!* as 'midcult' demonstrating a corruption of 'high culture' for 'middlebrow' American audiences, a style of 'folk-fakery' rather than 'Folk Art'.<sup>137</sup>

Mark Franko (2002) argues that genre boundaries between American classical ballet and modern dance were defined primarily by the two opposing figures of John Martin, the first dance critic of the *New York Times*, appointed in 1926, and champion of the modern dance movement, and wealthy patron of the arts Lincoln Kirstein promoting American classical ballet.<sup>138</sup> Franko states that Kirstein positioned classical ballet 'alongside the entertainment industry aesthetic' whilst dance critics such as Martin, positioned modern dance 'alongside the labor movement aesthetic.'<sup>139</sup> These binary oppositions related to perceived cultural value, associating high art with higher cultural value and status. Franko argues that the leading dance critics of the 1930s were attempting to legitimise modern dance and ballet as theatrical genres.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Dwight MacDonald, *Against the American Grain: Essays on the Effects of Mass Culture*, 1962; repr. New York: Da Capo Press, 1983), p.14, p.4, p.39, as quoted in Lawson-Peebles, ed., p.5.

<sup>138</sup> Franko, p.12.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, p.121.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p.107.

Kirstein's polemic favoured American ballet as opposed to the Russian ballet that was growing in popularity in the 1920s and 1930s. Despite this, Kirstein and his collaborators incorporated elements of American popular culture into choreography, costumes, music and staging in their new ballets in an attempt to generate mass appeal.<sup>141</sup>

These oppositions are visible in the European inspired operettas, first seen on Broadway before being adapted for the screen. One cycle of these starred Maurice Chevalier as a man of the people falling in love with Jeanette MacDonald as royalty, in a series of operettas made by MGM from 1929-1932. The same binaries were present in later films starring classically trained singer Deanna Durbin for Universal Pictures from 1936-1948, and the Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney films for MGM from 1939-1943.<sup>142</sup> For example in *Babes in Arms* (Busby Berkeley, MGM, 1939), swing music sung by Garland and Rooney contrasts with opera sung by an older couple.<sup>143</sup> Feuer (1982) states that the Hollywood musical celebrates the power of music; thereby the power of popular entertainment was explicit in the reflexive nature of song lyrics, and Hollywood became adept at celebrating popular American music.<sup>144</sup> Feuer quotes Henry Pleasants' definition of American popular music as 'a steady, swinging, propulsive beat, supporting a rhythmically free, more or less improvisational melody, the basic melodic material being the popular song.'<sup>145</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Stanley Green, *Hollywood Musicals: Year by Year*, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2nd edn, 1999); Deanna Durbin <[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002052/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_nm\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002052/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1)> accessed 26 May 2019, Mickey Rooney <[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001682/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001682/?ref_=nv_sr_1?ref_=nv_sr_1)> accessed 26 May 2019.

<sup>143</sup> Feuer, p.49.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, pp.49-50.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, p.53.

For popular artists to be associated with perceived high art lent status to their artistic practice. By importing aspects of European classical ballet and music styles into their work, American performers and musicians could boost their perceived credibility as artists amongst critics and audiences.

New immigrant and slave communities across America brought their own music and dance styles including African American (Negro) Spirituals, blues, jazz, and folk, such as Klezmer.<sup>146</sup> These styles fused with the American music and dance of Tin Pan Alley, vaudeville hoofing and modern dance, combined with an adaptation of the European classical style, to create a new distinctive American style of music and dance. New York in the 1920s epitomised 'The Jazz Age' with its roots in black culture.<sup>147</sup> This new style of improvisation in music with greater syncopation and a freer style of movement in dance, such as the 'shimmy' was enticing to white socialites in Prohibition era New York.<sup>148</sup> Black entertainers performed for white clientele in bars and clubs owned by white proprietors. 'The true negro conformed to a white vision [...] and represented joy in life unfettered by civilisation'.<sup>149</sup> These oppositions and the cultural appropriation of different styles of dance, choreography and music will be explored in more detail in Chapter Two.

### **Hollywood film musical adaptations of Broadway shows**

In *The Goldwyn Follies* (George Marshall, The Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1938) Balanchine choreographed a ballet sequence starring his then wife Vera Zorina, which incorporated classical ballet, show and modern dance in a

<sup>146</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>147</sup> Erenberg, p.251.

<sup>148</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>149</sup> Erenberg, p.255.

modern interpretation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>150</sup> This combination of dance styles produced in a commercial theatre style attempted to associate ballet with the popular entertainment of film, but it was not a dream ballet.<sup>151</sup>

Hollywood executives often purchased Broadway musical comedy and musical theatre properties that were considered flops at the time of production in order to mine shows for content, or just the title. Even with commercial hits of long-running shows, Hollywood producers sometimes preferred to mine content rather than attempt to adapt all elements of the show into a film. This included three Broadway shows featuring Astaire and the three related films in which he starred: *Funny Face* (22 November 1927 – 23 June 1928, 244 performances) and *Funny Face* (Stanley Donen, Paramount, 1957), *The Band Wagon* (3 June 1931 – 16 January 1932, 260 performances) and *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1953), and *Gay Divorce* (29 November 1932 – 1 July 1933, 248 performances) and *The Gay Divorcee* (Mark Sandrich, RKO, 1934).<sup>152</sup> By creating a new music score for the film adaptation of a show, the studios could potentially generate additional commercial returns if the music became popular with the public, through sheet music sales, radio exposure and later through

<sup>150</sup> *The Goldwyn Follies* was a revue highlighting the talents of vaudeville and Broadway stars including singers, dancers, comedians and a ventriloquist. The two lead characters in the film, the producer (Adolph Menjou) and an American girl (Helen Jepson) his hired arbiter of taste, watch the rehearsal performance of *Romeo and Juliet* in a theatre close to the sound stage, *The Goldwyn Follies*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0030194/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0030194/?ref_=nv_sr_1?ref_=nv_sr_1)> accessed 26 May 2019.

<sup>151</sup> Franko, p.111.

<sup>152</sup> *Funny Face*, Music by George Gershwin, Lyrics by Ira Gershwin, Nook by Fred Thompson and Paul Gerard Smith, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/funny-face-10498>> accessed 24 March 2019; the title and five of the songs from the stage show were used for the film in which the plot was entirely different, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0050419/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0050419/?ref_=nv_sr_1)> accessed 24 March 2019. *The Band Wagon*, Music by Arthur Schwartz, Lyrics by Howard Dietz, Book by George S. Kaufman and Howard Dietz, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-band-wagon-11380>> accessed 24 March 2019; the stage show was a musical revue with no plot, whereas the film of the same name was plot driven and did include six of the songs from the stage show, although some only as orchestral versions, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045537/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045537/?ref_=nv_sr_1)> accessed 24 March 2019. *Gay Divorce*, Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter, Book by Dwight Taylor <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/gay-divorce-11688/#opennightcredit>> accessed 24 March 2019; the film was an adaptation of the stage show that RKO changed to centre the plot around the female lead to be less risqué. Only one Cole Porter song was included in the film adaptation, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0025164/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0025164/?ref_=nv_sr_1)> accessed 24 March 2019.

record sales. Content and rights to titles were treated as currency and each studio bought considerable amounts of content that they could sell onto other studios at a commercial profit if they could not use it themselves. It was also common practice for Broadway and Hollywood producers and songwriters to recycle content, using popular songs repeatedly in numerous shows and films.

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II refused all attempts by Hollywood producers to buy their commercially successful Broadway shows at their peak. Their shows were only adapted for film once the financial returns were felt to be diminishing. Rodgers and Hammerstein set up their own production company to oversee the adaptation of these shows into Hollywood musicals. To take one example, from its premiere on Broadway in 1943, it was 12 years before *Oklahoma!* was seen on screen.<sup>153</sup>

In contrast MGM purchased *On the Town* (28 December 1944 – 2 February 1946, 462 performances) for \$250,000, with music score by Leonard Bernstein in the pre-production phase of the show, one of the first such pre-production agreements.<sup>154</sup> Whilst it was a risk to buy the rights at such a high cost in the pre-production phase, Louis B. Mayer was persuaded by his colleague Lillie Messinger to buy the rights before other studios in order to avoid a bidding war. This was based on the strength of her conversations with Leonard Bernstein and the talent of the writing and performing duo Betty Comden and Adolph

<sup>153</sup> This practice was part of a calculated set of adaptations and re-usage. Many shows took a long time to be adapted for the screen, whereas others happened quickly. Sometimes films were made before the usage rights expired. *Oklahoma!* (31 March 1943-29 May 1948, 2,122 performances), Book and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, Music by Richard Rodgers, Choreographed by Agnes de Mille, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/oklahoma-1285>> accessed 27 May 2019, *Oklahoma!* (Fred Zinnemann, Twentieth Century Fox, 1955), <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048445/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048445/?ref_=nv_sr_1?ref_=nv_sr_1)> accessed 27 May 2019.

<sup>154</sup> Fordin, pp. 257-8; *On the Town*, Book by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, Music by Leonard Bernstein and Lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/on-the-town-1614>> accessed 27 May 2019.

Green, in the summer of 1944.<sup>155</sup> Freed, with the support of Louis B. Mayer, commissioned a new score for the film *On the Town* as both men agreed that Bernstein's was too avant-garde in style and therefore not suitable for their target film audiences.<sup>156</sup> Freed was not contractually obliged to use Bernstein's score but the composer did have 'first refusal if new songs were going to be interpolated.'<sup>157</sup> Bernstein waived his right of interpolation on the agreement that MGM returned to him 'all their rights, title and interest to the song titles mentioned in the original 1945 purchase agreement,' which totalled 10 songs.<sup>158</sup> According to Hugh Fordin, Freed also felt that the book from the stage production could be a little offensive to film audiences due to its 'campy manner' and therefore needed rewriting, along with new songs.<sup>159</sup>

### **Technical innovations**

Fred Astaire was the first performer to insist on cameras filming his dance sequences in long shot to ensure that his whole body was visible. This revolutionary change in filming dance paved the way for artists such as Gene Kelly to develop a new style of choreography for the screen. Both artists, when working at MGM were given the freedom and resources to harness technological developments to develop their artistry on screen. This included the incorporation of animation into the choreography of dance sequences, such as Gene Kelly dancing with Jerry Mouse in *Anchors Aweigh* and Fred Astaire dancing with animated wings on his shoes in *The Barkleys of Broadway* (Charles Waters, MGM, 1949). Being at the forefront of technological

<sup>155</sup> Fordin, p.257. Louis B. Mayer and his production colleagues Eddie Mannix and Sam Katz saw the show soon after it opened but they did not like it and had no intention of adapting it for the screen at that time, *ibid*, p.258.

<sup>156</sup> Four songs were retained from the original show, 'I Feel Like I'm Not Out of Bed Yet', 'New York, New York', 'Miss Turnstiles Ballet' and 'Come Up to My Place', Fordin, p.259.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*.

development in relation to filming dance on screen was important to Kelly. This can be seen in many of his films including dancing with himself in the 'Alter-Ego' number, with the technical support of his MGM colleague Stanley Donen in *Cover Girl* (Charles Vidor, Columbia Pictures, 1944), choreographing for widescreen in the 'Dance of the Clansmen' in *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1954), and the triple focus on the three male leads in widescreen, dancing with tin can lids on their feet in *It's Always Fair Weather* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, MGM, 1955). Donen was also keen to pioneer new techniques in his first solo Director role and worked with art director Jack Martin Smith to create the barrel mechanics to enable Astaire to dance on the ceiling in *Royal Wedding* (Stanley Donen, MGM, 1951), though the idea for the number was originally Astaire's.<sup>160</sup>

The development of Technicolor enabled Minnelli to create stylised films using highly saturated colours, as can be seen in *The Pirate* and *Yolanda and the Thief*. However, both films were commercial and critical flops at the time of original presentation.<sup>161</sup> Stephen Harvey (1989) stated that 'where the press was concerned, its vaulting ambitions made *Yolanda* a film they wanted to embrace more enthusiastically than they actually did'.<sup>162</sup>

From the early silent era, some films included colour interludes using a variety of early technologies.<sup>163</sup> The dream ballet in *Carefree*, 'I Used to be Color-Blind'

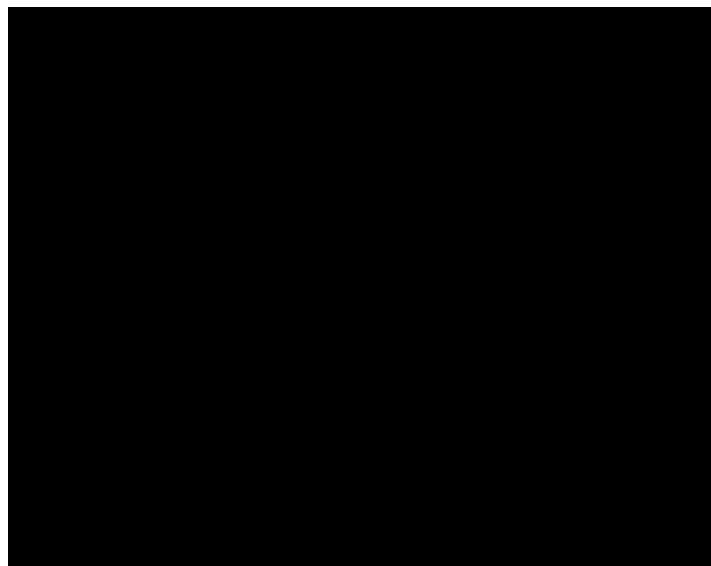
<sup>160</sup> 'I found a spot for my upside-down-on-the-ceiling-and-around-the-walls dance which I had planned for some time', according to Astaire in his autobiography, Fred Astaire, *Steps in Time* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1959, 3rd edition, 2000), p.299.

<sup>161</sup> *Yolanda and the Thief* cost \$2,443,322.31 and grossed in excess of \$1,791,000 on its initial release and showed a net loss of \$1,644,000 on the MGM Balance Sheet, Fordin, p.172; *The Pirate* cost £3,768,496, box office receipts were \$2,956,000, showing a net loss of \$2,290,000 in the studio's financial records, Fordin, p.212.

<sup>162</sup> Harvey, *Directed by Vincente Minnelli*, p.63.

<sup>163</sup> Technicolor dominated the market for colour films from the 1930s to 1950s. The company provided guidance on how to use the colours to serve the story development, and Natalie M. Kalmus, wife of original inventor Dr. Herbert T. Kalmus became 'Color Consultant' to films using Technicolor processes. 'The color consultants advised the productions on how to develop a color

was originally intended to be filmed in colour (figure 1.3).<sup>164</sup> 1929 was a landmark year for the use of Technicolor in musicals with four being shot entirely using the new technology.<sup>165</sup> However it was not until the mid 1940s that musicals were regularly produced in colour. This was largely earlier than its use in other film genres, and intended to enhance the visual experience for audiences, show off the studios' technical capabilities and the abilities of their musical stars. By introducing colour into particular scenes, studios could make them more spectacular and create more of a contrast between the musical number and the scenes with dialogue.<sup>166</sup> Crucially this also enabled studios to charge premium ticket prices on first release screenings.<sup>167</sup>



**Figure 1.3. 'I Used to be Color Blind' dream ballet, originally intended to be shot in colour, performed in slow motion in *Carefree***

score in accordance with the narrative structure of the film. Set and costume design, props, make-up, lighting including the camera work were all controlled by the Technicolor company. The dominant ideology of Technicolor advised a restrained use of colors with an emphasis on naturalness, strictly subordinate to the story development. Colors should subtly convey dramatic moods and impressions to the audience. Kalmus also suggested the use of conventional color associations, such as red for passion, anger, power etc', Timeline of Historical Film Colors, *Zauberklang*, <<https://zauberklang.ch/filmcolors/timeline-of-historical-film-colors/>> accessed 27 May 2019.

<sup>164</sup> Irving Berlin's lyric stated 'the red in your cheeks, the gold in your hair, the blue in your eyes' and was written for an intended colour section in the dream ballet, but the idea was dropped when colour tests turned out badly, Croce, p.150.

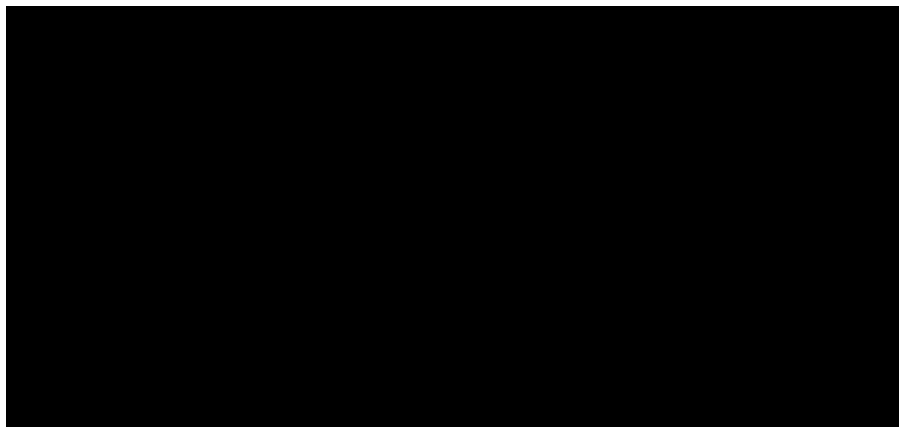
<sup>165</sup> Feuer, p.67.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p.67.

<sup>167</sup> Gomery, p.124.



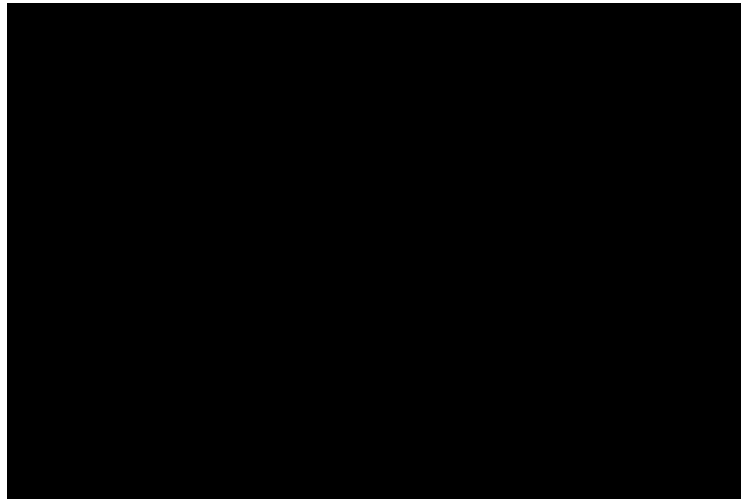
Other technological advances were used in musicals such as widescreen technology.<sup>168</sup> Not all cinemas were equipped with the technology to screen the films in their original form, so prints were struck to fit the size of the smaller screens (figures 1.4a and 1.4b) This cropping of action at the left and right extremes negatively affected the original intention of dance sequences, making some characters invisible to the audience. One example is the dream ballet in *Oklahoma!*, shot in the original Todd-AO Widescreen format.<sup>169</sup> In the cropped prints some of the townsfolk are not visible, and in the saloon scene less of the room is evident, including hanging light fittings, furniture, can-can dancers and cowboys.



**Figure 1.4a Widescreen image of *Oklahoma!***

<sup>168</sup> There were competing widescreen technologies so if a cinema chain installed technology to support one widescreen system it was not necessarily compatible with competing systems, viewing of *Oklahoma!* in original Todd-AO Widescreen format and introductory talk by writer Christopher Frayling, 'Widescreen Weekender', National Science + Media Museum, Bradford, 15 October 2015.

<sup>169</sup> Thomas Hauerlev, 'What is Todd-AO?', *In70mm.com*, 1 July 2008, *In70mm*, <[https://in70mm.com/newsletter/2002/67/what\\_is/index.htm](https://in70mm.com/newsletter/2002/67/what_is/index.htm)> accessed 6 August 2019.



**Figure 1.4b Cropped image of *Oklahoma!***

The following section concentrates on seven of the most influential choreographers working in American dance, on Broadway and in Hollywood in the early to mid twentieth century: Martha Graham, Agnes de Mille, Albertina Rasch, George Balanchine, Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly and Jerome Robbins, and the most prolific film director of dream ballets: Vincente Minnelli. The section also includes discussion of the two main studios producing dream ballets: MGM and Twentieth Century Fox.

### **Significant dance practitioners in America, on Broadway and in Hollywood**

#### **(i) Martha Graham – pioneer of Modern Dance**

In 1935 American theatre and dance impresario Lincoln Kirstein described Martha Graham as ‘a monument to the pioneer strength of the American Dance.’<sup>170</sup> He also described the new Modern Dance movement, or ‘free technique’ in America, of which Graham was one of the leading proponents, as ‘idiosyncratic, antitraditional, and – above all – against the ballet.’<sup>171</sup> Graham’s peers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman

<sup>170</sup> Kirstein, *Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing*, p.355.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, p.354.

were also leading proponents of what became known as modern dance.<sup>172</sup> After studying with St. Denis and Shawn in the 1910s and following work with Rouben Mamoulian in the theatre in the 1920s, Graham established the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance in New York in 1926.<sup>173</sup> Graham's signature style comprises repetitive explicit sexual and violent disjunctive movements and falls to the ground to express inner emotions, rather than the flowing style of classical ballet with movement emanating from the central core of the body.<sup>174</sup> This required a different style of dance training. Graham's choreography started with movement rather than character or ideas and inspired other dancers and choreographers, including her biographer Agnes de Mille. In a radio interview Graham stated that her dances 'must be recognised as American either through subject matter or through a tempo, rhythm, and attitude toward space which is peculiar to America and, while not so quickly recognised, is unlike any other country on earth'.<sup>175</sup>

Simultaneously American composers such as Aaron Copland were focusing on creating music inspired by the unique landscapes of America. Copland collaborated with Kirstein and choreographers Eugene Loring, Agnes de Mille and Martha Graham respectively on the development of one-act American ballets *Billy the Kid* (1939), *Rodeo* (1942) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944) (figure 1.5).<sup>176</sup>

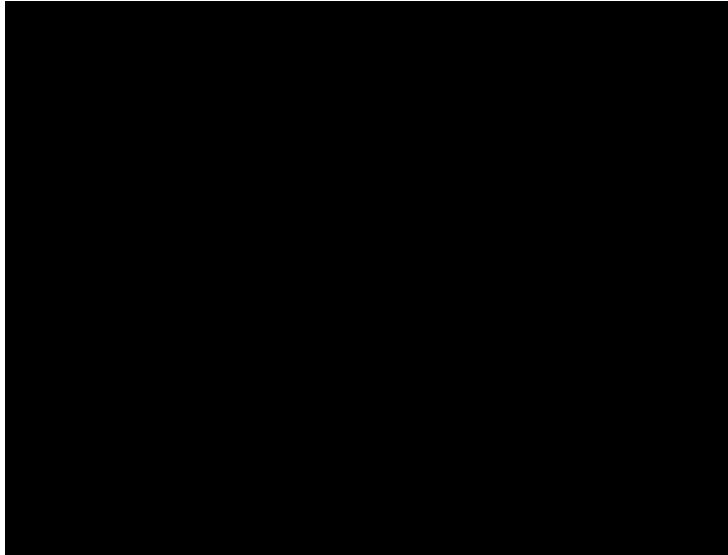
<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> The terminology Modern Dance and Contemporary Dance are often used interchangeably.

<sup>174</sup> Franko, pp.9-10.

<sup>175</sup> 'The Modern Dance: an interview with Martha Graham' transcribed from a KGW (The National Broadcasting Company) broadcast (date unknown) and reproduced in the souvenir booklet *Martha Graham and Dance Group*, Si-Lanchen Collection, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, *ibid* p.63.

<sup>176</sup> Homans, p.461. *Rodeo* was performed for the first time in London three months before the opening of Eugene Loring's *Billy the Kid* in New York, which included some gestures and dance movements similar to Agnes de Mille's choreography, Barker, p.136; *Rodeo*, Agnes de Mille *Dances*, <<http://www.agnesdemilledances.com/rodeo.html>> accessed 1 March 2019.



**Figure 1.5 Martha Graham, foreground in *Appalachian Spring* (1944), filmed for television in 1959<sup>177</sup>**

**(ii) Agnes de Mille – pioneer of character driven dance**

Agnes de Mille started training late for ballet (at the age of thirteen) and showed an aptitude for mime and comedy from an early age. Daniel Mark Epstein states that 'mime is the purest evidence of that kinetic memory which is essential to choreography as well as dance criticism.'<sup>178</sup> Despite years of working to develop her ballet technique with the ambition of becoming a prima ballerina, Agnes de Mille was forced to abandon classical ballet, as her skills and abilities were not suited to the art form.<sup>179</sup> She developed a new style of dance and choreography highlighting the importance of human connection with the land, linking earth and sky with movement and gestures emanating from character driven narrative.<sup>180</sup> Agnes de Mille's style was influenced by her fascination with 'Americana', folk dance, Hollywood westerns and the concept

<sup>177</sup> Martha Graham in *Appalachian Spring*, WQED Pittsburgh, 1959,

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmgaKGSxQVw>> accessed 1 March 2019.

<sup>178</sup> Daniel Mark Epstein, 'American Dryad: Agnes de Mille' in *Dance*, (2001), p.593.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid; Barbara Barker, 'Agnes de Mille, Liberated Expatriate, and the *American Suite* in *Dance Chronicle*, Vol 19, No. 2 (1996), pp.113-150.

of the frontier as defined by historian Frederick Jackson Turner.<sup>181</sup> She created female heroines with choreography inspired by the legend of the Pioneer American West through the single-point perspective of a woman.<sup>182</sup> Her Americana inspired style incorporated ballet, folk, jazz and her own interpretation of modern dance and this was highlighted in her *American Suite* which premiered in London in 1938.<sup>183</sup> The *American Suite*, including *Rodeo* demonstrated her idealism about her home country's wide open landscape and her passion for a new style of American modern dance inspired by Martha Graham, the Ballet Russes and other dancers and companies of the era (figure 1.6).<sup>184</sup> Barker claimed that Agnes de Mille's focus on an 'eclectic movement style', the development of a narrative and an 'American aesthetic' characterised the main body of her later work.<sup>185</sup> The mix of ballet, folk, jazz and modern dance coupled with a style of dance that revealed characters through signature gestures and movement motifs created a 'more complex dramatic terrain.'<sup>186</sup> John Martin writing in *The New York Times*, stated that Agnes de Mille had a 'rare and intuitive understanding of human beings which is at the heart and soul of her work.'<sup>187</sup> In her biography of Agnes de Mille, Carol Easton asserts that 'the importance of shaping gesture and expression to reveal character was conditioned by her exposure to the silent film acting of her adolescence'.<sup>188</sup> This statement ignores her early classical ballet training and

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p.118.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p124.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p.125.

<sup>184</sup> The *American Suite* programme included pieces titled *The Harvesting*, *Mountain White*, *Dust* and *Rodeo* with folk, cowboy songs or original music as musical accompaniment, *ibid*, pp.125-6.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, p.114.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p.116; Shelley C. Berg, 'Saving a Legacy: Agnes de Mille's *Goldrush*, *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer, 2001), p.70.

<sup>187</sup> John Martin, *The New York Times*, 4 March 1928 as quoted in Barker p117. According to Barker, 'over a period of fourteen years [...] she gradually developed the autobiographical no-nonsense frontier woman of one of her first solos, the *Forty-Niner*, into the Cowgirl heroine of *Rodeo*. In 1927, the original opportunistic pioneer [...], in 1938 she became the tossed, tormented rider of an unruly horse, and in 1942 met *Rodeo's* heroes, the Roper and the Wrangler' in 'Agnes de Mille, Liberated Expatriate, and the *American Suite*, 1938', p.118.

<sup>188</sup> Carol Easton, *No Intermittions: The Life of Agnes de Mille* (NY: Little Brown & Co., 1996), p.55 as quoted in Berg, p.69.

character studies. It is more likely that her representation of the American West was drawn from her youthful experiences in Hollywood, on set with her father and uncle, which arguably contributed to a form of 'Americana,' a stylised yet folksy representation of a disappearing era in America's history, that of pioneers conquering the Wild West.<sup>189</sup>

**Figure 1.6 Agnes de Mille in *Rodeo* for American Ballet Theatre, (1942)<sup>190</sup>**

In a 1931 article entitled 'The New Ballerina', Agnes de Mille compared the 'dazzling coquettes of nineteenth century ballet' to the 'severe, self-sacrificing modern dancers of the 1930s' explaining that modern dancers face new challenges of 'learning and unlearning techniques' and 'finding new ways of expression and movement.'<sup>191</sup> Agnes de Mille even parodied Graham's choreographic style and the nature of her company as radical and class-conscious citing 'their use of dance as a direct means of social propaganda' in the programme notes to her duet *Rehearsal: New York Dance Group*.<sup>192</sup> She also parodied what she perceived to be classical ballet choreographer Leonard Massine's high art pretensions of his symphonic ballets in her comic solo *The Rehearsal: Symphonic Ballet* (1938), in which she danced 'thirty-two *fouettés* on pointe, interspersed with knitting, and much heavy-handed soul-searching'.<sup>193</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Agnes de Mille's father was William de Mille, a playwright and director in theatre and silent films; her uncle was film director Cecil B. de Mille.

<sup>190</sup> 'No Intermissions: The Life of Agnes de Mille', *The Arts Desk*, 8 September 2009, <<https://theartsdesk.com/dance/no-intermissions-life-agnes-de-mille>> accessed 19 March 2019.

<sup>191</sup> Agnes de Mille, 'The New Ballerina' *Theatre Arts Monthly*, May 1931, pp.428-36 as quoted in Barker, p.118.

<sup>192</sup> Agnes de Mille programme notes for *American Suite*, 1938 as quoted in Barker, p.126.

<sup>193</sup> Barker, pp.128-9; See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

Feuer states that Agnes de Mille's style of choreography permeated musical comedy and choreography for film musicals.<sup>194</sup> Agnes de Mille continued to create dream ballets for Broadway musicals including the 'Civil War Ballet' in *Bloomer Girl* (7 October 1943 – 10 February 1945, 567 performances) and the 'Forty Minutes for Lunch Ballet' in *One Touch of Venus* (7 October 1943 – 10 February 1945, 567 performances).<sup>195</sup> In the 'Civil War Ballet', Agnes de Mille's choreography focused on women's anxiety and despair while waiting for their men to return home, in a musical with two main themes: women's rights and anti-slavery. Rodgers and Hammerstein continued to work with Agnes de Mille on *Carousel* (19 April 1945 – 24 May 1947, 890 performances), but their relationship ended following disappointing box office returns and the mixed critical response to *Allegro* (10 October 1947 – 10 July 1948, 315 performances).<sup>196</sup>

Choreographer Jerome Robbins stated in an interview in later life that 'dream ballets were not originated by Agnes but she changed them.... *Oklahoma!* did away with the chorus line and had real people there all the time in character.'<sup>197</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Feuer, p.8.

<sup>195</sup> *Bloomer Girl*, Book by Sig Herzig and Fred Saidy, Music by Harold Arlen, Lyrics by E.Y. Harburg, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/bloomer-girl-1583>> accessed 27 May 2019; *One Touch of Venus*, Book by S.J. Perelman and Ogden Nash, Music by Kurt Weill and Lyrics by Ogden Nash, Staged by Elia Kazan, <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=1341>> accessed 27 May 2019.

<sup>196</sup> *Carousel*, Book by Oscar Hammerstein II, Music by Richard Rodgers and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/carousel-1694/-opennightcredit>> accessed 20 September 2018; *Allegro*, Book by Oscar Hammerstein II, Music by Richard Rodgers and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/allegro-1787>> accessed 27 May 2019. *Allegro* was Rodgers & Hammerstein's most experimental show following the story of Dr Joseph Taylor, Jr. from birth through to adulthood. Their aim was to create a minimalist production with no conventional sets or props with cinematic transitions using projections. Despite this aim, the production required 40 stagehands, 60 mini-prop settings, 500 lighting cues, 39 actors, 22 dancers and 38 singers. It was the first time that Agnes de Mille had directed a show and she included several big ballets, but due to the scale and complexity of the show Rodgers and Hammerstein had to step in to assist with the dialogue scenes. Only Agnes de Mille received consistently good notices in the reviews, but the show divided the critics. *New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson said 'the lyric rapture of a music masterpiece', whilst Cecil Smith, *Los Angeles Times* reporter writing in *Theatre Arts* 'hated the book, music and lyrics', Ewen, pp.254-5; Grant, pp.264-5.

<sup>197</sup> Audio notes for a future interview with Jerome Robbins, TOFT, \*MGZTL 4-3100, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

Altman (1987) explains the significance of her new style of dance, arguing that it was both ritual and narrative as opposed to classical ballet that was mainly narrative but not ritual, and folk dance that was always ritual but not necessarily narrative.<sup>198</sup>

### **(iii) Albertina Rasch – choreographer and pioneer of dream ballets**

Born in Vienna to a Polish mother and Russian father, at the age of seven, Rasch enrolled at Vienna's Imperial Ballet and debuted as a teenager in *Coppelia*.<sup>199</sup> In 1909 she was spotted by a talent scout and was put under contract to New York City's Hippodrome becoming a headline performer by 1910. She arrived in Los Angeles in 1915 performing as a prima ballerina in opera, in vaudeville and concert tours before her first appearance on film in a 1916 short.<sup>200</sup> In 1923 she opened the Albertina Rasch Dance Studio, offering lessons in ballet and interpretive dance based on her European training. When demand for her trained dancers grew she offered 'her studio as a one-stop shop, providing music arrangements, choreography, and dancers for performances during the prologues at moving-picture theaters via the Exhibitors' Service Bureau.'<sup>201</sup> Rasch became known for her 'New World Ballet' style, later more commonly referred to as American Ballet.<sup>202</sup> This style was a fusion of European classical ballet tradition and 'movements and rhythms associated with modern American dance music, primarily jazz and syncopated popular music.'<sup>203</sup> She met her second husband composer Dimitri Tiomkin in 1925 when she was choreographing routines for the Keith-Orpheum circuit and

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Biography of Albertina Rasch, <<http://www.dimitritiomkin.com/biography/albertina-rasch/>> accessed 4 March 2019.

<sup>200</sup> I am unable to find any details or footage of the short film; *ibid*.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid. Between 1927-31 Rasch toured America with her 'Albertina Rasch American Ballet', Frank W.D. Ries, 'Albertina Rasch: The concert career and the concept of the American ballet', *Dance Chronicle*, 7:2, (1983), pp.162-3.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.



he joined her vaudeville act. From 1924-1947 she also worked on Broadway and by 1927 she had five shows on stage. During her time on Broadway she worked with George & Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Kurt Weill, Al Jolson, Danny Kaye and Fred & Adele Astaire.<sup>204</sup> In 1929 she wrote a piece for *The Dance Magazine* discussing her thoughts on a potential 'American Ballet'.<sup>205</sup> Her film career started in 1929 under contract with MGM with the *Hollywood Revue of 1929* (Charles Reisner, MGM, 1929), *Sally* (John Francis Dillon, First National Pictures, 1929), *Devil-May-Care* (Sidney Franklin, MGM, 1929) and for the first two years she directed dance routines that had no relation to the films' plots.<sup>206</sup> From 1933 she started to choreograph scenes that related to the films' narratives, including *Going Hollywood* (Raoul Walsh, MGM, 1933), *The Firefly* (Robert Z. Leonard, MGM, 1937), *Rosalie* (W.S. Van Dyke, MGM, 1937) and *Marie Antoinette* (W.S. Van Dyke, MGM, 1938), and (on loan to Columbia Pictures) *After the Dance* (Leo Bulgakov, Columbia Pictures, 1935) and *The King Steps Out* (Josef von Sternberg, Columbia Pictures, 1936). She worked with Tiomkin on a number of films including *The Great Waltz* (Julien Duvivier, MGM, 1938).<sup>207</sup>

<sup>204</sup> Albertina Rasch Broadway biography, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/albertina-rasch-15946>> accessed 4 March 2019.

<sup>205</sup> Ries, 'Albertina Rasch: The concert career and the concept of the American ballet', pp167-8.

<sup>206</sup> *Songbook* Blog post including clips of the Albertina Rasch Dancers in various early films, <<https://songbook1.wordpress.com/tx/albertina-rasch-dancers/>> accessed 4 March 2019.

<sup>207</sup> Albertina Rasch biography, *All Music*, <<https://www.allmusic.com/artist/albertina-rasch-mn0001009443>> accessed 4 March 2019; Rasch Broadway biography, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/albertina-rasch-15946>> accessed 10 July 2019; *Songbook* Blog post, <<https://songbook1.wordpress.com/tx/albertina-rasch-dancers/>> accessed 4 March 2019; *Going Hollywood*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0024067/fullcredits/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0024067/fullcredits/?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm)> accessed 4 March 2019, *The Firefly*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0028873/fullcredits/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0028873/fullcredits/?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm)> accessed 4 March 2019 *Rosalie*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0029499/fullcredits/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0029499/fullcredits/?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm)> accessed 4 March 2019, *Marie Antoinette*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0030418/fullcredits/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0030418/fullcredits/?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm)> accessed 4 March 2019, *After the Dance* <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0026044/fullcredits/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0026044/fullcredits/?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm)> accessed 4 March 2019, *The King Steps Out* <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0027847/fullcredits/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0027847/fullcredits/?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm)> accessed 4 March 2019, *The Great Waltz*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0030202/fullcredits/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0030202/fullcredits/?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm)> accessed 4 March 2019.

Rasch was an example of the new style of dance teacher in America in the 1930s. She was a choreographer of ballet or 'toe-dancing' for stage musicals (revues, operettas and musical comedies) on Broadway and for early Hollywood musicals, including the first dream ballet on stage and on film, and she established a Hollywood dance studio in 1929.<sup>208</sup> This studio provided dance training for dance professionals in 'modern forms of ballet, jazz rhythms, tap and acrobatic, physical culture, [and] interpretive dancing.'<sup>209</sup> She concentrated on her dance studio from the late 1930s and her work on Broadway until her retirement in 1946.

#### **(iv) George Balanchine – establishing American classical ballet**

One of America's most respected ballet choreographers, George Balanchine, originally trained as a ballet dancer in his home country of Russia. After defecting to Paris in 1924, Balanchine was recruited by Diaghilev as choreographer for the Ballet Russes. He soon became the ballet master and through Diaghilev, Balanchine gained the opportunity to work with an extraordinary group of talented musicians, artists and performers including Prokofiev, Ravel, Debussy, Picasso and Matisse.<sup>210</sup> In 1934 Kirstein spotted Balanchine's talent and persuaded him to move to New York to work with him and his colleagues to create a new form of contemporary American ballet.<sup>211</sup> For his work on Broadway Balanchine insisted on a choreographer credit rather than the standard 'Dances Staged By' credit for previous Broadway dance directors.<sup>212</sup> Balanchine stated 'the Ballet has spiritual and metaphysical

<sup>208</sup> McLean as quoted in Cohan, ed., *The Sound of Musicals*, pp.67-69.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> John E. Bowlt, Zelfira Tregulova and Nathalie Rosticher Giordano, eds., p.21.

<sup>211</sup> New York City Ballet <<http://www.nycballet.com/about/default.aspx>> accessed 3 May 2016.

<sup>212</sup> Broadway Dance Directors assembled steps into routines, worked with chorus lines of dancers or created more complicated production numbers with no connection to the narrative, Stempel, p.280.

elements, not merely physical ones'.<sup>213</sup> He choreographed two ballets with a self-contained story that related to the show's main narrative, though not dream ballets, in *On Your Toes* (11 April 1936 – 23 January 1937, 315 performances).<sup>214</sup> The first ballet, 'La Princesse Zenobia' was a parody of Fokine's ballet *Scheherazade* (1910), and the second ballet, 'Slaughter on Tenth Avenue' comically contrasted the high art pretensions of European dance styles (mainly classical ballet) with the populist American dance styles (mainly jazz dance and tap).<sup>215</sup> Unlike previous ballet sequences, 'Slaughter on Tenth Avenue' was positioned at the end of the show and helped to drive the plot narrative with the lead male character Phil Dolan Jr. continuing to tap to avoid being murdered by a gangster sat in the auditorium, and thereby extending the scene.<sup>216</sup> Balanchine continued to choreograph narrative based ballets for Broadway shows including 'Honeymoon Ballet' in *I Married an Angel* (11 May 1938 – 25 February 1939, 338 performances) and in film including 'The Ballet of Swan Lake' in *I Was an Adventuress* (Gregory Ratoff, Twentieth Century Fox, 1940).<sup>217</sup>

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, p.280.

<sup>214</sup> *On Your Toes*, Book by Richard Rodgers, George Abbott and Lorenz Hart, Music by Richard Rodgers, Lyrics by Lorenz Hart, <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=12114>> accessed 1 March 2019. 'Slaughter on Tenth Avenue' starred Ray Bolger. *On Your Toes*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0031756/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0031756/?ref_=nv_sr_1?ref_=nv_sr_1)>, accessed 7 April 2019. When Gene Kelly and Vera-Ellen performed in the 'Slaughter on Tenth Avenue' dance sequence in the Rodgers and Hart biopic *Words and Music* (Norman Taurog, MGM, 1948), choreographer Robert Alton created completely new choreography for the scene to suite Kelly's athletic jazz dance style, performed to the original music by Richard Rodgers, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaAilKkmjp3c>> accessed 4 March 2019.

<sup>215</sup> Stempel, p.281; these ballets were recreated by Balanchine in the film adaptation as seen in the 'Princess Zenobia Ballet' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FB24IiKrDXs>> access 20 September 2018, and the 'Slaughter on Tenth Avenue Ballet' in *On Your Toes* (Ray Enright, Warner Brothers, 1939), <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96z0DNZ\\_fBc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96z0DNZ_fBc)> accessed 20 September 2018.

<sup>216</sup> Stempel, p.279.

<sup>217</sup> *I Married An Angel*, Book by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Music by Richard Rodgers, Lyrics by Lorenz Hart, <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=12349>> accessed 20 September 2018; *I Was an Adventuress* in which Balanchine is the uncredited conductor, and his wife Vera Zorina and Lew Christensen dance in 'The ballet of Swan Lake' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YKKzrw90Fg>> accessed 27 May 2019. <[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0032620/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0032620/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1)> accessed 3 May 2016. This was a remake of an earlier 1938 French film: *I Was an Adventuress (J'étais une aventurière)*, dir. Raymond Bernard, Ciné-Alliance, <[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0142412/?ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_cnn](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0142412/?ref_=tt_trv_cnn)> accessed 3 May 2016.

Kirstein set up the company 'Ballet Caravan' with choreographer Eugene Loring in 1936 with a mixed repertoire of classic and character pieces working with three dancers trained in the School of American Ballet that he had established with Balanchine.<sup>218</sup> Working with these dancers Loring choreographed *Filling Station* in 1937 for Lew Christenson, *Billy the Kid* in 1941 in which he performed himself and in the same year *Juke Box* for William Dollar.<sup>219</sup> These dances, rooted in the tradition of the classic form of ballet but incorporating the influences of modern dance, focused on exploring popular American culture and iconography. From 1946 Balanchine concentrated on establishing the ballet company that eventually became the New York City Ballet in 1948. As Artistic Director until his death in 1983 at 79, he was able to develop his own style of choreography, dance and American ballet repertoire blending classical ballet traditions with modern dance and moving away from narrative ballet.<sup>220</sup>

### **(v) Fred Astaire**

Astaire grew up in vaudeville as one half of a double act with his older sister Adele, starting out in 1905 when he was only six years old. Over the years their training included ballet, tap and syncopation including the use of arms and upper body, ballroom and specialty dances. As a young boy Astaire was a gifted toe dancer. Always in his sister's shadow, he created his own disciplined routine of rehearsals and began to choreograph for the duo as a teenager. They made their Broadway debut in 1917 and by the 1920s, shows were being written especially for them. Their first major collaboration with George & Ira

<sup>218</sup> New York City Ballet chronology, <<http://www.nycballet.com/about/default.aspx>> accessed 1 March 2019.

<sup>219</sup> Franko, pp.119-121.

<sup>220</sup> New York City Ballet, <<http://www.nycballet.com/about/default.aspx>> accessed 20 September 2018; Balanchine choreographed 465 works in his lifetime, New York City Ballet, <<https://www.nycballet.com/Explore/Our-History/George-Balanchine.aspx>> accessed 27 May 2019.

Gershwin *Lady, Be Good!* (1 December 1924 – 12 September 1925, 330 performances) was described by Gershwin's biographer Howard Pollack as 'the work that finally severed musical comedy from operetta.'<sup>221</sup> From 1917-32 the Astaires appeared in ten musicals on Broadway including *Funny Face* (22 November 1927 – 23 June 1928, 244 performances).<sup>222</sup> During that time they also had major success in London, firstly with *Stop Flirting!* (Opening date: 30 May 1923, 418 performances) and transfers of *Lady, Be Good!* (Opening date: 14 April 1926, 326 performances) and *Funny Face* (Opening date: 8 November 1928, 263 performances).<sup>223</sup> After their triumphant run in *The Band Wagon* on Broadway Adele left to get married, leaving her brother to make a name for himself. His first and last show without Adele was *Gay Divorce* (29 November 1932 – 1 July 1933, 248 performances).<sup>224</sup> In 1933 newly married Fred Astaire moved to Hollywood to appear in his first film and the deal was that if successful, he would be signed for two more at a higher salary.<sup>225</sup> At the age of thirty-four this was the start of his enduring partnership with Rogers in nine films for RKO between 1933-1939 and a substantial career in film. In early 1934 Astaire had informed his agent Leland Heyward that he did not want to be part of another partnership, stating:

<sup>221</sup> Howard Pollack, *George Gershwin: His Life and Work* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 2006), p.331, as quoted in Kathleen Riley, *The Astaires* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.1.

<sup>222</sup> *Funny Face*, Book by Fred Thompson and Paul Gerard Smith, Music by George Gershwin and Lyrics by Ira Gershwin, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/funny-face-10498>> accessed 4 March 2019.

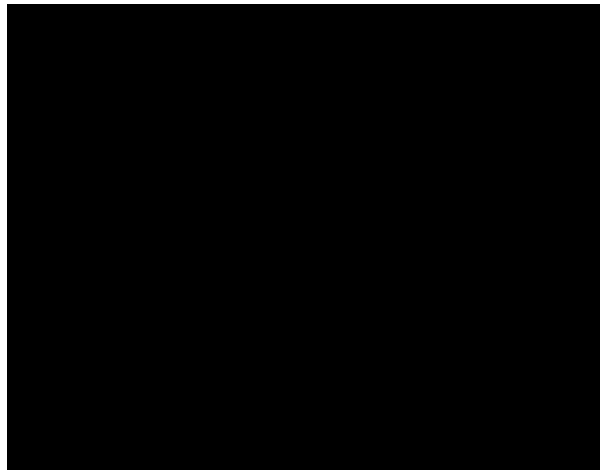
<sup>223</sup> *Stop Flirting!* (Daly/Lannin/Gershwin Brothers), <[http://www.guidetomusicaltheatre.com/london\\_shows\\_chronology/1923.htm](http://www.guidetomusicaltheatre.com/london_shows_chronology/1923.htm)> accessed 4 March 2019, *Lady, Be Good!*, <[http://www.guidetomusicaltheatre.com/shows\\_/ladybegood.htm](http://www.guidetomusicaltheatre.com/shows_/ladybegood.htm)> accessed 4 March 2019 and *Funny Face*, <[http://www.guidetomusicaltheatre.com/london\\_shows\\_chronology/1928.htm](http://www.guidetomusicaltheatre.com/london_shows_chronology/1928.htm)> accessed 4 March 2019, closing dates unknown.

<sup>224</sup> Riley, p.176. Astaire acquired the rights to *Gay Divorce* on RKO producer Pandro S. Berman's instruction. It was later adapted on film as *The Gay Divorcee* (Mark Sandrich, RKO, 1934), and became his second film collaboration with Ginger Rogers.

<sup>225</sup> Mueller, *Astaire Dancing*, pp.6-7.

I did not go into pictures to be teamed with her [Rogers] or anyone else, and if that is the program in mind for me, I will not stand for it. I don't mind doing another picture with her but as for this team idea it's out!<sup>226</sup>

However, Pandro S. Berman and the studio reminded Astaire via his agent that it was not his decision.<sup>227</sup> Astaire's unique dancing style was a fusion of tap, ballet, ballroom and jazz dance that evolved over his dancing career. He was greatly influenced by jazz syncopations and rhythms, the tap dancers of Harlem in the 1920s and the swing bands of the 1930s. Todd Decker (2011) makes the case that for Astaire it was popular syncopated music that made him dance as a 'fundamental creative impulse' that was responsible for his apparently spontaneous style on screen (figure 1.7).<sup>228</sup>



**Figure 1.7 Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in *Swing Time***

His understated way of interpreting a song made Astaire the popular choice for composers, such as Irving Berlin, Cole Porter and George & Ira Gershwin and he introduced more song standards from the 'Great American Songbook' than any other performer. Although he was not known publicly as a musician, he

<sup>226</sup> Letter typed in capitals from Fred Astaire to his agent Leland Hayward, 9 February 1934, Riley, pp.177-8.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid, p.178.

<sup>228</sup> Todd Decker, *Music Makes Me: Fred Astaire and Jazz* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), pp.6-7.

composed music and played instruments including the piano and drums, the latter featuring in a number of his films, including *Daddy Long Legs*. Astaire never returned to the stage and despite initially retiring in 1946 after his twentieth film, he came out of retirement to replace the injured Gene Kelly in *Easter Parade* (Charles Walters, MGM, 1948), following which he made a further nine musicals for MGM. At the age of 69 he finally retired from film musicals after the commercial and critical flop *Finian's Rainbow* (Francis Ford Coppola, Warner Brothers & Seven Arts, 1968). Astaire went on to produce and star in four television dance specials from 1958 and continued acting in film and television until the age of 80.

#### **(vi) Gene Kelly**

Kelly was a dancer, actor, singer, choreographer and director. He originally trained as a classical ballet dancer before taking on the running of the family dance school for children in his hometown of Pittsburgh, and the expansion of the family business with additional dance schools.<sup>229</sup> During this time he worked on incoming touring shows by 'doctoring' routines, changing the choreography when required and providing new choreography, often uncredited.<sup>230</sup> When Kelly moved to New York in 1938 it was primarily to become a choreographer on Broadway shows. Choreographer Robert Alton had cast Kelly as a dancer in his first Broadway show *Leave it to Me* (9 November 1938 – 15 July 1939).<sup>231</sup> In 1939 Kelly's breakthrough role was as a dancer and choreographer in *The Time of Your Life* (25 October 1939 – 6 April 1940, 185 performances; 23 September 1940 – 19 October 1940, 32

<sup>229</sup> Clive Hirschorn, *Gene Kelly* (London: W.H. Allen, 1974; repr.1984), pp.37-8.

<sup>230</sup> 'An Evening with Gene Kelly', in association with MGM Inc, BBCTV 1974, Paley Center, Los Angeles, accessed January 2014.

<sup>231</sup> *Leave it to Me!*, Book by Bella Spewack and Sam Spewack, Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/leave-it-to-me-12393>> accessed 28 July 2015.

performances) dancing to his own choreography.<sup>232</sup> Kelly then starred in *Pal Joey* (25 December 1940 – 29 November 1941, 374 performances), choreographed by Robert Alton.<sup>233</sup> It was during his time on Broadway that Kelly met his future collaborator Stanley Donen, who himself started out as a dancer on stage. During the run of *Pal Joey* Kelly was spotted by Hollywood producer David O. Selznick and signed to a contract in Hollywood. Selznick sold half of Kelly's contract to MGM for his first film *For Me and My Gal* (Busby Berkeley, MGM, 1942), and following the success of the film producer Arthur Freed bought out the other half of the contract so that Kelly joined MGM full-time.

The first dream ballet that Kelly choreographed on film was 'La Cumparsita' in *Anchors Aweigh* (1944) (figure 1.8). The Spanish themed sequence follows Kelly's sailor character Joe trying to woo Aunt Susie (Kathryn Grayson) through song and dance that takes place in an indoor film set on the studio lot. He daydreams that he is a Spanish matador wearing traditional flamenco costume and cape, dancing to impress a Spanish woman (Grayson) also wearing traditional costume, including a *mantilla* lace veil. Kelly dances in an authentic flamenco style with added athletic climbing and leaps, inspired by Douglas Fairbanks Senior.<sup>234</sup> Kelly was keen to create 'islands within the film' to show the breadth and variety of dance, including classical ballet style in the film narrative.<sup>235</sup>

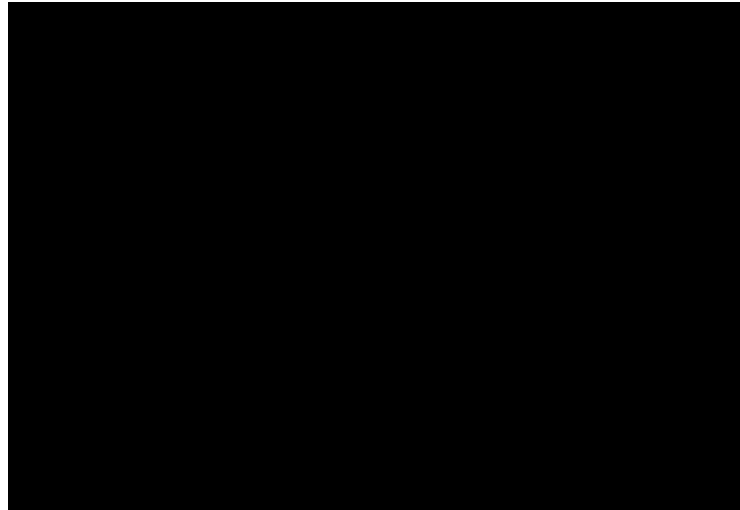
<sup>232</sup> *The Time of Your Life*, Written by William Saroyan, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-time-of-your-life-13201>> accessed 24 March 2019, 2<sup>nd</sup> run, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-time-of-your-life-1015>> accessed 24 March 2019.

<sup>233</sup> *Pal Joey*, Book by John O'Hara, Music by Richard Rodgers, Lyrics by Lorenz Hart, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/pal-joey-1046>> accessed 24 March 2019.

<sup>234</sup> Hirschorn, p.136.

<sup>235</sup> *Gene Kelly: Anatomy of a Dancer*, American Masters, PBS, (2002), Paley Center, New York, accessed July 2008.





**Figure 1.8 Gene Kelly in 'La Cumparsita' dream ballet in *Anchors Aweigh***

With his co-director Donen, Kelly made two films with dream ballets: 'A Day in New York' in *On the Town* and 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain*. Both the 'Miss Turnstiles Ballet' in *On the Town* and the 'Introduction to Lise Bouvier Ballet' in *An American in Paris* were used as a mechanism to introduce Kelly's love interests in the respective films. These two solo ballets have a different purpose to dream ballets. They are idealised visual projections of both women from the male perspective and establish the female stars' dancing prowess including classical ballet, and therefore their suitability as Kelly's love interest.

Richard Griffith in his introductory essay for New York's MOMA Gene Kelly film retrospective in 1962, highlighted Kelly's complementary goals in the making of his films: 'to build dances into the structure of the film as its central expressive essence' and 'to use dances to change the mood entirely, in counterpoint to the rest of the picture, as if a second self were emerging.'<sup>236</sup>

<sup>236</sup> Richard Griffith, *The Cinema of Gene Kelly* (New York: MOMA Art Film Library, 1962), MOMA Film Archives New York, accessed July 2008.

Kelly's appreciation of ballet was evident in his ballet film *Invitation to the Dance* (Gene Kelly, MGM, 1956) originally intended by Kelly and Freed as a follow up to *Singin' in the Rain* but not completed until 1955.<sup>237</sup> The film contains no dialogue and comprises of three separate dance sequences featuring French and Russian ballet dancers.<sup>238</sup> Kelly's last film for MGM, and his last major musical as the male lead, was *Les Girls* (George Cukor, Sol C. Siegel and MGM, 1957), choreographed by Jack Cole. He retired from musicals in 1967 but continued to choreograph and direct for stage, film and television until the early 1980s, though still acting and performing occasional dance numbers on screen up to 1980. He presented documentaries and introduced film musical compilations up to 1994 at the age of 82.

#### **(vii) Jerome Robbins**

Like his choreographer peers Jerome Robbins originally trained as a dancer in ballet, modern dance and the Broadway style. Prior to working on Broadway, he had performed in concert tours, at summer camps and with Ballet Theater, where he met and worked with George Balanchine and Agnes de Mille before performing and choreographing on Broadway. In 1949 he became Balanchine's Associate Assistant Director at New York City Ballet.<sup>239</sup> His first major success as a choreographer was a short ballet work for Ballet Theater titled *Fancy Free* (30 September – 9 November 1946, number of performances unknown), which was adapted to become the stage musical *On the Town* (28 December 1944 – 2 February 1946, 462 performances) in the same year.<sup>240</sup> Robbins

<sup>237</sup> Fordin, pp. 371-3.

<sup>238</sup> A fourth dance sequence was filmed, 'Dance Me a Song' but was edited out of the final film, Fordin, pp.371-396.

<sup>239</sup> Jerome Robbins, <<http://jeromerobbins.org/a-biography-in-brief/>> accessed 23 April 2019.

<sup>240</sup> *Fancy Free*, choreography by Jerome Robbins, music by Leonard Bernstein, was one of four works performed as part of a Ballet Theater showcase, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/ballet-theatre-1457>> accessed 23 April 2019; *On the Town*, Music by Leonard Bernstein, Book and Lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, based on an idea by Jerome

choreographed dream ballets in Broadway shows including the 'Mack Sennett Keystone Kops' ballet in *High Button Shoes* (9 October 1947 - 2 July 1949, 727 performances) and 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet in *The King and I* (29 March 1951 – 20 March 1954, 1246 performances). In 1945 an article in *Newsweek* stated, 'despite the fact that Robbins uses one of the now popular "dream ballets" to display Sono Osato [in *On the Town* on Broadway] at her most glamorous best, he says that 'someday I'm gonna do a dream ballet to end all dream ballets. I don't want to ever smell a dream ballet again.'<sup>241</sup> He continued to choreograph and often direct Broadway musicals including *Call Me Madam* (12 October 1950-3 May 1952, 644 performances), *The Pajama Game* (13 May 1954 – 24 November 1956, 1,063 performances), *Bells Are Ringing* (29 November 1956-7 March 1959, 924 performances) *West Side Story* (26 September 1957-27 June 1959, 732 performances) *Gypsy* (21 May 1959-25 March 1961, 702 performances) and *Fiddler on the Roof* (22 September 1964-2 July 1972, 3,242 performances). At the same time he choreographed for New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theater, festivals, theatre and television.<sup>242</sup> From 1969 until 1990 he was Ballet Master in Chief

Robbins, choreography by Jerome Robbins, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/on-the-town-1614>> accessed 23 April 2019.

<sup>241</sup> Jerome Robbins quoted in *Newsweek*, 8 January 1945 in relation to the opening of *On the Town* that he conceived and choreographed, Jerome Robbins Professional Papers, Series I: Theatrical Productions, 1944-2000 and n.d., *On the Town*, 1944-1995 and n.d., S\*MGZMD 130 Box 63 of 581, Folder 19, *On the Town* Production, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

<sup>242</sup> *Call Me Madam* (12 October 1950-3 May 1952, 644 performances), Music and Lyrics by Irving Berlin, Book by Russel Crouse and Howard Lindsay, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/call-me-madam-1871>>, accessed 26 May 2019; *The Pajama Game* (13 May 1954 – 24 November 1956, 1,063 performances), Music and Lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, Book by George Abbott and Richard Bissell, Directed by George Abbott and Jerome Robbins, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-pajama-game-2454>>, accessed 26 May 2019; *Bells Are Ringing* (29 November 1956-7 March 1959, 924 performances), Lyrics and Book by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, Music by Jule Styne, Directed by Jerome Robbins, Choreographed by Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/bells-are-ringing-2590>>, accessed 26 May 2019; *West Side Story* (26 September 1957-27 June 1959, 732 performances), Book by Arthur Laurents, Conceived by Jerome Robbins, Music by Leonard Bernstein, Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, Directed by Jerome Robbins, Choreographed by Peter Gennaro and Jerome Robbins, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/west-side-story-2639>>, accessed 26 May 2019; *Gypsy* (21 May 1959-25 March 1961, 702 performances), Book by Arthur Laurents, Based on the Memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee, Music by Jule Styne, Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, Directed and Choreographed by Jerome Robbins, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/gypsy-2743>>, accessed 26 May 2019; *Fiddler on the Roof* (22 September 1964-2 July 1972, 3,242

for New York City Ballet, and by his death at 79 in 1998 he had choreographed 54 works for the company.<sup>243</sup>

### **(viii) Vincente Minnelli – most prolific director of dream ballets**

Whilst not a dancer or choreographer, Minnelli started his career working as a costume and set designer in Chicago in the 1920s before moving to New York. In 1932 he was employed to work at the recently opened Radio City Music Hall as a set designer before eventually becoming the Stage Director.<sup>244</sup> From 1935 Minnelli worked on numerous revues and shows on Broadway including *At Home Abroad* (19 September 1935 – 7 March 1936, 198 performances), *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1936* (30 January – 9 May 1936, 115 performances) and *Very Warm for May* (17 November 1939 – 6 January 1940, 59 performances).<sup>245</sup> His interest in art and particularly the use of bold colours and surrealism was expressed in the stylised dream ballets and scenarios that he produced in revues at Radio City Music Hall and on Broadway, prior to moving to MGM in 1940.<sup>246</sup> Minnelli spent time working in Cedric Gibbons' art department in his first year at MGM. Harvey (1989) describes Minnelli's trademark style as 'a lush and daring use of color, the seamless fusion of music and camera movement, and a decorative scheme that mates the cast with inanimate objects in voluptuous counterpoint'.<sup>247</sup> His evocation of fantasy

performances), Book by Joseph Stein, Based on the Stories by Sholom Aleichem, Music by Jerry Bock, Lyrics by Sheldon Harnick, Directed and Choreographed by Jerome Robbins, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/fiddler-on-the-roof-3213>>, accessed 26 May 2019.

<sup>243</sup> Jerome Robbins biography, New York City Ballet, <<https://www.nycballet.com/Explore/Our-History/Jerome-Robbins.aspx>> accessed 26 May 2019.

<sup>244</sup> Joseph Andrew Casper, *Vincente Minnelli and the Film Musical* (New Jersey: A.S. Barnes and Co., Inc, 1977), pp.15-20.

<sup>245</sup> *At Home Abroad*, Book by Howard Dietz, Music by Arthur Schwartz and Lyrics by Howard Dietz, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/at-home-abroad-11985>> accessed 3 May 2016; *Ziegfeld Follies of 1936*, Book by David Freeman, Music by Vernon Duke, lyrics by Ira Gershwin, Ballets directed by George Balanchine, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/ziegfeld-follies-of-1936-13606>>; *Very Warm for May*, Book by Oscar Hammerstein II, Music by Jerome Kern, Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, Choreographed by Albertina Rasch, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/very-warm-for-may-12714>> accessed 27 May 2019.

<sup>246</sup> Casper, *Vincente Minnelli*, pp.15.20.

<sup>247</sup> Harvey, p.15.

worlds, the surreal nature of dream ballets and the disruptive force of style and excess could sometimes be in danger of overpowering or detracting from the performances, and these effects were not always popular with audiences.

Harvey argues that *The Pirate*'s 'critical reception focused on Minnelli's heady aestheticism, which to some viewers loomed large over the film's perceived weaknesses of script and score'.<sup>248</sup> Angela Dalle-Vacche argues that Minnelli's work 'points to the opposition that Hollywood locates between American masculinity and artistic creativity.'<sup>249</sup>

Minnelli was the most prolific director of dream ballet sequences whilst at MGM, directing the following: 'Limehouse Blues' in *Ziegfeld Follies*, 'Will You Marry Me?' in *Yolanda and The Thief*, both choreographed by Eugene Loring, and the spoof 'Girl Hunt Ballet' in *The Band Wagon* starring Astaire and choreographed by Michael Kidd. He also directed the 'Mack the Black Ballet' in *The Pirate*, choreographed by Robert Alton and Kelly and 'The American in Paris Ballet' in *An American in Paris* starring and choreographed by Kelly.

## **Significant Studios**

### **(i) Metro Goldwyn Mayer & the Arthur Freed Unit<sup>250</sup>**

Leo Rosten (1941) states that:

Each studio has a personality; each studio's product shows special emphases and values. And in the final analysis, the sum total of a studio's personality, the aggregate pattern of its choices and its tastes, may be traced to its producers. For it is the producers who establish the preferences, and the predispositions of the organization, and, therefore, of the movies which it turns out.<sup>251</sup>

<sup>248</sup> Ibid, p.90.

<sup>249</sup> Dalle-Vacche, p.63.

<sup>250</sup> 'The Freed Unit' is a term coined by critics and academics to reference the repertory team approach that Arthur Freed developed to produce musicals at MGM.

<sup>251</sup> Leo Rosten, *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, the Movie Makers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace,

MGM is regularly credited with mastering the integrated musical, particularly under the aegis of Freed and his team – ‘the Freed Unit’.<sup>252</sup> Schatz (1988) states that Freed produced the first ‘original ‘movie musical’’ that integrated musical numbers into the story without recourse to a backstage plot, thus bringing fantasy and narrative reality into a delicate balance.’<sup>253</sup> I will discuss integration in relation to dream ballets in Chapter Three.

Douglas Gomery (2005) also recognises that the use of the same in-house producers helped to create a consistent studio style.<sup>254</sup> MGM created a ‘house style’ through its use of colour, costume, set design and approach to music scoring and adaptation. Cohan (2005) argues that Freed’s Unit: ‘was the most organized as a bona fide quasi-independent unit with a dedicated labor force, drawing on the same people most consistently.’<sup>255</sup>

According to Schatz (1988), MGM produced over half the musicals made in Hollywood between 1946-55, of which Freed produced twenty-one (Joe Pasternak produced twenty-seven and Jack Cummings produced twelve).<sup>256</sup> Freed had started out as a theatre producer and lyricist with composer Nacio Herb Brown, before being recruited by Louis B. Mayer at MGM. He quickly became the studio’s top producer, after working on *The Wizard of Oz*, the Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland ‘putting on a show’ musicals, and his own

1941) as quoted in Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003), p.135; Cohan highlights the working practices at the studios and how they worked with stars,

‘once signed to a studio, these talents worked with production units that functioned more or less like stock repertory companies, giving each studio’s product its distinct ‘look’, with reference not only to a studio’s own house style but also the kind of musical it produced’, Cohan, ed., *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, p.7.

<sup>252</sup> Freed appointed former assistant director Bill Ryan to be the link between his operation and the production office on the lot, and this provided Freed’s Unit with autonomy, Fordin, pp.119-20.

<sup>253</sup> Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, p.371.

<sup>254</sup> Gomery, p.99.

<sup>255</sup> Cohan, *Incongruous Entertainment*, p.344.

<sup>256</sup> Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, p.447.

successful run of musicals between 1944-58. Composer Irving Berlin stated that Freed's 'greatest talent was to know talent, to recognize talent and to surround himself with it.'<sup>257</sup>

Freed was able to attract the best composers from Broadway to MGM, and he assembled an extraordinary in-house musical team led by Roger Edens, his longest lasting collaborator. Edens' influence extended beyond music, as he was also Freed's associate producer. Vocal Arranger Saul Chaplin described Edens thus: 'whatever taste Freed lacked, Roger Edens supplied.'<sup>258</sup> The music team responsible for the lush orchestral sound associated with MGM musicals, included Executive in Charge of Music, Johnny Green, Musical Directors Adolph Deutsch, Lennie Hayton, André Previn, Orchestrator Conrad Salinger, and Lela Simone, the unit's troubleshooter for anything related to sound and music.<sup>259</sup>

Turning now to Art Direction, Robert S. Sennett (1994) described Cedric Gibbons as 'one of the greatest geniuses of Hollywood'.<sup>260</sup> The 'unabashed opulence that became the hallmark' of MGM musicals was largely attributable to Gibbons, whose 'name appeared on virtually every American-made MGM film' as the studio's supervising art director from 1924-56.<sup>261</sup> Gibbons was a former designer in Hollywood's silent era working with Cecil B. de Mille and Samuel Goldwyn. He was responsible for supervising hundreds of staff at

<sup>257</sup> Ibid, p.448.

<sup>258</sup> Peter Hay, *MGM: When the Lion Roars* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1991), p.218.

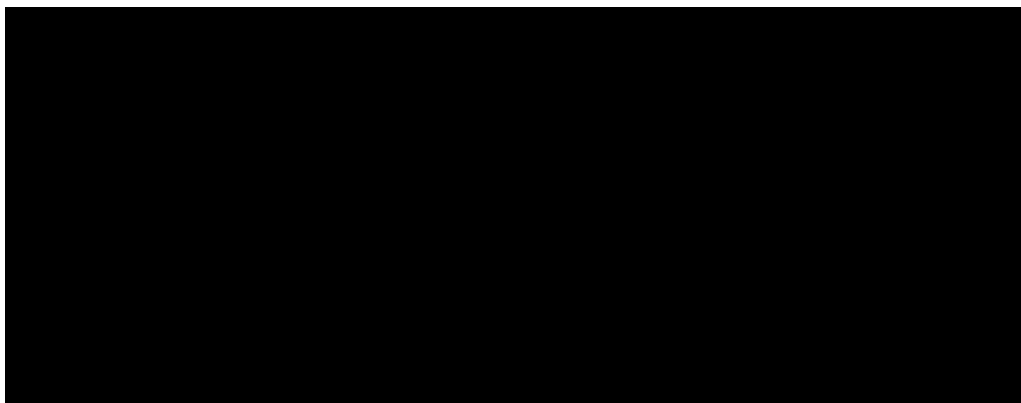
<sup>259</sup> Fordin, p.120; it was Simone who worked on the sound synchronisation in post production for Kelly's title song performance *Singin' in the Rain* to ensure the correct sounds of his splashes in the puddles, Helen Hanson, 'Looking for Lela Simone: Genres of Industry Discourse and Production Histories of Classical Hollywood' research seminar, University of Warwick, 21 November 2018.

<sup>260</sup> Robert S. Sennett, *Setting the Scene: The Great Hollywood Art Directors* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), p.70.

<sup>261</sup> Hay, p.187; MGM was contractually obliged to credit Cedric Gibbons on all MGM films released in the USA; Gibbons designed the Academy Award statuette and won eleven Academy Awards, Sennett, p.70.

MGM. He trained many designers including Preston Ames, Academy Award-winning Art Director and Production Designer on *An American in Paris* and *Gigi* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1958), and Jack Martin Smith, Art Director on *Yolanda and the Thief*, *Ziegfeld Follies*, and *The Pirate*. Smith later joined Twentieth Century Fox in 1954 and was Art Director for *Carousel* and won his third Academy Award for *Hello Dolly!* (Gene Kelly, Twentieth Century Fox, 1969).<sup>262</sup> Freed regularly worked with costume designers Irene Sharaff, Orry-Kelly and Walter Plunkett who jointly won Best Costume Design for *An American in Paris*.

Feuer argues that MGM Freed Unit musicals, and especially Minnelli's contained 'extremes of stylization in shows, but they also institutionalized a related practice – containing surrealistic décor and other excesses of style in dream sequences' (figures 1.19a and 1.19b).<sup>263</sup>



**Figures 1.9a and 1.9b** Extremes of stylisation: surrealism in the 'Will You Marry Me?' dream ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief* (1.9a) and the use of the colour red in the 'Mack the Black' dream ballet in *The Pirate* (1.9b)

<sup>262</sup> Ibid; Cedric Gibbons, <[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0316539/bio?ref\\_=nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0316539/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm)> accessed 2 March 2019, Preston Ames, <[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0024694/bio?ref\\_=nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0024694/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm)> accessed 2 March 2019, (Ames won Best Art Direction for *An American in Paris* alongside Cedric Gibbons, Edwin B. Willis, Keogh Gleason), Jack Martin Smith, <[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0005584/bio?ref\\_=nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0005584/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm)> accessed 2 March 2019.  
<sup>263</sup> Feuer, p.69.



## **(ii) Twentieth Century Fox**

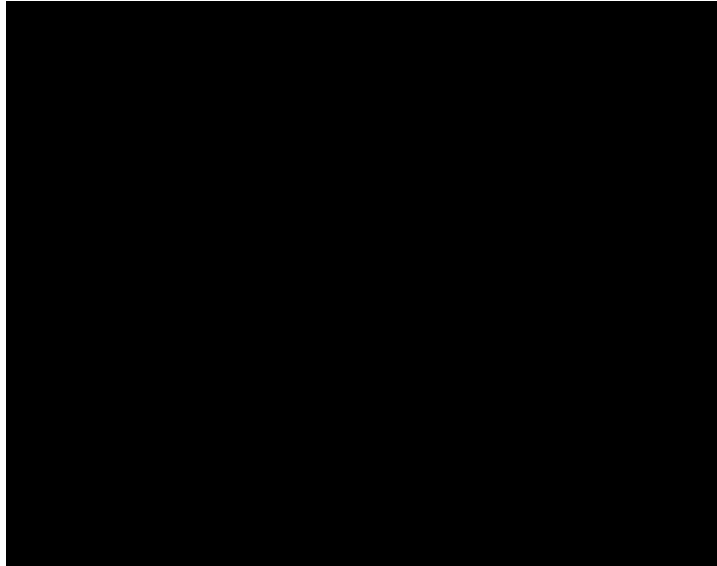
Dream ballets produced at Twentieth Century Fox were primarily within screen adaptations of Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway shows *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel* and *The King and I*.

The studio did not have a house style for its musicals, but it did employ new technologies to help to distinguish its films from other studios.

The mise-en-scène for the dream ballets in *Daddy Long Legs* evoked the MGM house style with its mix of elaborate settings, bold use of bright colours and hand-drawn sketches, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Three (figure 1.10). The Art Directors on the film were John DeCuir and Lyle Wheeler; the latter started his career working at MGM in 1931 with Cedric Gibbons, working his way up to assistant art director.<sup>264</sup> Both later worked together on *The King and I* and *Hello Dolly!*.

The Rodgers and Hammerstein film adaptations, with the exception of *The King and I* differ to the majority of MGM musicals in that they employ a mix of outdoor locations and more naturalistic settings and this will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>264</sup> *Daddy Long Legs*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0047969/fullcredits?ref\\_=ttco\\_sa\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0047969/fullcredits?ref_=ttco_sa_1)> accessed 4 March 2019, Lyle Wheeler, <[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0923907/bio?ref\\_=nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0923907/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm)> accessed 4 March 2019.



**Figure 1.10** Hand drawn style of the mise-en-scène in the 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' nightmare dream ballet in *Daddy Long Legs*<sup>265</sup>

The next section will address the function and purpose of dream ballets on stage and screen.

### **Narrative Function and Purpose of Dream Ballets**

Dance-led dream ballets became popular on Broadway in the 1930s.

Hollywood adopted the fashion for including dream ballets in prestige musicals featuring established dancing stars. The films that were adapted from stage productions with dream ballets often included the ballets too, though not necessarily using the same choreography or choreographer, but many excised them from the plot. One late example is the Broadway show *The Pajama Game* (13 May 1954 – 10 November 1956, 1063 performances), with the dream ballet choreographed by Roger Adams. Here the dream ballet was removed when the show was adapted for the screen.<sup>266</sup> This could have been for a number of reasons. The material might have been acquired for a non-dancing star or the

<sup>265</sup> Composite image, *The Blonde at the Film* blog, <<https://theblondeatthefilm.com/2013/11/15/daddy-long-legs-1955/>> accessed 4 March 2019.

<sup>266</sup> *The Pajama Game* (George Abbott, Stanley Donen, Warner Brothers, 1954).

cost of staging the ballet was deemed prohibitive. In the case of this particular adaptation, Warner Brothers did not have a track record in producing dream ballets and Co-Director Stanley Donen never produced another major dream ballet after his collaboration with Gene Kelly on *Singin' in the Rain*.<sup>267</sup>

The inclusion of dream ballets was often director or star-led, particularly at MGM where Vincente Minnelli and Gene Kelly favoured their inclusion in musicals. Dream ballets were often included to show off a star's classical ballet pedigree such as that of Leslie Caron in *Daddy Long Legs* and *The Glass Slipper* (Charles Walters, MGM, 1955). In the case of the Rodgers and Hammerstein film adaptations, the producers were attempting to recreate faithful adaptations and so included the dream ballets.

Dream ballets functioned in their narratives as manifestations of daydreams, nightmares, memories or even hallucinations of one of the main characters, usually the leading male or female. As stated in the Introduction, the dreams usually represent a moment in time when the lead character is faced with a potentially life-changing decision. This includes acknowledging the loss of love ('The American in Paris Ballet'), falling in love ('I Used to Be Color-Blind' ballet), fear of the consequences of making such a decision ('Laurey Makes up her Mind' ballet), or expressing sexual longing and physical desire ('Mack the Black' ballet). The dreaming character may also be using the dream as a way to explore what seems like an unreachable aspiration in the primary diegesis, for example Astaire's longing for the attention and love of Lucille Bremer's

<sup>267</sup> Donen's last dream ballet was the three minute 'If I had a Million Dollars' in *I Love Melvin* (Stanley Donen, MGM, 1953). It is a comic parody of the aspirational Hollywood starlet (Debbie Reynolds) dancing with male dancers dressed as stereotypical portrayals of Gene Kelly as Jerry Mulligan from *An American In Paris* and Fred Astaire in top hat and tails from *Top Hat*, wearing face masks, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5ekdwf82ws>>, accessed 9 July 2019.

unattainable woman in the 'Limehouse Blues' ballet. The dream ballets provide a safe and secure place, set apart from the world of the characters' ordinary consciousness and the quotidian world of the film. This allows the characters to work through, though not necessarily solve their problems, explore potential options, reflect on what they have been through, and understand the potential consequences of particular choices.

What all the dreaming lead characters have in common is a feeling of isolation, of being alone, unsure of what route to take and what decision to make. Even in 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain*, one of the most joyous and upbeat dream ballets in Hollywood film musicals, Kelly's aspirational performer has to struggle to make his way through vaudeville to Broadway on his own and is unable to win the love of Cyd Charisse's Vamp character. There is always a romantic and/or sexual dimension to the dream ballet as the lead character expresses romantic and/or physical/sexual yearning for a potential partner of the opposite sex. According to Feuer, all Hollywood musicals include heterogeneous levels within the multiple diegesis that become homogenised through the union of the romantic couple.<sup>268</sup>

The promotional literature for the MGM Invitational Hollywood premiere of *An American in Paris* in 1951 detailed that the ballet had taken six months to research and plan, six weeks of rehearsal and three weeks to film.<sup>269</sup>

Newspaper reviews from the 1950s use the terminology 'ballet' rather than 'dream ballet'. For example, the *Los Angeles Times* 10 November 1951

<sup>268</sup> Feuer, p.68.

<sup>269</sup> MGM Invitational Hollywood Premiere of *An American in Paris*, Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood, 9 November 1951, *An American in Paris* file, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

described 'The American in Paris Ballet' thus: 'this is in the fantasy realm in which the star excels'.<sup>270</sup>

The purpose of all dream ballets is to explore complex emotions and moods in a different space through the physical expression of dance and movement, creating an additional layer of interpretation for the viewer. Not every individual gesture or movement has a significant individual meaning, but a series of movements (phrases) and positions can evoke visual representations of different moods, feelings and emotions. Different dance styles can represent different moods. Classical ballet and ballroom dancing are romantic; jazz and Latin infused dance styles can be interpreted as sexually provocative; folk dance represents a feeling of community and connection to the land and its people. Tap demonstrates confidence and an upbeat, positive mood, whereas hoofing is more relaxed. All these layered meanings depend on the physical movements of the body and the accompanying music. Jazz and Latin infused dance tends to be danced to a faster beat with looser body movements. Tap is danced to a syncopated rhythm, whereas classical ballet and ballroom dancing is usually danced to a slower rhythm. The extended dream ballet format allows the choreographer to explore a broader range of dance styles than in dance sequences in the primary diegesis. This alternative space identified as a dream within the narrative signals to the audience a change in tempo and mood. In the stage musical and film adaptation *Brigadoon*, the fictional world of the town that appears every 200 years is 'real' to the diegetic characters, whereas the settings for dream ballets insist on the absence of a world accessible to the characters that are outside the dream world.<sup>271</sup>

<sup>270</sup> Newspaper cutting, *Los Angeles Times* 10 November 1951, *An American in Paris* production file, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

<sup>271</sup> *Brigadoon* (13 March-31 July 1948, 581 performances), *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1954).

Kelly described dream ballets as 'cine ballets'. In an interview published in *Dance* magazine in 1951 with reference to *An American in Paris* he stated:

I hope we have been successful in suggesting by means of the fluid camera, by means of mood-motivated movement and style, by means of movement and decors and score an impression of an integrated cine ballet or ballet created for the screen.<sup>272</sup>

Feuer argues that 'the musical's multiple levels of reality contrast the stage with the world, illusion with reality,' and that 'the dream world holds at bay the imaginative excess to which musicals are prone.'<sup>273</sup> Feuer asserts that 'there are only two places where we feel secure enough to see so vividly: in the theater and in dreams'.<sup>274</sup> Feuer's idea that dreams allow the dreamer to let their imagination take the lead, unhindered by logic and a sense of reality, is still valid. However her attempts to attribute two main functions to dream ballets, as either to 'emphasize the wish of the dreamer [...] or [to] represent a tentative working out of the problems of the primary narrative' is too narrow a definition, derived from a model of the function of dreams drawn from Freud. This definition does not sufficiently address the primary function of dance within the dream ballet. Dance is used as a way to physically explore and express internal and often repressed emotions and feelings through the creation of different moods, integrated with stylised mise-en-scène and the musical soundtrack.

So, is there a way to group dream ballets, by studio, director, star, and are there theoretical concepts that run across groupings? Are there any single

<sup>272</sup> 'Interview with Gene Kelly, *Dance*, August 1951, p.24, *An American in Paris* production file, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

<sup>273</sup> Feuer, p.68.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid*, p.68.

anomalies? Feuer argues that in wish fulfillment dream ballets 'the ballet foreshadows in symbolic form the eventual outcome of the plot' and that such a ballet is likely to occur earlier in the film; whereas dream ballets 'which recapitulate the plot retrace the narrative in symbolic form to its point of rupture' and that such problem solving dream ballets occur 'prior to the denouement of the film'.<sup>275</sup> I would argue that the wish fulfillment dream ballets are rather problem *posing* dreams, and particularly in relation to romantic love and sexual curiosity/fear. The dreamer is expressing their repressed emotions, which helps them to address deep-seated feelings that cannot be formally addressed in the primary narrative. This can be seen in Johnny's (Astaire) fear of being romantically entrapped by Yolanda (Bremer) in the 'Will You Marry Me?' ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief*, or Amanda's (Rogers) realisation that she is in love with her psychiatrist (Astaire) not her fiancé (Ralph Bellamy) in the 'I Used to be Color-Blind' ballet in *Carefree*, or Laurey's (Jones) sexual curiosity regarding Jud (Steiger), but romantic longing for Curly (MacRae) in the 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' ballet in *Oklahoma!*. I would also argue that problem posing dream ballets are actually dream ballets focused on romantic yearning as the solution to the problem in question is always played out in the primary diegesis, not in the dream. In the 'A Day in New York' ballet in *On the Town* Kelly's character Gabey expresses frustration, sadness and loneliness at the thought of not finding his true love, whereas in 'The American in Paris Ballet' in *An American in Paris*, Kelly's character Jerry is reconciling himself to the loss of his true love. Through both dream ballets Kelly's characters retrace their personal love stories including the joy of falling in love and the passion of being in love. Neither dream ballet attempts to solve a problem, but they both express Kelly's innermost romantic and sexual feelings. The lead character in the

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, pp.74-5.

eponymous *Lili* (Leslie Caron) is struggling to understand her feelings for the puppeteer Paul Berthalet (Mel Ferrer) and his feelings for her and so runs away from him. In the second dream ballet 'Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo', her romantic yearning for the man, rather than the puppets brings her feelings to the surface. In this dream ballet the puppets come to life and Lili dances with each one as they appear. The puppets eventually disappear to reveal Paul and he dances a romantic *pas de deux* with Lili. The dream enables Lili to understand that her affection for the puppets represents her romantic feelings towards Paul, and that his playful manipulation of the puppets whenever in Lili's presence is really a manifestation of his true romantic feelings towards her. On waking, Lili rushes back to Paul and they acknowledge their love for each other.

Altman (1987) argues that studios used the dream device to 'reserve their most flamboyant number for presentation as dream'.<sup>276</sup> Altman does not distinguish between dream ballets and dream sequences. He also charges musicals with trying to find new devices to locate dreams in more realistic settings through devices including hypnosis, escapism and reincarnation.<sup>277</sup> He attributes 'the use of art forms and dream sequences [to the] genre's tendency to blend the real and the ideal or imaginary.'<sup>278</sup> Altman suggests that the character who dreams in the musical 'shares with the spectator a fixed, limited reality, while the dream and the film both enjoy a freedom from the normal physical laws of time, space and causality.'<sup>279</sup> Feuer argues that the dream is a secondary realm 'more fantastic than a primary one' which is waking life.<sup>280</sup> This means that dreams can 'render ordinary events surrealistic' and so dreams are the

<sup>276</sup> Altman, p.62.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid, p.61.

<sup>280</sup> Feuer, p.69.



'logical choice of instrument upon which to play the secondary register in the musical film.'<sup>281</sup> Feuer states that the nature of the dream ballet is 'determined by the primary narrative realm'.<sup>282</sup> Dream ballets can only relate to the film in which they are situated, unlike song and dance numbers that could be interchangeable between some musicals, which was established practice.

In some dream ballets, particularly those choreographed by Kelly, but also in *Oklahoma!*, choreographed by Agnes de Mille, actors/singers were substituted for dancers in the dream ballets.<sup>283</sup> In *Oklahoma!* Agnes de Mille's choreography allows the viewer to follow without difficulty the transition between Jones as Laurey to Bambi Linn as Dream Laurey. In *On the Town* Kelly substituted dancers for the other four lead characters in the dream ballet, with no visual transition and this is discussed further in Chapter Three. This substitution can be related to the culture of substitution of talent in Hollywood musicals, especially involving singers. Substitute singers were not credited and were contracted to not divulge their involvement. Audiences were only loosely aware that uncredited singers produced some of the actors' singing voices they heard on screen. This culture of substitution of singers was finally parodied in *Singin' in the Rain* with Debbie Reynolds' character Kathy Seldon being forced to substitute for the singing voice of star Lina Lamont (Jean Hagen). In the *mise-en-abîme* structure of the film, this culture of substitution was hidden from audiences, for example when the uncredited Betty Noyes' singing voice was used in the scene where Kathy Seldon is dubbing Lina Lamont's singing voice in a sound studio for the track 'Would You?'. The studio felt that Debbie Reynolds' singing voice, which is otherwise used throughout the film, was not

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> In the 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' dream ballet in the original stage production of *Oklahoma!* the three leads were substituted for dancers and I will discuss this further in Chapter Two.

strong enough for this particular scene, as she could not hit the high notes.<sup>284</sup>

The substitution of dancers in dream ballets is more complex and clearly more apparent.

### **Early dream ballets on stage**

Bernard Taper, Balanchine's biographer states that 'Peter's Journey' from *Babes in Arms* (14 April 1937 – 18 December 1937, 289 performances) was 'the first dream ballet to be seen on Broadway.'<sup>285</sup> In the same year Charles Weidman's choreography for the 'American Couple' ballet sequence in *I'd Rather Be Right* (2 November 1937 – 9 July 1938, 290 performances) used modern dance to tell the story of a blissful marriage.<sup>286</sup> However, Ethan Mordden (2005) identifies 'The Beggar Waltz' in *The Band Wagon* five years earlier (3 June 1931 – 16 Jan 1932, 260 performances) and choreographed by Albertina Rasch in 1931 for Fred Astaire as 'the earliest Dream Ballet [...] in the musical's history'.<sup>287</sup> Later that year Albertina Rasch staged another dream ballet for *The Cat and the Fiddle* (15 October 1931 – 24 September 1932, 395 performances).<sup>288</sup>

<sup>284</sup> Murray Pomerance, ed., *American Cinema of the 1950s: Themes and Variations* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.70. In this film clip, Lost Voices has reinstated Debbie Reynolds' original vocal track for the song 'Would You?', <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMwtRfeQGig>> accessed 30 March 2019.

<sup>285</sup> Bernard Taper, *Balanchine: A Biography* (New York: Times Books, 1984), p.184, as quoted in Riley, *The Astaires*, p.141; *Babes in Arms*, Book by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Music by Richard Rodgers, Lyrics by Lorenz Hart, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/babes-in-arms-12218>> accessed 27 May 2019;

<sup>286</sup> *I'd Rather Be Right*, Book by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, Music by Richard Rodgers and Lyrics by Lorenz Hart, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/id-rather-be-right-12307>> accessed 27 May 2019; Ethan Mordden, *Broadway Babies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.133.

<sup>287</sup> Ethan Mordden, *Sing for Your Supper: The Broadway Musical in the 1930s* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.29 as quoted in Riley, p.141; *The Bank Wagon*, Book by George S. Kaufman and Howard Dietz, Music by Arthur Schwartz, Lyrics by Howard Dietz, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-bank-wagon-11380>> accessed 27 May 2019.

<sup>288</sup> Riley, p.225; *The Cat and the Fiddle*, Book by Otto Harbach and Jerome Kern, Music by Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach, Lyrics by Otto Harbach and Jerome Kern, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-cat-and-the-fiddle-11426/#opennightcredit>> accessed 17 May 2019.

**(i) 'The Beggar Waltz' in *The Band Wagon***

'The Beggar Waltz' in the original stage production *The Band Wagon* (1931-2) made use of a revolving stage, which was the central feature of the show's production design. Astaire plays the eponymous beggar, dressed in rags and first seen on the steps of the Vienna State Opera (figure 1.11). Classical ballet trained Tilly Losch plays the company's prima ballerina, who drops some coins into the beggar's hand on entering the stage door.<sup>289</sup> The beggar falls asleep and the stage revolves to reveal 'the sumptuous interior of the opera house and the lustrous substance of his dream.'<sup>290</sup> The beggar is now dressed in an expensive costume and is dancing with his idol, the prima ballerina to ballet music 'with its soaring crescendos dissolving into a lilting waltz.'<sup>291</sup> When the fantasy ends, the stage revolves back to the exterior of the opera house with the sleeping beggar. When he awakes, the ballerina appears from the stage door, she throws him her purse as she leaves and the beggar slumps back down on the steps.<sup>292</sup> In describing Astaire's performance, biographer of *The Astaires* Kathleen Riley states, 'as the eponymous beggar, his body adroitly and affectingly portrayed supplication, exclusion, and dejection; as the imagined premier danseur, it assumed impressive and jubilant command of the stage.'<sup>293</sup>

In 1935 'The Beggar Waltz', renamed 'The Beggar's Dream' appeared in a revue show titled *Stop Press!* in London, but Rasch received no credit as choreographer in the programme.<sup>294</sup>

<sup>289</sup> Danish performer Tilly Losch started her career at the Vienna State Opera Ballet and also studied modern dance, Riley, pp.134-5.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p.141. This show was one of the first on Broadway to use a revolving stage.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> *Stop Press!* <<http://www.overthefootlights.co.uk/London%20Revue%201935-1939.pdf>> accessed 4 March 2019, included selections from *The Band Wagon, As Thousands Cheer* (30 September 1933 – 8 September 1934, 400 performances), Book by Moss Hart, Music and Lyrics by Irving Berlin, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/as-thousands-cheer-11762>>

**Figure 1.11 Tilly Losch and Fred Astaire in 'The Beggar Waltz' in *The Band Wagon* (1931)<sup>295</sup>**

**(ii) *Pal Joey***

In 1940 choreographer Robert Alton choreographed all the dances including a dream ballet titled 'Joey Looks into the Future' for Kelly, including dances that he performed himself in *Pal Joey*. Dramatically this marked a change in direction for musical comedy with a more realistic, complex and cynical approach to storytelling. Kelly as Joey Evans is an anti-hero figure, using his charm – and promiscuity – to attempt to further his career. Unlike musical comedies of the time there was no positive resolution to the story, Joey ends up back where he started – on his own still hustling as a nightclub performer in seedy clubs. Critic Brooks Atkinson after watching the opening night performance wrote 'although it is expertly done, can you draw sweet water from a foul well?'<sup>296</sup> The film adaptation *Pal Joey* (George Sidney, 1957, Columbia) moved the location from Chicago to San Francisco and contained no dance sequences outside the cabaret nightclub settings and therefore no dream ballets. The adaptation changed the downbeat ending to a happy one with Joey (Frank Sinatra) relinquishing his womanising ways, rejecting rich widow Vera Simpson (Rita Hayworth), to commit to a monogamous relationship with chorus girl Linda English (Kim Novak). This development relates back to earlier in this chapter, whereby Hollywood changed properties after purchase, in this case focusing on a song-based musical rather than dance.

accessed 27 May 2019, and *Revenge with Music* (28 November 1934 – 27 April 1935, 158 performances), Book by Howard Dietz, Music by Arthur Schwartz, Lyrics by Howard Dietz <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/revenge-with-music-9389>> accessed 27 May 2019, *ibid*, p. 142.

<sup>295</sup> *Dance Fools Dance* Blog, <<https://dancefoolsdance.tumblr.com/>> accessed 27 May 2019.

<sup>296</sup> Stempel, p.286.

### **(iii) *Oklahoma!***

The year 1943 was a landmark for the creation of integrated dance within Broadway musical theatre. This was primarily due to the creation of character driven dance sequences and dream ballets with through narrative in *Oklahoma!* (1943 – 1948), choreographed by Agnes de Mille.<sup>297</sup> She had been commissioned by Rodgers and Hammerstein to choreograph the dances in the show on the strength of her choreography for her work *Rodeo*.<sup>298</sup> Agnes de Mille wrote to Theresa Helburn at the Theater Guild asking to be considered for the role of dance-director for *Green Grow the Lilacs* (book adapted as *Oklahoma!*) in 1942 stating:

I have made a very deep study of American folk material and have become something of a specialist in the field. [...] Lynn Riggs knows my work very well, and what I am capable of doing. [...] Please do not settle on anyone else before the 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>299</sup>

Many academics and critics acknowledge *Oklahoma!*'s combination of 'through narrative' in music and dance as the first truly integrated musical. John Ditsky challenges this hypothesis in his article "Stupid Sons of Fishes': Shared Values in John Steinbeck and The Musical Stage' referencing *Pal Joey* and *Show Boat* as the first musicals to integrate music and dance into the show's book, as I have detailed in this chapter.<sup>300</sup> Agnes de Mille's choreography fuses traditional folk ballet and frontier motifs with inspiration from the emerging American

<sup>297</sup> *Oklahoma!* was based on the play *Green Grow The Lilacs* written by part-Cherokee Lynn Riggs in 1931, <<http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/oklahoma-1285>> accessed 27 May 2019.

<sup>298</sup> Carter, pp.44-47.

<sup>299</sup> Extract of a letter dated 24 September 1942 written by Agnes de Mille to Theresa Helburn, one of the Board of Directors of the Theater Guild, Carter, *ibid*, p.45; Agnes de Mille also lobbied Lawrence Langner, founder of the Theater Guild in 1941 regarding her 'revue based on American folk material' who then suggested her to Richard Rodgers. Helburn, Rodgers and Hammerstein all attended Agnes de Mille's premiere of *Rodeo* on 16 October 1942, as quoted in *ibid*, pp.45-6.

<sup>300</sup> John Ditsky, "Stupid Sons of Fishes': Shared Values in John Steinbeck and The Musical Stage' as quoted in Stempel, p.286.

dance choreography of Martha Graham and the mime-ballets of Anthony Tudor, to create an American style of dance tailored to suit the new American music being written for Broadway.<sup>301</sup> Agnes de Mille stated in her first autobiography, *Dance to the Piper* that 'the line between dancing and acting is no longer clearly marked.'<sup>302</sup> I will discuss the dream ballet 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' in detail in Chapter Two.

In the next section I will analyse the first dream ballet on film, the 'Lucky Star Ballet' in *Broadway Melody of 1936*. The ballet is one of only three dream ballets in my corpus choreographed by a woman: Albertina Rasch, with a female dreamer: Eleanor Powell, therefore representing a female narrative from a female perspective.

### ***Broadway Melody of 1936***

Rasch's dream ballet for the black and white film *Broadway Melody of 1936* entitled 'Lucky Star Ballet' visualised Irene Foster's (Eleanor Powell in her first film) innermost thoughts and ambitions to become a star on Broadway.<sup>303</sup> Such was Rasch's status at the time, the screen credit was changed prior to release to state: 'Lucky Star Ballet Conceived and Directed by Albertina Rasch.'<sup>304</sup> Powell, known primarily as a tap dancer, though originally trained in classical ballet, is portrayed as a prima ballerina in her dream.<sup>305</sup> The sequence

<sup>301</sup> Feuer, p.8. Anthony Tudor was a choreographer and dancer who started his career with Ballet Rambert in London, where he performed with Agnes de Mille in the early 1930s, <<https://www.abt.org/people/antony-tudor/>> accessed 27 May 2019, Barker pp.121-3.

<sup>302</sup> Agnes de Mille, *Dance to the Piper* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1952), p.308.

<sup>303</sup> The score written by Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed features three songs that later feature in *Singin' in the Rain*, 'You Are My Lucky Star', 'Broadway Melody' and 'Broadway Rhythm'. All three songs had featured in previous MGM films.

<sup>304</sup> Frank W.R. Ries, Albertina Rasch: The Hollywood career', *Dance Chronicle*, 6:4, (1982), pp.312-313.

<sup>305</sup> Eleanor Powell started dancing professionally at twelve, performed with Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson in 1928 and started her career on Broadway in 1929. She became known for her unique style of tap dancing, 'machine-gun footwork' including hard and fast syncopated tap rhythms, fast spins and back bends. She was signed by MGM in 1935 to star in musicals and

positions classical ballet as a higher art form in comparison to tap or Broadway dance styles, and is thus symbolic of her aspirational rise to stardom. The dream ballet featured Powell dancing *en pointe* surrounded by the Albertina Rasch dancers also dancing *en pointe* and wearing traditional classical ballet costumes. It was the only dream ballet on film to feature primarily classical ballet. The setting features clouds, dry ice and glittering stars that one by one come to life as dancers in star-shaped tutus.<sup>306</sup> Overhead shots show formations of the dancers in constellations, the Milky Way and a star.<sup>307</sup> Foster's aspirational dream is also designed to make her more romantically worthy in the eyes of Robert Taylor's character, successful Broadway producer and childhood sweetheart Bob Gordon. The song 'You Are My Lucky Star' written by Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed is a recurring motif throughout the film used as diegetic and non-diegetic orchestral score.<sup>308</sup> See Appendix 4 for the plot summary.

The five-minute dream ballet takes place forty-four minutes into the 101-minute running time. Gordon is called by his assistant Basil (Nick Long Jr.) to meet with wealthy widow Lillian Brent (June Knight), halting a rehearsal, and leaving Foster sat in the auditorium on her own, just after she is reunited with Gordon. The camera pans into a close up and she speaks out loud 'I want to make good' and then starts singing 'In my imagination' which is the first line of 'You Are My Lucky Star'.<sup>309</sup> As she reaches the lyric 'you are my lucky star', a reverse shot shows Foster sitting in the auditorium facing the stage, then a

devised her own choreography, <[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0007224/?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_t2](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0007224/?ref_=tt_cl_t2)> accessed 30 March 2019.

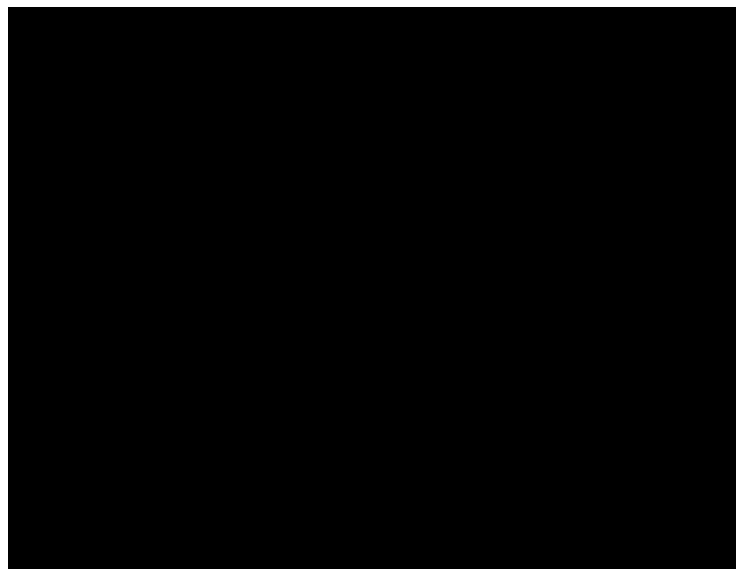
<sup>306</sup> Ries, Albertina Rasch: The Hollywood career', p.313.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> In one rendition when Foster is rehearsing for Gordon in disguise as LaBelle Arlette, Roger Edens, composer, arranger and MGM Associate Producer in the Arthur Freed Unit, performed as the uncredited piano player.

<sup>309</sup> Powell's singing voice was dubbed by Marjorie Lane, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0026144/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0026144/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast)> accessed 30 March 2019.

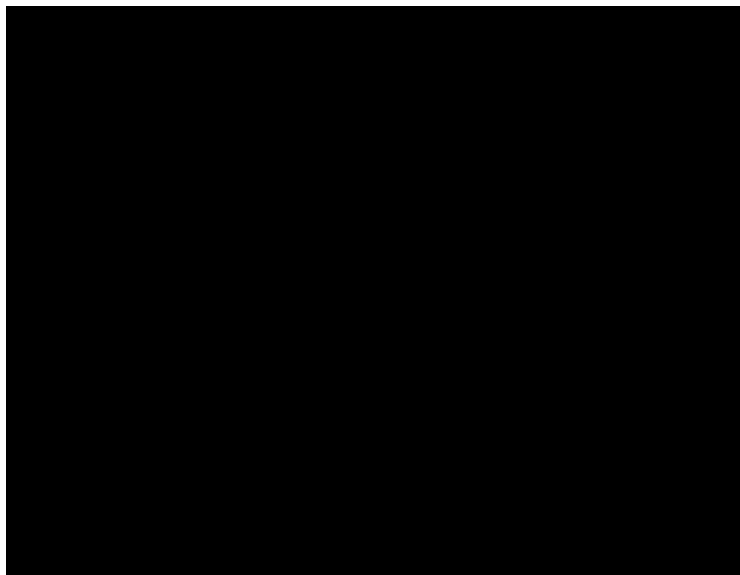
reverse shot shows her as a transparent apparition standing up from her seat. She continues to sing and make her way up the stairs and onto the stage. On the lyric 'I was star struck' a reverse shot shows the theatre filling up with an audience behind a full orchestra (another transparent apparition). Another reverse shot focuses on Foster singing and when she reaches the lyric 'you've opened heaven's portal / here on earth for this poor mortal', the scene fades to a long shot revealing a brightly lit stage with a mirrored floor. In the centre is Foster dressed in a white sparkling gown and headdress with silver sequins and heeled shoes. She is flanked by three men on either side dressed in white tie and tails and six women on either side dressed in long white gowns and trains with shiny white wigs standing like statues on stairways. The men sing 'You are My Lucky Star' to Foster as she smiles towards the audience. At the top of a small flight of stairs behind Foster is a large domed lit centerpiece with vertical lit pillar in front of a gleaming backdrop. The set design is reminiscent of the modernist sets in the Astaire and Rogers' RKO films.



**Figure 1.12 Eleanor Powell in a *Ziegfeld Follies* style pose in the 'Lucky Star Ballet' in *Broadway Melody of 1936***



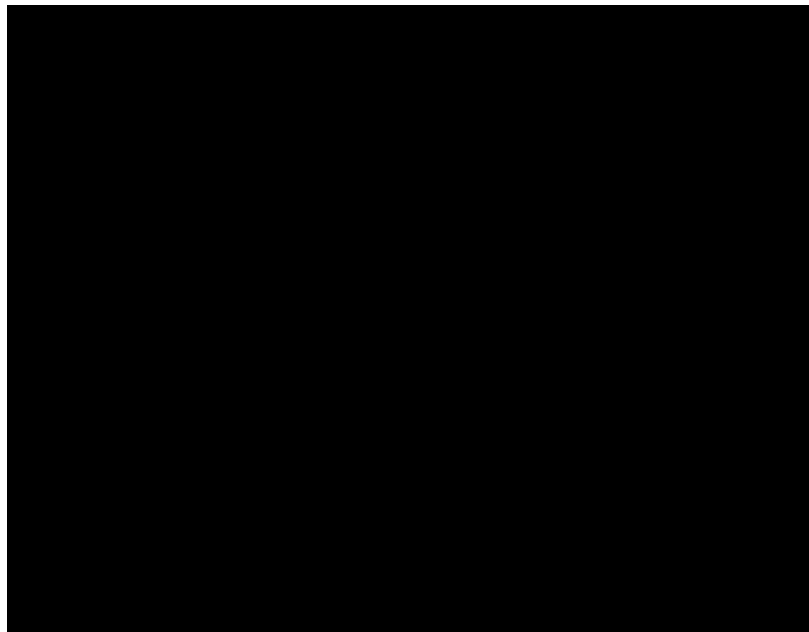
The camera cuts to a close up of Foster leaning into one man, smiling and turning before leaning towards another, whilst holding her skirt. This scene evokes the style of Florenz Ziegfeld shows with the leading lady presented to the audience and escorted down stairs by smartly dressed men singing to the star, flanked by statuesque women (figure 1.12). Foster walks towards the audience arm in arm with two men and escorted by the rest of the male singers. The camera cranes upwards and over the group as they walk out of shot. The camera then moves towards and over the backdrop, using the overhead crane style synonymous with Busby Berkeley. The overhead camera shot reveals twelve ballet dancers wearing long white sparkly tutus and short white wigs sat on the floor bent forwards in a circle, surrounded by another twelve ballet dancers wearing short white costumes with chiffon capes and point shoes dancing in a circle (figure 1.13).



**Figure 1.13 Overhead crane shot of the Albertina Rasch dancers in the 'Lucky Star Ballet'**

The outer dancers perform *arabesques* and *jetés* with *ports de bras* as the camera pans down to stage level framed by a tree with pearl flowers hanging

from the branches.<sup>310</sup> The inner twelve dancers rise from the floor and join the other dancers performing short circular runs in the style of a traditional *corps de ballet* before stopping to hold a position with left leg pointed to the side in second position and leaning over sideways. The dancers in the long tutus perform a more traditional form of classical ballet, whereas the dancers in shorter costumes are more fluid in style, more reminiscent of the Isadora Duncan style of dance.<sup>311</sup> Foster dances into frame as the dancers retreat out of frame (figure 1.14).



**Figure 1.14 Eleanor Powell dancing into the frame with the Albertina Rasch dancers in the second part of the 'Lucky Star Ballet'**

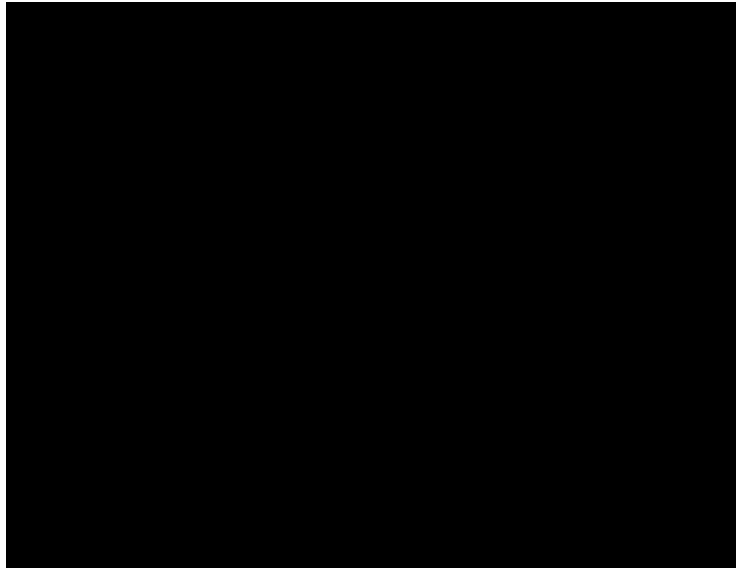
She performs a series of *arabesques*, *pirouettes*, *fouettés en face en l'air*, *tours en attitudes*, *grands battements* before conducting a series of *chaîné* turns with bent arms in a non-classical ballet style, before standing *en pointe*.<sup>312</sup> She

<sup>310</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>311</sup> Isadora Duncan's style of dancing was known for its 'free-spiritedness, coupled with the high ideals of Ancient Greece: beauty, philosophy and humanity', Lori Belilove and the Isadora Duncan Dance Company, <<https://isadoraduncan.org/foundation/isadora-duncan/>> accessed 27 May 2019.

<sup>312</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

moves towards a mirror pond and the camera pointing into the mirror films her in reverse and upside down looking into the pond. When she moves away the camera returns to a mid shot position as she continues to dance *arabesques* and *pirouettes* whilst moving backwards, still to the soundtrack of 'You are My Lucky Star'. She is joined by six of the dancers (in long tutus) and they all dance together *en pointe* with Powell continuing *en pointe* towards the mirrored pond. The camera pans down to show her feet in fifth position dancing *en pointe* and the rest of her body visible in the mirrored pond (figure 1.15).



**Figure 1.15 Eleanor Powell dancing mirrored in the pond in the 'Lucky Star Ballet'**

The camera pans back as Foster delivers a series of *soutenus en tournant*, followed by the rest of the dancers in two groups performing a series of *tours à la seconde* until they are out of frame.<sup>313</sup> As they leave the stage six of the other dancers run into frame performing *arabesques*, *glissades*, *pas de bourrées*, *effacés devants* and *tours en l'air*.<sup>314</sup> The camera pans to the right to reveal Foster standing holding her full skirt out with both hands. As the dancers

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

leave the stage, Foster dances a series of *grands battements en tournant* and ends with her performing her signature fast turns around the central tree as the rest of the dancers enter and dance around her.<sup>315</sup> She finishes facing the audience, arms aloft as a reverse shot shows the audience applauding furiously. The image fades to Foster sat on her own in the auditorium, eyes closed and smiling. Secretary Kitty Corbett (Una Merkel) appears shouting 'Miss Foster' to wake her up.

Rasch's choreography, whilst using classical ballet movements including *en pointe* technique and with echoes of *Swan Lake's corps de ballet* in the staging, has a more relaxed interpretation echoing the new style of fluid jazz-infused American ballet that she had pioneered on stage.

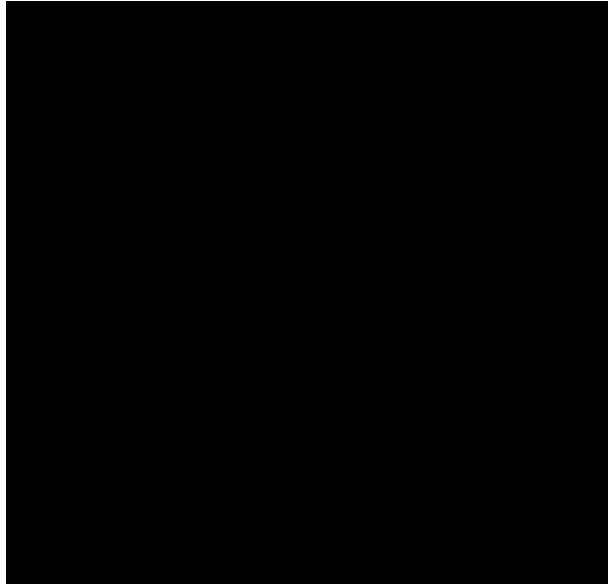
In this early example we see both a self-realisation dream ballet and a sequence of exposition, one that establishes for the film's audience that Foster does indeed have the singing and dancing talents that will make her a potential star by the end of the film.

### **The demise of dream ballets**

It could be argued that the critical and commercial failure of Kelly's very personal *Invitation to the Dance*, with its strong focus on ballet was a contributory factor towards MGM's decision not to produce further dream ballets (figure 1.16).<sup>316</sup>

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> *Invitation to the Dance* cost \$1,419,105 and grossed \$615,000 (\$200,000 domestic, \$415,000 foreign) showing an operating deficit of \$3,000,000. This was the heaviest operating loss since 1947-8, Fordin, p.396. Kelly had not intended to feature in the film until pressure from his producer Freed and so he featured in all four segments, Fordin, pp.390-91. The production of the film including principal filming, which took place in the UK and postproduction took over four years, Fordin, p. 379, p.396.



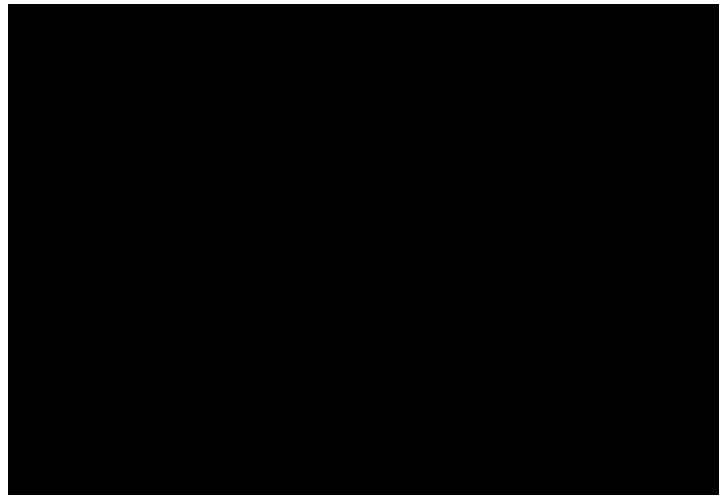
**Figure 1.16 Gene Kelly in *Invitation to the Dance***

However, the demise of the dream ballet after 1956 is one part of the larger decline in the popularity of Hollywood film musicals and the changing production environment. There were successful film musicals produced post 1956, mainly Broadway adaptations such as *Gigi* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1958), *West Side Story* (Robert Wise, United Artists, 1961) and *Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 1965). Other major expensive productions, such as *Hello Dolly!* (Gene Kelly, Twentieth Century Fox, 1969) and *Sweet Charity* (Bob Fosse, Universal Pictures, 1969) were commercial and critical flops on first release, nearly bankrupting their respective studios. Notably, none of these aforementioned films featured dream ballets.

MGM musicals were the most expensive and prestigious films produced at the studio, and the production of dream ballets was their most expensive element. High production costs and reduced studio profits by the mid 1950s, coupled

with wider social changes, including changing public taste and demographics contributed to the significant reduction in the production of musicals.<sup>317</sup>

The cycle of dream ballets featuring regularly in Hollywood film musicals effectively ended with *The King and I* in 1956, although Bob Fosse included a dance-led dream ballet in his semi-autobiographical musical *All that Jazz* (Bob Fosse, Columbia Pictures Corporation and Twentieth Century Fox, 1979) (figure 1.17). Dream ballets still feature occasionally on film and television today, although mainly as homage to the musicals' heyday, as stated in the Introduction.<sup>318</sup>



**Figure 1.17 Roy Schneider as Joe Gideon (inspired by Bob Fosse's life) in 'Hospital Hallucination' in *All that Jazz***

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has charted the rise in popularity of ballet and dance in America from the mid nineteenth century through to the 1950s. Starting in vaudeville, through to the development of the integrated musical on Broadway and finally Hollywood, the inclusion of dream ballets added another layer of meaning to the primary diegesis. Pioneered by classically trained ballet dancers, the

<sup>317</sup> Pomerance pp.6-11.

<sup>318</sup> See Filmography for dream ballets in American film and television post 1956.

dream ballets functioned as a way to explore complex emotions and feelings visually and physically by creating different moods. This approach focused on using a broader range of dance styles than in non-dream ballet dance sequences including but not exclusively, classical ballet. Each dream ballet had its own musical soundtrack, usually by the same composer, but composed or adapted specifically for the ballet. The highly stylised mise-en-scène helped to demarcate the dream ballet from the rest of the film for audiences and contributed to creating a specific mood and feeling dependent on the dreaming character's state of mind. They were also developed by choreographers, directors and producers as a device to present classical ballet and modern dance styles to a mass audience. Dream ballets were a regularly featured production element during the 1940s and early 1950s until the slow demise in the production of film musicals from the mid 1950s onwards.

The next chapter will explore the development of an 'American' style of dance as exemplified in the dance-led dream ballets of Hollywood film musicals. I explore two films in detail – *Oklahoma!* and *An American in Paris*. I also address issues of cultural appropriation through a brief examination of *The King and I*.

## Chapter 2

### **An 'American' style**

This chapter will explore the development of an 'American' style of dance as exemplified in dream ballets, taking as primary examples *Oklahoma!* and *An American in Paris*. I will discuss the distinctive styles of the choreographers: Agnes de Mille and Gene Kelly, drawing on an understanding of their artistic influences, the use of 'grafting' of movements and gestures from multiple sources and how these contributed towards the creation of core syntax in 'American' choreography and dance. This chapter will also explore the role that cultural appropriation of ethnic dance played in dance choreography in dream ballets, with specific reference to Jerome Robbins's choreography of 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet in *The King and I*.

In the first section I will explore the origins of the dream ballet in *Oklahoma!*, its original concept, purpose and cultural influences. See Appendix 9 for the plot summary.

#### **Agnes de Mille – origins of the 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' ballet in *Oklahoma!***

Oscar Hammerstein II had established that the dream should be a 'contemplation of Laurey's problems', namely her love for Curly and her sense of duty towards Jud which is overshadowed by Jud's threat to kill Curly.<sup>319</sup> There was no death scene in Hammerstein's original concept.<sup>320</sup> In Draft Two of his script, Hammerstein states 'the figures in the ballet, LAUREY, CURLY,

<sup>319</sup> Oscar Hammerstein II, *Oklahoma!* Draft 2 (1-3-8-10) in Carter (2007), pp.129-130.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*



JUD etc. may be portrayed by the actors who play these roles or by Dancers who simulate them. This will depend on the talents of the cast and the judgment of the dance director.’<sup>321</sup> Carter (2007) asserts that ‘Hammerstein’s outline may lack the strong narrative thread linking the episodes of de Mille’s version of the ballet, but the bones are there.’<sup>322</sup> In television, print and radio interviews and her own books in subsequent years, Agnes de Mille outlined differing versions of events in the creation of the dream ballet. However, it was Agnes de Mille who developed the concept of the ballet as an anxiety dream. Focusing on exploring Laurey’s internal emotional struggle, the dream confronts her growing sexual awareness and deals with her competing and conflicting feelings for two very different men: an upbeat cowboy (Curly) with whom she is falling in love and a brooding farm hand, the ‘gothic satan’ (Jud) who represents her sexual curiosity and darkest fears.<sup>323</sup>

Steven Bruhm states in *Gothic Oklahoma!: The Dream Ballet* that the ballet is gothic in nature due to the repressed desires that become visible through the ‘morass of sexual fears compounded by the allurements of sexual license and sexual power.’<sup>324</sup> I will analyse how the choreography makes sexual desires visible, yet at the same time codes them to make them acceptable to audiences and the PCA. Bruhm argues that the dream ballet represents a ‘fantasy of marriage and a fear of violence’ thereby providing a ‘gothic affect’ as highlighted by the ‘white knight’ and ‘gothic villain.’<sup>325</sup>

<sup>321</sup> Ibid, pp.128-9.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid, p.131.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid, pp.132-3; Bruhm, pp.102-3.

<sup>324</sup> Bruhm, p.102; Bruhm’s article focuses on the dream ballet that was restaged by Agnes de Mille for the 1955 film.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid p.101.

As with a number of dream ballets, there is a stress on traditional classical ballet content, in comparison to other dance sequences within the musical, including the romantic lead couple dancing a *pas de deux*.<sup>326</sup> Hanna (1988) explains that the *pas de deux* is ‘the outstanding and widely recognized sign of sexuality in ballet in the heterosexual *pas de deux* and partnering style in which the man supports, manipulates, and often conquers the woman.’<sup>327</sup> Hanna argues that ‘love [...] is signified in the concretization of the embrace, and prolonged ecstasy, through the adjustment of weight and sustained balance.’<sup>328</sup>

Agnes de Mille added ‘motifs of American folk’ and country-dance styles, elements of modern dance and jazz dance.<sup>329</sup> In her quest for authenticity she brought in May Gadd of the American Country Dance Society to assist with the creation of authentic movements.<sup>330</sup> Shelley C. Berg states that Agnes de Mille ‘appreciated the ‘rules and courtesies’ in folk dance and social dance forms, and their definitions of male and female roles.’<sup>331</sup>

***Agnes de Mille – the original stage production of Oklahoma!*** (31 March 1943 – 29 May 1948, 2212 performances, St. James’ Theatre, New York)

Agnes de Mille’s choreography of *Oklahoma!* was a natural progression of the work that she had been developing throughout her career. She took a holistic approach to the choreography creating signature gestures to represent different character types – cowboys and farmers – as well as the individual lead characters that recurred throughout the show. The choreography for each dance routine served a narrative purpose driving forward the plot. She cast

<sup>326</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>327</sup> Hanna, p.166.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Bruhm, p.102.

<sup>330</sup> Carter, p.140.

<sup>331</sup> Berg, p.74.

classically trained dancers for the *corps de ballet* (rather than a traditional Broadway chorus line). According to Barker, Agnes de Mille believed that the individual characters ‘dictated their own gestures and possessed idiosyncratic styles.’<sup>332</sup> She devised scenarios first then developed characters before translating them into gestures.<sup>333</sup> She worked closely with the dancers during rehearsal through the rote technique, as there was no form of dance notation at that time.<sup>334</sup> Vivian Smith, an original member of the cast and one of Agnes de Mille’s regular dancers, recalled her experiences in a television interview in 1993: ‘it was run more like a ballet company learning a new ballet.’<sup>335</sup> In the original stage production, as Laurey becomes sleepy to the tune of ‘Out of My Dreams’, a substitute dancer, Russian ballerina Katharine Sergava, appeared as Dream Laurey, (figure 2.1), visually signalling the start of the dream ballet.<sup>336</sup> Substitute dancers Dream Jud (George Church) and Dream Curly (Marc Platt) performed the dream ballet with an ensemble of dancers.<sup>337</sup> In a television interview Marc Platt stated, ‘this was a whole new thing, ballet, modern, interpretive. Agnes had a way of showing you movements that was ethereal, creative, had a spiritual quality and she took you with her.’<sup>338</sup>

<sup>332</sup> Barker, p.140.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> ‘Rote’ means the habitual repetition of something to be learned, *Oxford English Dictionary*. The Rote technique is still commonly used today by choreographers and dancers whereby dances are learned by physical repetition of moves, building up the dance piece in sections. Dancers and choreographers pass on choreography through this repetition of movement, often bringing in dancers who originated the work or performed a piece multiple times and are associated with the work. Dancer Gemze de Lappe’s knowledge of Agnes de Mille’s choreography has kept many of Agnes de Mille’s original choreography alive and in regular performance.

<sup>335</sup> Interview with 1943 *Oklahoma!* cast to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, organised by Broadway Theater Institute, 1993, MGZIC 9-5170, TOFT, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

<sup>336</sup> Katharine Sergava, Dream Laurey in the original Broadway production, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/katharine-sergava-90584>> accessed 1 March 2019.

<sup>337</sup> George Church, Dream Jud, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/george-church-35295>> accessed 1 March 2019, Howard da Silva, Jud <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/howard-da-silva-67218>> Marc Platt, Dream Curly, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/marc-platt-93805>> Alfred Drake, Curly <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/alfred-drake-4031>> in the original Broadway production, accessed 1 March 2019.

<sup>338</sup> Interview with 1943 *Oklahoma!* cast, 1993, MGZIC 9-5170, TOFT, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

**Figure 2.1 Marc Platt and Katharine Sergava portray Dream Curly and Dream Laurey in the 'Out of My Dreams' ballet (original title) from the original 1943 Broadway production of *Oklahoma!*<sup>339</sup>**

**'Laurey Makes up her Mind' in the film adaptation of *Oklahoma!***

Agnes de Mille used classical ballet as the basis of the extended dream ballet sequence but with less formality and bringing forth the character gestures already established in previous dances within the film. The ballet takes place in different settings signifying the outdoors area beside Aunt Eller's (Charlotte Greenwood) house, the church, the outside of Jud's (Rod Steiger) smokehouse, as well as the indoor settings of a saloon and its upstairs hallway. All these settings are stylised to present the space as a dance space with a painted flat at the back of the set. For example, the outdoors area includes a painted backdrop of cornfields and an orange-hued expansive sky.

The depiction of Oklahoma in the early 1900s 'embraces that set of political, social and cultural beliefs and practices known as the 'American Way.'<sup>340</sup> It 'idealises the nonurban Other' and whilst 'there are authentic figures and genuine hoe-down steps in the dancing [...] it is better dancing, more excited and varied than you would actually find in a barn or on a moonlight meadow.'<sup>341</sup>

It was common practice at the time for scenes to be edited in post-production by studio editors under the instruction of directors and producers. In an interview Agnes de Mille gave to an American journalist in 1955 in relation to the film of *Oklahoma!*:

<sup>339</sup> *Dance Advantage* Blog, <<https://www.danceadvantage.net/agnes-de-mille-oklahoma/>> accessed 1 March 2019.

<sup>340</sup> Carter, p.191.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

She stated politely that she regretted the cuts, that they were made against her better judgment and that she wasn't happy that in a sequence from the movie's big ballet, the original music had been removed and another piece substituted under the already filmed dances.<sup>342</sup>

There is no surviving footage of the full dream ballet sequence from the original stage production and therefore it is impossible to assess exactly where the cuts are and how the changes in music impacted on the presentation. Agnes de Mille in many interviews and in her own writing stated that the original ballet was seventeen minutes in length; the ballet sequence in the film is fourteen minutes and thirty-nine seconds long: thus the ballet was not greatly cut, but the use of another piece of music and the cutting of a particular element of a scene may still have been significant.<sup>343</sup> The dream ballet, as with all the scenes in the film, had to be filmed twice, in Todd-AO format and in Cinemascope. This created challenges for Agnes de Mille and according to Frank W.D. Ries 'she made demands that often halted production and created unnecessary delays.'<sup>344</sup>

The first half of the dream ballet reprises the main narrative of the flirtatious relationship between Curly (Gordon MacRae) and Laurey (Shirley Jones), whereas the second half is a premonition detailing what might happen in the future including the death of Curly. The ballet addresses the pleasures of mutual monogamous love, the perils of not being able to access monogamous love, or not needing to, and the tribulations associated with making up one's

<sup>342</sup> *New York Herald Tribune* 1955 (exact date and name of journalist not visible on press cutting), Agnes de Mille papers 1928-1963, Clippings Box 1 \*MGZRC97, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, NYPAL, January 2014.

<sup>343</sup> I have not been able to source additional evidence that either confirms this assertion or references a different piece of music.

<sup>344</sup> In his review of Easton, *No Intermissions: the Life of Agnes de Mille*, Ries states that as a result Agnes de Mille lost out on choreographing the dances in the film adaptation of *Carousel*, for which she had originated the choreography on stage, Ries, 'The Agony of Agnes', *Dance Chronicle*, p.165.

mind. The ballet also addresses the fear of male on male violence and the acceptance and fear of the loss of virginity. Earlier in the film Laurey states that she believes Jud prowls nightly outside her bedroom window and he therefore represents both threatening lust, but also a powerful passion.<sup>345</sup> 'He opens Laurey's eyes to a sexual life that will find its 'proper' fulfillment in wedlock with Curly.'<sup>346</sup> Earlier in the film Laurey had invited Jud to the Box Social to make Curly jealous, without fully understanding the impact of that invitation on Jud's obsessive feelings and behaviour towards her until they are manifest in the ballet.

The tone of the different scenes within the ballet is affected by the way in which the melodies, most of which had already been heard earlier in the film, affect the mood of the scene and how the viewer sees and interprets the dance. 'Out of My Dreams', the song that was written as the transition into the ballet is a simple romantic waltz. In an earlier scene in the film *Ado Annie* (Gloria Grahame) sings to Laurey 'I'm just a girl who can't say no' expressing her inability to choose between two men. This potentially invokes possibilities of immoral behaviour and her lack of interest in having to make a choice between cowboy Will Parker (Gene Nelson) and peddler Ali Hakim (Eddie Albert). This song acts as a prelude to Laurey's own dilemma. Jud represents Laurey's nightmare but the representation of him in her dream and the consequences of his actions do help her to see things clearly, once awake.<sup>347</sup>

Laurey's fear of and fascination with Jud is further evoked through the repetition of the music during the ballet, particularly in the saloon scene through

<sup>345</sup> Carter, p.190.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

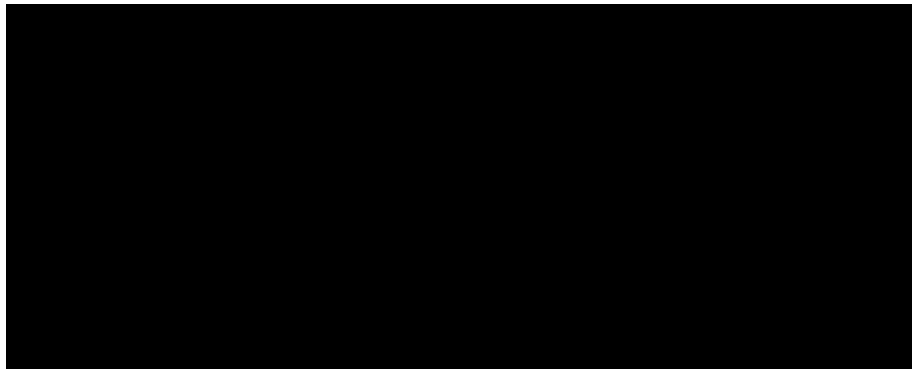
the song 'Poor Jud is Daid'. This refers to an earlier scene in the film whereby Curly sings this song to Jud in his smokehouse. At the end of the ballet the music rises to a crescendo at the same time as a tornado reaches its height during the fight scene. The music changes to sound effects of wind interspersed with music then silence when Curly is killed. In the dialogue-free dream ballet, Laurey's scream is audible but the sound of the scream is slowed down and could be mistaken for a sound effect for the wind or thunder. The music and sound effects restart as Jud finally carries Laurey off into the distance.

Smoke is used at the start and the end of the ballet as a visual cue to demarcate it from the rest of the film. Slow motion occurs at certain key moments to create additional dramatic effect. This highlights Laurey's love for Curly in the early part, or expresses the sexual freedom and implied promiscuity of the Can-Can girls in the saloon to the orchestral version of 'I'm Just a Girl Who Can't Say No', or Laurey's fear of Jud in the latter part of the ballet when he attacks Curly.

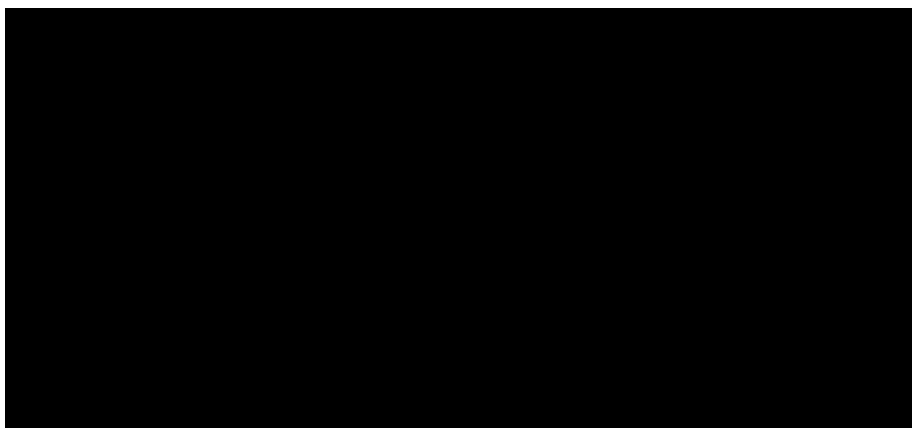
The dream ballet was renamed for the film of *Oklahoma!* from 'Out of My Dreams Ballet', to 'Laurey Makes up her Mind'.<sup>348</sup> What we now see on screen is as follows. Sniffing the 'Elixir of Egypt' potion bought from the peddler Ali Hakim as a way to solve all problems, Laurey falls asleep whilst sitting outside her Aunt Eller's house and the dream begins. Jones starts to sing 'Out of My Dreams' and there is a cut to show Bambi Linn as Dream Laurey standing at

<sup>348</sup> *Oklahoma!* <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/oklahoma-1285/#songs>> accessed 1 March 2019. Bambi Linn had been part of the original Broadway dance ensemble, with character dancing as Aggie and as a Dream Child in the dream ballet, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/oklahoma-1285>> accessed 1 March 2019; *Oklahoma!* (1955), <[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048445/?ref\\_=sr\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048445/?ref_=sr_1)> accessed 1 March 2019.

the end of the porch against a corn yellow sky with swirling clouds (figure 2.2). Another cut shows Laurey rising from the chair, eyes closed, still singing and as she walks slowly towards the open space, she opens her eyes. In front of her stands the dancing Laurey, dressed in the same three-quarter length lilac gingham short-sleeved, full skirted dress and flat ballet pumps (not *pointe* shoes), blonde hair in a ponytail. The two women circle each other slowly once, each with an outstretched arm bent at the elbow, and hand in a vertical position almost touching palms as if looking in a mirror, before Jones moves out of the frame, having established Linn as Dream Laurey (figure 2.3).



**Figure. 2.2** Introducing Bambi Linn as Dream Laurey in the ‘Laurey Makes up her Mind’ dream ballet in *Oklahoma!*



**Figure 2.3** Transition from Laurey (Shirley Jones, back to the camera) into Dream Laurey (Bambi Linn) in the ‘Laurey Makes up her Mind’ dream ballet



As Laurey turns round at the start of the ballet, Gordon MacRae's character Curly and dancing Curly (James Mitchell) stand with their backs to the audience at an angle to the camera. Both wear an orange shirt, blue neckerchief, brown hat, blue jeans and dark brown leather riding chaps, the same outfit Curly was wearing in the first scene of the film. When the film cuts to face both Curlys there is a continuity error as neither are wearing hats. MacRae now disappears out of the frame leaving Linn and Mitchell to dance the *pas de deux* as Laurey and Curly.<sup>349</sup> In the original widescreen format, MacRae and Jones are still visible to the side of the screen during the first part of the ballet.<sup>350</sup>

The positioning of dancers throughout the ballet is often at a diagonal angle to the camera and therefore the external audience too, which helps to capture some of the kinetic movement of the dance.

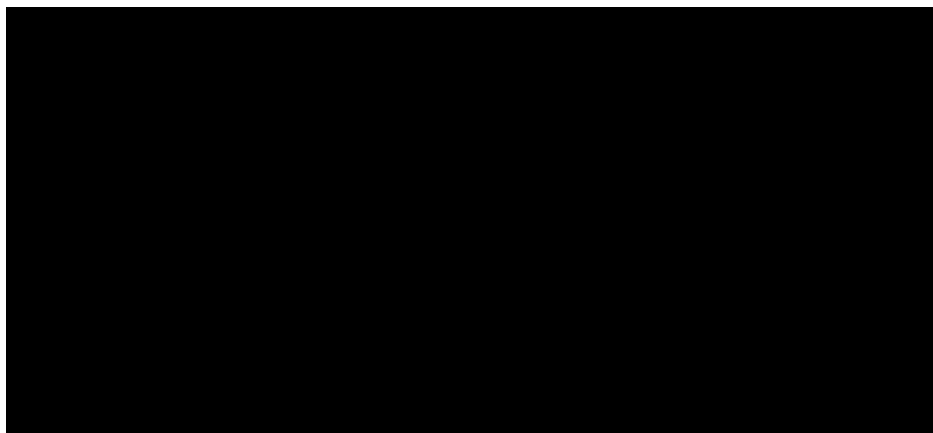
When the camera turns to face Curly, his eyes are shut. He slowly opens them, and the camera moves from a close up to a reverse long shot revealing the smiling Laurey. She runs towards Curly in slow motion through smoke and changing lighting effects. She leaps (*grand jeté en avant*) into his arms as he catches her under her bent knee at shoulder height, with her straight arms stretched out at head height at a ninety degree angle to her body, one above the other, with palms down, in the classic ballet arm position of *third arabesque* (figure 2.4).<sup>351</sup> This movement is more fluid and less formal than classical ballet movement and is infused with elements of modern dance and individual

<sup>349</sup> In the following analysis of the ballet I will refer to the roles played by Linn and Mitchell as Laurey and Curly.

<sup>350</sup> Viewing of the original Todd-AO Widescreen format of *Oklahoma!*, Widescreen Weekender, National Science + Media Museum, Bradford, 15 October 2015.

<sup>351</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

gestures: the bended knee, the flat-footed run, the arms bent at the elbow or completely straight in a V shape outstretched to the sky. This last move is a recurring Agnes de Mille motif. Swirling clouds in the bright yellow sky are visible and the background then turns from yellow/orange to blue and remains so throughout the *pas de deux* before returning to orange at the end of the duet. Laurey's dress now has a fine net overlay which softens the effect of the gingham pattern.



**Figure 2.4 Laurey and James Mitchell as Dream Curly dancing the *pas de deux* in 'Laurey Makes up her Mind'**

Dancer Marc Platt described this *pas de deux* as 'simple choreography but beautiful, no complicated lifts but fully in character.'<sup>352</sup> Agnes de Mille in a television interview said that she wanted the ballet to show 'tenderness and passion.'<sup>353</sup> This romantic duet is a representation of Curly and Laurey's love for each other and involves small leaps (*jetés*) by Laurey assisted by Curly holding her waist, and floor work – a feature of the modern dance movement, as exemplified by Martha Graham. Agnes de Mille acknowledged that she included 'falls' in her choreography, representing 'falling to earth, swooning

<sup>352</sup> Mark Platt in an interview with the 1943 *Oklahoma!* cast, 1993, TOFT, NYPAL, January 2014.

<sup>353</sup> Agnes de Mille television interview and recreation of the *Oklahoma!* dream ballet 'Laurey Makes Up Her Mind' \*MGZIC 9-5184 TOFT, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

back, resurrection and running away to return to a focal point.’<sup>354</sup> Curly gently kisses Laurey on the lips, often a climactic moment in a traditional *pas de deux*. Laurey interrupts the *pas de deux* with hand and arm gestures to invoke playfulness, for example snapping of the fingers, hands on the waist and shaking of the head, arms folded in front, and the bashful apology as she dips her head to rest on Curly’s chest waiting for him to lift her chin and smile. The *pas de deux* ends with another lift at shoulder height. Laurey’s knees are bent into Curly’s chest, arms outstretched with curved hands above her head in classical ballet fifth position, then outstretched in the V shape (figure 2.5a), before she slides down his body to stand facing Curly, arms wrapped around each other. This particular leap is similar to a scene in ‘The Broadway Ballet’ from *Singin’ in the Rain* when Gene Kelly catches Cyd Charisse as she leaps to his shoulder height and then slides down his body to sit on the ground (figure 2.5b), as discussed in Chapter Four. However, in *Oklahoma!* the context establishes this movement as romantic whereas the movement in *Singin’ in the Rain* is more sexually charged. The audience understands that Laurey and Curly also represent the union of two worlds – cowboys and farmers, as well as the inclusion of Oklahoma state into the American union.

<sup>354</sup> Easton, pp.337-8 as referenced in Berg, p.88.



**Figures 2.5a and 2.5b Laurey leaps into Curly's arms in 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' (2.5a), in comparison to Cyd Charisse as the 'Vamp' jumping into the hooper's arms (Gene Kelly) in a more sexually provocative movement (2.5b) in 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain***

The next section of the ballet represents Laurey and Curly's love in the context of their local community, with dancers joining them in celebration. In describing the dancers' outstretched arms in a V shape and twisting left to right, Agnes de Mille suggested that they 'symbolised the heart, wind, birds, love', therefore acknowledging that movements and gestures can have multiple meanings and are open to interpretation by the viewer.<sup>355</sup> Two schoolgirls feature throughout the film, including the dream ballet, expressing naivety, innocence and flirtatiousness that echo Laurey's personality. Church bells chime and Laurey

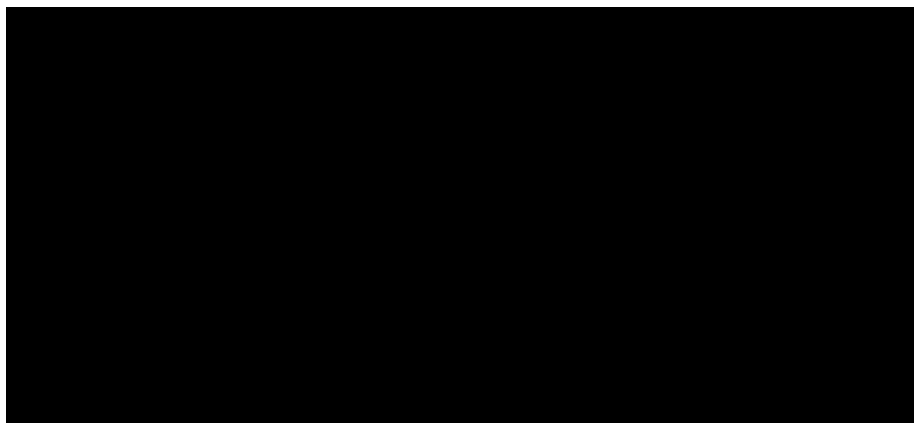
<sup>355</sup> Agnes de Mille television interview and recreation of the *Oklahoma!* dream ballet, \*MGZIC 9-5184 TOFT, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

runs to a larger group of female dancers now wearing bonnets. One holds out a white wedding dress to Laurey and places the dress on her outstretched arms. One of the dancers points to the sky as an oversized wedding veil drifts down from above, caught by some of the dancers. The camera cuts to an ordinary sized veil now positioned over Laurey's head. The two schoolgirls and one of the female dancers dance in unison clasping their hands in front of their bodies and side-kicking with alternate legs and bended knees, then all three leap in the air in an *arabesque croisée* with arms outstretched in the V shape.<sup>356</sup> The audience recognises and understands the ultimate union of romantic love through a wedding celebrated by and with the local community of friends and family.

The dancers all point offstage and run away as the cowboys enter in two groups, with Curly in the lead group, dancing in unison using gestures already established in earlier dances to denote riding on horseback – arms extended at the front of the body with bent elbows, hands together as if holding reins, legs in a wide bow-legged gait with bent knees, stepping side to side at a fast pace. The scene changes to small groups of townsfolk (male and female dancers) standing together near the outline of a chapel. The cowboys ride in, stop, lunge forward and back on one foot, the other in the air with pointed feet, wheel their right arms in a backwards circle, lunge forward again on both feet then lift their left leg in a semi-circular motion as if pulling their horses to a halt and dismounting. The cowboys use mannerisms seen throughout the film – tucking thumbs into the front of their belts, or lapels, a wide legged walk, whipping the air as if using a lasso and crossing their hands, one over the other, symbolising holding horses' reins. The cowboys take off their hats as a group of female

<sup>356</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

dancers dressed identically in mauve coloured dresses, some wearing dark sashes, others wearing bonnets, walk in, in twos, gloved hands resting on the front of their skirts in the manner of bridesmaids, led by the two schoolgirls. They turn to face each other, raise their arms upwards to form an archway for Laurey to walk through dressed in the white wedding dress and veil, holding a bouquet of white flowers representing virginity. The wedding dress is similar to the one that Laurey will wear at end of the film. This is a more stylised ballet dress with three-quarter length full net skirt, capped sleeves, fitted bodice and lace frontage around the neckline (figure 2.6). The full-length wedding dress that Laurey wears for her wedding in the primary diegesis is more conservative with long sleeves and less lace frontage.



**Figure 2.6 Laurey wearing the wedding dress against a darkening sky in the 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' dream ballet**

Curly walks over to Laurey to pull back the veil. There is a reverse shot to Laurey's face looking up at Curly as he lifts the veil but a reverse close up shot reveals her face in panic. Another reverse close up shot reveals the substitution of Jud (Rod Steiger, as in the primary diegesis) for Curly. Jud pulls off the veil and throws it to the floor. As Laurey backs away, all the townsfolk including Curly stand frozen in time and motionless. Laurey runs away backwards and stops to lean on some of the townsfolk, but none respond to

her touch, she drops her head clutching her face as if in tears. When she throws her arms around Curly, he does not respond and backs away slowly at the same time as all the townsfolk, causing Laurey to slide to the floor, leaving her on her own with Jud. He grabs her by the wrist and pulls her up; she pulls away and runs through the double doors of the chapel revealing a fenced pathway to Jud's smokehouse. This is recognisably the smokehouse that the audience has seen earlier in the primary diegesis with its walls covered with postcards of can-can dancers, scantily clad and naked women. The smokehouse is a small dark and dirty wooden shack with a low sloping roof and only one door to enter/exit; therefore, if Laurey runs indoors trying to escape Jud, she will be trapped.

Jud slowly follows Laurey as she runs through the door of the smokehouse that opens to reveal a stylised saloon setting. This highlights the nature of dreaming with illogical movements and transitions from different spaces that are unconnected physically, and such transitions are repeated throughout the ballet. However, unlike dreams that do not follow a logical timeline, this dream ballet, like all others, follows a sequential timeline mirroring the primary narrative. These unexpected transitions often add to the general unease at the most traumatic points in the ballet when Laurey feels trapped by Jud. This transition into the saloon setting is marked by flames shooting upwards - signifying danger, again only visible in the original widescreen format. The red saloon contains a chandelier, the outline of a mirror, and another in the distance, elaborate upholstered chairs and *chaises longues*, polished wooden tables, a steep stairway (that leads nowhere) and Can-Can dancers wearing deadpan expressions – an allusion to the static girly postcards on the walls of Jud's smokehouse. In the original widescreen format, the top of the staircase balustrade is visible. The dancers all wear black and brightly coloured shiny

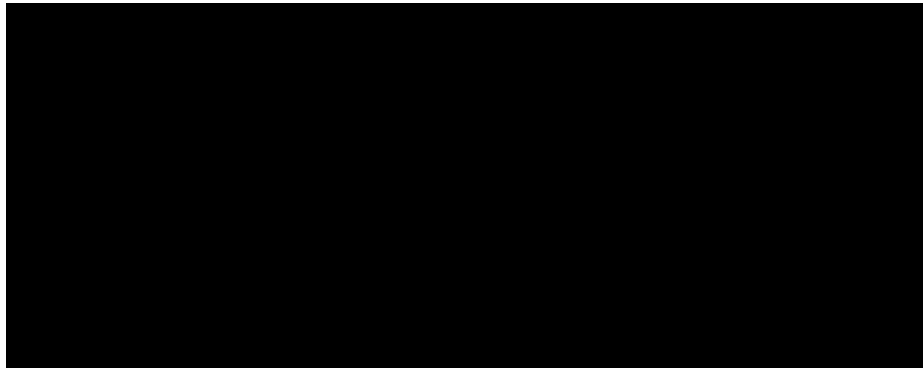
fitted knee-length dresses, exposing their shoulders and arms with full skirts and multi-coloured underskirts, headdresses and black calf length heeled, laced boots, similar in style to the Can-Can dancers in the original 1943 stage production (figures 2.7a and 2.7b). They are also wearing green garter belts; just like those that peddler Ali Hakim was trying to sell to Laurey and Aunt Eller.

Jud stands amongst a group of dancers; Laurey backs away and sits down on the knees of another Can-Can dancer who drops her arm over Laurey's shoulder. Laurey turns to face her, slowly stands up, turns again and falls to the ground. She watches as some of the Can-Can dancers start to move towards her, shifting their weight from one foot to the other, hands on their hips. Jud walks in between three of the dancers, leering at them, slaps their behinds and takes a seat with his back to the camera. The gesture demonstrates his ease and control of this kind of overt sexuality. The camera angle often includes 'crotch shots' of the Can-Can dancers, particularly as they perform fan-kicks, or are lifted with flexed feet and their legs astride the cowboys.<sup>357</sup> As the girls walk away, the three Can-Can dancers slowly walk in unison towards Jud shaking their skirts to reveal their thighs. This is the only section in the ballet when the camera in a mid-shot position does not show the legs of the dancers until they lean backwards and kick their right legs in the air. As they walk away in a loose-limbed trot then turn round, they perform the recognisable high-kicking movements of the Can-Can dance specifically for Jud. They alternate kicking one straight leg in the air, then bending it at the knee and twirling it in a circle, whilst all three hold hands with their arms aloft. The audience understands that Laurey's dream has become a nightmare in which she has no control over her

<sup>357</sup> Betsy Cooper, 'The Body Censored: Dance, Morality, and the Production Code During the Golden Age of the Film Musical' in Bales and Eliot, eds., *Dance on Its Own Terms*, p.113; see Appendix 1 Dance glossary.



surroundings, and has moved from a safe romantic setting into a sexually charged environment.



**Figures 2.7a and 2.7b The risqué postcard girls come to life as Can-Can girls dancing in the saloon in the original 1943 stage production (2.7a) and in the film adaptation (2.7b) in the ‘Laurey Makes up her Mind’ dream ballet<sup>358</sup>**

Bruhm states that the Can-Can dancers are the threat to Laurey, rather than Jud as they echo her fears of home and sexuality.<sup>359</sup> Bruhm in referencing the original play, identifies Laurey’s fear in relation to the threat of her home being burned down by native Americans, as the territory of Oklahoma moves towards becoming a state and native Americans fight for their land.<sup>360</sup> However this is erased from the musical play of *Oklahoma!*, as there are no native Americans in the musical, apart from a passing spoken reference to explain why Laurey lives with her aunt. It is more likely that the original scandalous Can-Can dance was chosen specifically by Agnes de Mille to represent female sexual power and pleasure and to highlight Laurey’s fear of her own sexuality as well as her sexual curiosity. The Can-Can typically expresses sexual energy and freedom; female dancers wore bright satin costumes, frilly underwear and black stockings to illustrate forbidden sexual desires associated with the risqué

<sup>358</sup> *Oklahoma!* Wikipedia, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream\\_ballet#/media/File:Oklahoma\\_8e07920v.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream_ballet#/media/File:Oklahoma_8e07920v.jpg)> accessed 1 March 2019.

<sup>359</sup> Bruhm, pp.102-5.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

reputation of the dance.<sup>361</sup> The provocative moves performed by the Can-Can dancers overtly emphasise female sexuality and forbidden pleasure.<sup>362</sup> Laurey knows that she does not belong, yet is entranced by the style, moves and power of the women. These women do not conform to the norms of Laurey's society, but their obvious sexual freedom stirs curiosity in her.

One of the dancers walks towards Laurey shaking her skirt as if to taunt her, pulls her up from the floor by her shoulders, deliberately rips her dress, drags her towards Jud and spins her into his arms. This is an unusual gesture given that Laurey has not previously encountered the dancer before. It could represent a strategic substitution whereby the implicit intention was for Jud to present a gesture of this kind that might be associated in the audiences' minds with Jud's known desire for the virginal Laurey. The censors might have considered this too explicit at the time of production. As I pointed out earlier Agnes de Mille stated that the ballet had been cut after it had been filmed and it is possible that footage here was edited out. Alternatively, the dancer's physical gesture may imply that Laurey is not the perfect innocent girl that Jud believes her to be, or that with her gown torn, she no longer represents a social status higher than that of a Can-Can dancer.

In this scene Agnes de Mille also includes two other dances that were considered scandalous when first introduced to society – the waltz and the polka. The dances were considered a 'danger to religion and morals' with close body contact and a 2/4 fast beat, and audiences would be aware of the historical status of these dances.<sup>363</sup> Jud grabs Laurey and forces her to dance

<sup>361</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>362</sup> Bruhm, p.106.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

an ungainly waltz before he is distracted by one of the Can-Can dancers and joins her instead to polka around the floor whilst the rest dance with their cowboy partners. The cowboys use gestures established earlier in the film, arms bent, fists clenched and flapping their arms, slapping their thighs and hopping on their toes with legs bent at the knee in a wide bow-legged gait. The cowboys hold the dancers close, standing behind them, hands on the dancers' hips as they stride forward, then lift the dancers above their heads as the Can-Can dancers kick a leg in the air. The change from the female Can-Can dancers performing on their own to dancing with the cowboys to Ado Annie's song 'I'm Just a Girl Who Can't Say No' represents a more positive and less sexually threatening dance style. The cowboys dance with the Can-Can dancers in a two-step. This dance has been seen earlier in the film in the 'Kansas City' dance routine that Will demonstrates to the locals at the train station, including cowboys, Aunt Eller and the two schoolgirls. This new dance is popular in the big city of Kansas, according to Will and therefore represents a modern, urban and mildly risqué style.

Laurey pushes her way through all the dancers into the centre of the room and imitates a turn and kick of her leg in the style of the Can-Can dancers, as she tries to join in somewhat against her will. As she does so the cowboys hold the dancers aloft above their shoulders and the women stay motionless. They are paraded around the floor at a slow pace as if they are wooden horses going round on a carousel.

Berg states that a regular Agnes de Mille motif is for the male dancer to hold aloft the female dance partner above his head and shoulders, thus

demonstrating that the female dancer is reliant on the male's support.<sup>364</sup> Bruhm suggests this is a 'danse macabre' and that Laurey is 'dancing with death' to the refrain of 'Poor Jud is Daid' representing her 'powerlessness' and her 'fear of sexual union'; in gothic literature death is either a 'metaphor for liberation' or 'threatened corporeal reality'.<sup>365</sup> Bruhm's analysis does not take full account of Laurey's unspoken sexual fascination with Jud, her mixed feelings of sexual curiosity and physical repulsion.

During this scene the sky starts to turn darker, more red than orange and the cloud formation of a tornado is visible in the distance. This change to the environment is a signal to audiences that the mood, tone and action in the ballet are changing, expressing upcoming danger. The dancers encircle Laurey, whose head is dropped on her shoulder as if hypnotised or physically exhausted. One of the dancers grabs her by the wrist and pulls her into the circle of dancers to join in high kicking alternate straight legs. The Can-Can dancers drop to the floor leaving Laurey high kicking with three cowboys moving forward towards Jud, as if being presented to him as an offering. Laurey covers her eyes as the cowboys drop to the floor. She stops dancing and removes her hands to reveal Jud standing facing her – a loose re-enactment of the moment when Laurey first faced Jud outside the chapel. All the dancers and cowboys run away leaving Jud and Laurey on their own. Laurey's decision to run upstairs, as if she has no alternative option, references an earlier scene in the film where Ali Hakim promised Ado Annie 'paradise' upstairs in the hotel in Claremore, a comic reference to sex.<sup>366</sup> The Legion of Decency interpreted these rooms as a brothel and the scene had to be reshot

<sup>364</sup> Berg, p.77.

<sup>365</sup> Bruhm, pp.106-7.

<sup>366</sup> Carter, pp.196-7.

to establish that the hallway and rooms represent a gambling house.<sup>367</sup>

However in the film, the scene in the hallway is ambiguous and offers no recognisable images of a gambling house (figure 2.8a).



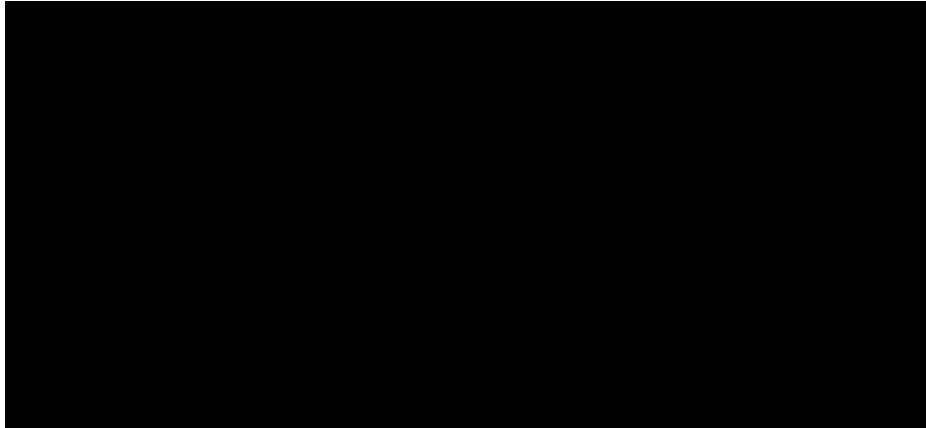
**Figures 2.8a and 2.8b The upstairs hallway in the saloon (2.8a) in comparison to the floating staircase seen earlier in the 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' dream ballet (2.8b)**

Laurey slowly extends her leg in front of her pointing her foot at the end of the floating staircase (figure 2.8b), as the camera cuts from a long shot to a reverse close up of her face, and then a reverse long shot of a dark red hallway with lots of closed doors on both sides. This indicates Laurey's trepidation in taking the next step. The hallway could be expressive of her state of mind. The doors represent different pathways and choices and the perceived sexual danger of going upstairs. The dark red hallway with wall lights has peeling

<sup>367</sup> Frank Walsh, *Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p.267 referenced by Cooper in Bales and Eliot eds., p.114.

wallpaper, signifying to the audience that this shabby place is not the right choice for Laurey. Stylistically, this scene differs from the rest of the ballet; it is much darker in tone and clearly demonstrates the lack of 'paradise' upstairs. A long shot shows Laurey running down the hallway and there is an awkward cut showing her slipping out of a door partway down the corridor. She then moves round the archway of the single open door at the end of the hallway revealing the 'outdoors'. This is followed by another cut to Laurey running away from the backdrop of Aunt Eller's house towards the camera at a diagonal angle, against the red sky with the tornado cloud formation. The choppy editing in this short scene may reflect some of the cuts to the ballet that Agnes de Mille complained about in the newspaper interview referenced earlier, or the cuts insisted on by the Legion of Decency.

Laurey suddenly stops, head in hands, as the wind starts to howl and the sky darkens. She turns round and sees Jud to one side. The camera pans back to reveal Curly to the other side of her. Laurey runs towards Curly who lifts her by the waist and places her behind him in a protective movement, he then pulls a gun on Jud and shoots him several times: Jud is unaffected and walks towards Curly as they are both temporarily engulfed in smoke. As Jud grabs Curly by the shoulders, there is a cut to a close up on Laurey's screaming face and her scream is audible. A reverse shot shows Jud carrying Curly, holding him by his hips above his head demonstrating his power as Curly holds onto Jud's shoulders. Jud throws Curly to the ground and this starts the two-minute stylised fight scene between the two men (figure 2.9).



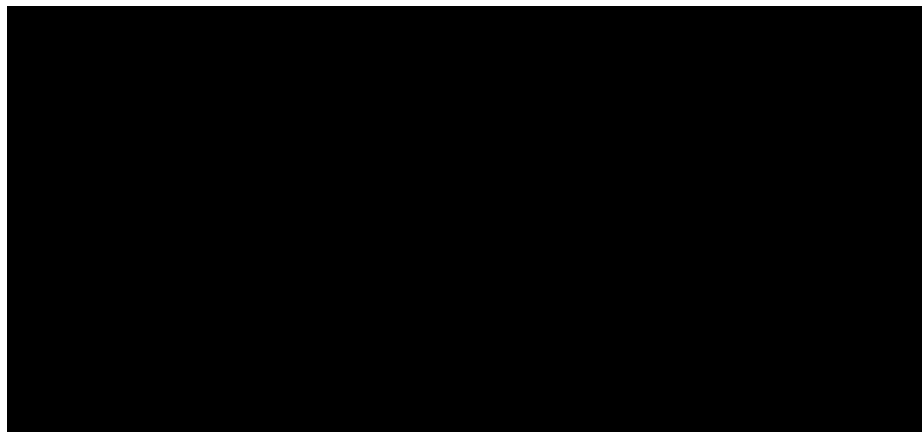
**Figure 2.9 Curly and Jud (Rod Steiger) fighting, watched by Laurey**

Jud grabs Laurey and starts to carry her away before placing her down behind him, just as Curly had done earlier in the scene, to protect her from the fight. Jud is clearly the stronger of the two men, continually pushing Curly to the ground. As Curly falls into Laurey's arms, Jud attacks him from behind causing him to collapse to the ground again. The fight turns into slow motion as the two men grapple one another with Laurey in the background, arms outstretched to the sky, as if pleading to a higher being. She *pirouettes* towards Jud who pushes her away; this move echoes the twisting of the tornado.<sup>368</sup> The townsfolk arrive as the wind builds and the tornado cloud formation draws closer, growing in size.

Laurey rushes to Curly as cowboys try to hold Jud back, but he shakes them off and then throws Laurey to one side. A weakened Curly lies on the ground; Jud grabs him, pulls his head up and strangles him while Laurey pulls at Jud's shirt. Curly falls to the ground, motionless – dead. Jud drags him by one hand towards Laurey who is backing away from everyone. Jud lets go of Curly's hand and it drops to the floor; he steps over the body and lifts Laurey by her

<sup>368</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

waist above his head. He carries her away triumphant, her arms outstretched towards Curly before they drop lifeless against Jud's back, resigned to her fate (figure 2.10). The community stands motionless, not willing to help her and leaving her on her own to deal with the negative consequences of her sexual curiosity, namely a life as a fallen woman with Jud, not as a respectable married woman with Curly.



**Figure 2.10 The final scene of Jud carrying off Laurey past the dead Curly and towards the tornado in the 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' dream ballet**

Smoke fills the screen and when it disappears, the audience finds Jones as Laurey sat on the chair in which she has been dreaming, still asleep but clearly in distress turning her head from side to side. She wakes with a start to the sound of Jud calling her name as he stands over her - casting a shadow. She inhales a sharp intake of breath and holds her hand to her face, clearly afraid of Jud. He is dressed very differently from the dream in smart attire – brown shirt and tie with a blue velvet waistcoat - his hair is brushed and his face is clean. He acts sheepishly towards Laurey with his hands clasped in front of him. As she wakes up he quietly says 'it's time to get started for the party', he then backs away slowly as she gets up from the chair and walks away from him. This gentle benign Jud is completely at odds with his behaviour in Laurey's



dream. The audience understands that Laurey has made her mind up that she wants romantic love and marriage with Curly and that she now fears Jud; her sexual curiosity has been repressed, whereas Jud is overtly in love with Laurey. This scene also reminds the audience that although Jud in the dream is still played by Rod Steiger, in the dream he is a projection of Laurey's unconscious and thus at a distance from his character in the primary diegesis of the film.

### **Ballet choreography within the dream ballet**

Ballet choreography is used earlier in the film in the 'Many a New Day' scene where Laurey and her female friends are getting ready for that evening's event. This scene demonstrates the camaraderie, support and genuine friendship between Laurey and the local young women, in the face of competition for Curly's affections from an outsider.

In the dream ballet Laurey's style of dancing utilises the graceful fluidity of ballet without the rigid adherence to form and individual ballet positions. Curly's dancing utilises the strength and grace of ballet and his male supporting role to Laurey, with some additional character movements with the other cowboys. A dancer does not replace Jud's character played by Steiger in the dream ballet as he is only required to perform stylised movement rather than dance, but it does require a physically strong performer able to carry Curly above head height. It may be the case that Steiger's presence as a major star, following his breakthrough role in *On the Waterfront* (Elia Kazan, Horizon Pictures, 1954), was so important that the dance was choreographed around him. In the original national touring company of *Oklahoma!* Alfred Cibelli played Jud in the ballet

sequence as well as throughout the musical.<sup>369</sup> As no original footage of the dream ballet exists it is not known whether the original choreography for Jud in the dream ballet required a dancer's expertise.

### **Critical and Commercial response to *Oklahoma!***

Rodgers and Hammerstein and The Theater Guild rejected numerous offers for the film rights to *Oklahoma!* throughout its national and international record-breaking runs in order to guarantee significant profits from the stage royalties. They also refused use of any of the songs from *Oklahoma!* in any films. The Broadway show finally closed its initial run in 1948 after over 2,000 performances. The British run saw profits drop by early 1950 and the USA national touring company shows came to a close in 1953. This resulted in the rights reverting back to Rodgers and Hammerstein from The Theatre Guild after protracted negotiations.

Carter states that the 'immediate reaction of the newspapers (on 1 April 1943) [...] ranged from positive to wildly enthusiastic (with just one somewhat cool exception).'<sup>370</sup> Burton Rascoe in the *New York World-Telegraph* singled out Agnes de Mille for credit, stating that the dream ballet was 'the biggest hit of the show'.<sup>371</sup> Burns Mantle of the *New York Daily News* praised the integration of the dancing.<sup>372</sup>

<sup>369</sup> Carter, p.246; A trivia reference on the *Oklahoma!* page on *Internet Movie Database* suggests that because the production team was unable to find a dancing double that looked like Steiger from behind, Steiger did his own dancing with considerable coaching from Agnes de Mille, however I have not been able to corroborate this reference, [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048445/trivia?ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_trv](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048445/trivia?ref_=tt_trv_trv), accessed 2 February 2020.

<sup>370</sup> Carter, p.170.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

By 1953 Rodgers and Hammerstein had become members of the board of directors of a new company created by Michael Todd and Joseph M. Schenck at Twentieth Century Fox called Magna Theatre Corporation. The first film in production was *Oklahoma!*. The only performers who transferred from the stage production to the screen adaptation were Marc Platt and Bambi Linn, but in different roles. The final production costs totalled \$6,800,000.<sup>373</sup> The film won two Academy Awards for Best Music and Best Sound Recording and took \$7,100,000 on its first US run.<sup>374</sup>

### ***Oklahoma!*'s impact on dance choreography on Broadway**

Paul Filmer, Val Rimmer and Dave Walsh identify four ways that the choreography for *Oklahoma!* changed the way dance was staged on Broadway. Firstly, the choreography 'merged a number of different dance styles [...] North American dances and styles.'<sup>375</sup> This is an example of the grafting of styles, movements and gestures from multiple sources to create an American style. The authors highlight the use of square dance, the two-step and ragtime tap-dancing. Secondly the choreography references modern American dance, especially the work of Martha Graham and Lester Horton. Modern dancer Bella Lewitzky, who was part of Horton's company, worked with Agnes de Mille to choreograph some of the dance sequences, and she performed in the chorus in the film adaptation.<sup>376</sup> Thirdly, Agnes de Mille drew on her previous work, notably *Rodeo*, incorporating classical ballet positions such as *arabesques*, *pirouettes*, *pointe* work and *echappés* in the dream ballet and other dance sequences in the film, especially 'Many a New Day'.<sup>377</sup> Finally

<sup>373</sup> Ibid, pp.244-249.

<sup>374</sup> *Oklahoma!* (1955) < [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048445/business?ref\\_=tt\\_dt\\_bus](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048445/business?ref_=tt_dt_bus) accessed 28 July 2015.

<sup>375</sup> Paul Filmer, Val Rimmer and Dave Walsh, 'Oklahoma!: Ideology and Politics in the Vernacular Tradition of the American Musical, *Popular Music*, Vol.18, No.3 (Oct., 1999), p.387.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid, p.388.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid; see Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

dancers were chosen by Agnes de Mille for their ability to act through dance and express characters through movements, thoughts and emotions, rather than casting well-known dance stars.<sup>378</sup> Agnes de Mille taught acting classes for dancers with her own particular style of dance acting using gestures and movements to denote objects, actions and emotions.

Barker, basing her comment on an interview with Agnes de Mille, said that 'she was the first to admit that her great weakness was in the invention of original movement and an ability to develop one consistent choreographic style.'<sup>379</sup> It is paradoxical that Agnes de Mille said this prior to the creation of her choreography for *Oklahoma!*, for which there was so much critical acclaim and which has since been much imitated and parodied within film and on Broadway.

This completes my analysis of the dream ballet in *Oklahoma!*.

### **The influence of *The Red Shoes***

Before moving on to *An American in Paris*, I wish briefly to consider the influence of the dream ballet in *The Red Shoes*, choreographed by Robert Helpmann.<sup>380</sup> The British film was based on the Hans Christian Anderson fairy story of the same name including a sixteen-minute dream ballet that was a commercial and critical success in America as well as the UK.<sup>381</sup> Kelly and Freed both cited this film as a major influence on the creation of 'The American in Paris Ballet'.

<sup>378</sup> Filmer, Rimmer and Walsh, p.388.

<sup>379</sup> Barker, p.140.

<sup>380</sup> Dancer Leonard Massine choreographed his own dance as the shoemaker in 'The Ballet of the Red Shoes', Mark Connolly, *The Red Shoes* (London: Turner Classic Movies, I.B. Tauris), p.40.

<sup>381</sup> The film was produced by independent producers with no track record of producing musicals.

Vicky Page (Moira Shearer) is a ballet dancer forced by ballet impresario Boris Lermontov (Anton Walbrook), to choose between her marriage to Julian Craster (Marius Goring), the composer of 'The Ballet of the Red Shoes' and dance.<sup>382</sup> She is driven to her death by the magical powers of her red ballet shoes. Adrienne L. McLean (2008) describes how the ballet in the film became 'imbricated as an always contradictory representation and ambiguously gendered embodiment of morbidity and ecstasy, life and death, achievement and failure, fulfillment and despair.'<sup>383</sup> All the dancing roles in the film were cast with ballet dancers, not actors to create authenticity in the dance scenes and it was always the intention of Powell and Pressburger to include a ballet sequence within the film.<sup>384</sup> The ballet is described by Herb Lightman in *American Cinematographer* as 'an impressionistic sequence in which the camera mirrors the ballerina's subconscious mind (figure 2.11). As she dances, the characters in the ballet identify themselves with the personalities involved in their own life'.<sup>385</sup> Lightman also states that the ballet 'is so very definitely a cinematic ballet that it could never actually be performed on a theatre stage.'<sup>386</sup> McLean states that 'the central ballet's fantasy elements *and* their relation to plot points function in ways that would already have been familiar to musical fans.'<sup>387</sup>

<sup>382</sup> Moira Shearer was a ballerina at the London-based Sadler's Wells Ballet company.

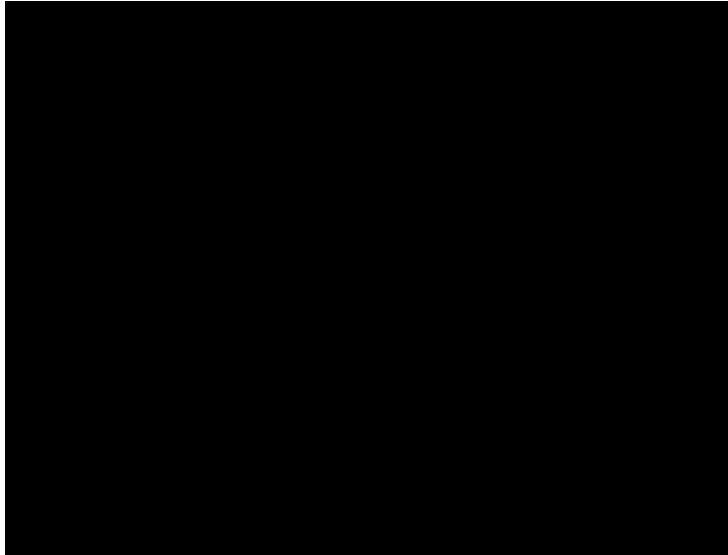
<sup>383</sup> McLean, *Dying Swans and Madmen: Ballet, The Body and Narrative Cinema*, p.137.

<sup>384</sup> The film also featured former Ballet Russes principal dancer Leonide Massine, prima ballerina Ludmilla Tcherina and Robert Helpmann, principal dancer at Sadlers Wells in London. Ibid, p.142.

<sup>385</sup> Herb Lightman, 'The Red Shoes: The Ultimate in Choreography Done in Technicolor by Jack Cardiff, A.S.C.', *American Cinematographer*, 20 March, 1949, pp.82-3; as quoted in *ibid*, p.146.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid, p.149.



**Figure 2.11 Vicky Page (Maira Shearer) dancing  
'The Ballet of The Red Shoes' in *The Red Shoes***

Archive material highlights the presence of this film in the development of the work of the Freed Unit. In a memo from Freed to Kelly and Donen, Freed stated:

I just ran the cut numbers of *On The Town* and they were the greatest and most inspiring works I have seen since I have been making moving pictures. Pressburger and Powell can't shine your shoes – red, white or blue. Much love from your proud producer.<sup>388</sup>

The decision to create a ballet for *An American in Paris* that would run for seventeen minutes was agreed between Freed, Kelly and Minnelli so as to create a ballet that was both longer than *The Ballet of The Red Shoes*, and with more ambition in scale and scope. Most dream ballets in film at this point were approximately between five and eight minutes in length.

In his biography, Kelly asserted that the success of *The Red Shoes* internationally provided evidence that classical ballet could work in

<sup>388</sup> Arthur Freed Memo to Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 13 April 1949, *On The Town*, Box 17, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, July 2008.

commercially successful and popular films.<sup>389</sup> Director Michael Powell wrote in his autobiography that ‘Gene Kelly told me that he ran *The Red Shoes* fifteen to twenty times for different executives at MGM before he got acceptance of his script [*An American in Paris*]’.<sup>390</sup> Mark Connolly (2005) states, ‘few British films have had such a direct and deep impact in Hollywood’.<sup>391</sup>

In the next section I will explore the work of Gene Kelly and collaborators on the creation of the dream ballet for *An American in Paris*, the longest and most expensive dream ballet sequence in Hollywood film musicals, at that point.

### **Background to the production of the ‘The American in Paris Ballet’ in *An American in Paris***

Producer Arthur Freed was a personal friend of Ira Gershwin and he acquired the title rights to his brother George Gershwin’s ‘symphonic tone poem’ composition *An American in Paris* suite in 1949, originally written in 1928-9, for \$158,750.<sup>392</sup> The contract was on the condition that only the Gershwins’ back catalogue of music was to be used in any film produced.<sup>393</sup> The title was at this point the only narrative instruction, as there was no story or script. See Appendix 3 for the plot summary.

<sup>389</sup> Hirschorn, p.202.

<sup>390</sup> Michael Powell, *A Life in Movies* as quoted in McLean, *Dying Swans and Madmen*, p.166.

<sup>391</sup> Connolly, *The Red Shoes*, p.88.

<sup>392</sup> Fordin, pp.306-8. George Gershwin died in 1937. Albertina Rasch choreographed an abridged ballet to Gershwin’s ‘An American in Paris’ for his show *Show Girl* (2 July 1929 – 5 October 1929), Music by George Gershwin, Book by William Anthony McGuire, Lyrics by Ira Gershwin and Gus Kahn, Ballets by Albertina Rasch, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/show-girl-10910>> accessed 8 July 2019. In 1936 Ruth Page created a stand alone ballet *Americans in Paris* to the music for herself and Paul Draper and in 1950 she revised the show to become *Les Américains à Paris*, <<https://www.broadway.com/buzz/180246/dance-through-the-80-year-history-of-gershwins-an-american-in-paris-from-carnegie-hall-to-broadway/>> accessed 8 July 2019, but I have not found any evidence to state that these productions were influences on the film version.

<sup>393</sup> Ira Gershwin received \$56,250 as a consultant on the film and to ‘write new and/or additional lyrics (English and French) for the songs selected, *ibid*.

Kelly was determined to cast a classically trained ballet dancer in the lead female role. Originally the role was earmarked for Cyd Charisse but when she became pregnant, Kelly and Freed started to look elsewhere for new talent and both were keen to cast a French dancer. Two French dancers, Odile Versois and Leslie Caron, were screen tested. Kelly had seen Caron perform in France at the Ballet des Champs-Élysées in 1949. He lobbied for her to be cast despite her lack of acting experience, limited command of the English language and the fact that she was still a minor and there would be technical issues in securing a visa.<sup>394</sup> It was of course a well-established tradition in Hollywood for studios to use both minors and Europeans.

The ballet was planned from the start, but the working scripts written by Alan J. Lerner only make reference to the position of the ballet sequence, or 'choreographic pantomime' within the primary diegesis, not the ballet narrative.<sup>395</sup> In an early story outline dated 14 November 1949, the ending of the film was substantially different.<sup>396</sup> After the Black and White Ball (*Beaux Arts Ball*), Lise and Jerry agree to meet at the bridge after telling Milo and Henri about their love for each other, and 'with the embrace the music of 'An American in Paris' begins, and never stops for the rest of the picture. All the movement from now on is done in choreographic pantomime. Ends with Lisa and Jerry in his flat looking at his painting of her'.<sup>397</sup> The script dated 8 May 1950 notes the name change from Lisa to Lise Bouvier, and as per previous script versions notes that the 'ballet [is] still to be determined'.<sup>398</sup> The complete script dated 12 June 1950 outlines the finale as per the filmed version though it

<sup>394</sup> Harris, *BFI Classics: An American in Paris*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>395</sup> Turner MGM Scripts A-688 *An American in Paris* (1951), p.14, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> Turner MGM Scripts A-671 *An American in Paris* (1951), Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.



still does not include the ballet narrative stating 'this mood carries into the Ballet [...] 'AN AMERICAN IN PARIS BALLET 170-195 [...] The opening scene of which is a reproduction of Jerry's sketch. Lise and Jerry. Dancers.'<sup>399</sup>

The outline and eventual ballet narrative were devised by Kelly, Minnelli, Freed and costume designer Irene Sharaff late in the production process. The ballet was rehearsed, staged and filmed after filming of the book was completed. According to the ballet script written by Minnelli and Kelly on 6 September 1950, 'everything up to scene 1 has been shot, everything following scene 9 has been shot.'<sup>400</sup> Kelly was allocated six weeks to rehearse the ballet with his assistant choreographer Carol Haney.<sup>401</sup>

Differing accounts exist as to the origins of this dream ballet narrative.<sup>402</sup> In an undated Production Note in the MGM Archives, possibly a draft for the promotional materials for the film, there is reference to Freed stating:

When we started the picture, we had no intention of doing the ballet the way it materialized. We were intending to shoot it on the Paris streets. We all had our passports. Even Ira [Gershwin] had packed, done pill rehearsals and left. [...] 'Do you think we're limiting ourselves by shooting in actual scenes?' asked Freed in conference with Kelly and Minnelli, maybe we've already done this sort of thing in *On the Town*.' Then Freed said 'what about the idea of doing the ballet based on the artists' imagination of different painters?'<sup>403</sup>

<sup>399</sup> Turner MGM Scripts A-673 *An American in Paris* (1951), Script dated 6-12-50, Script completed 6-14-50, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014. The numbers in the quote refer to the scene numbers.

<sup>400</sup> *An American in Paris* Ballet Complete 9-6-50, From Vincente Minnelli, Gene Kelly, Okayed: Arthur Freed, Vincente Minnelli papers, *An American in Paris* Script Folder 1, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>401</sup> During rehearsals Minnelli directed *Father's Little Dividend* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1951), the sequel to his earlier *Father of the Bride* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1950).

<sup>402</sup> Minnelli references Music Critic Deems Taylor's narrative for Gershwin's original programme notes for the premiere of *An American in Paris* in December 1928 as an influence on parts of the ballet narrative, Knox p.141.

<sup>403</sup> Undated Production Note, *An American in Paris*, Box 1, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

The idea of filming on the Paris streets is referenced in a series of wires from Ed Woehler, Assistant Director/Unit Manager to Walter Strohm, Head of the Production Department, dated 6-11 September 1950. Woehler complains about the 'wet streets' due to rain and the plan to film the main landmarks lit specifically for the film that resulted in 'unusable nite (sic) shots'.<sup>404</sup> A letter from Peter Ballbush (Montage Director) to Arthur Freed detailed the problems of shooting in Paris including reference to the revolt to free Algiers using up all available motor cops and causing 'no control over traffic'.<sup>405</sup> In a Production Note from Ed Woehler, dated 2 August 1950 he stated the intention to shoot many scenes on location in Paris including the ballet sequence and to 'shoot with hidden camera to get authentic feeling'; (a handwritten pencil note simply saying 'cut' is written across this Production Note).<sup>406</sup>

The ballet would have been radically different if it had been filmed on the streets of Paris. Having abandoned the idea, the creative team needed a unifying concept to create a focus. This was to create individual worlds influenced by specific French artists, primarily from the Impressionist and Post Impressionist periods. One of the artists included was the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh but tied in by using his colour palette and character studies for the *Place de l'Opéra* scene. Kelly chose not to use Edgar Degas, as his work was too directly associated with ballet.<sup>407</sup>

As an integrated film musical, Paris itself plays an important role within the film; it is not just a backdrop to the story. The creative team collaborated to develop

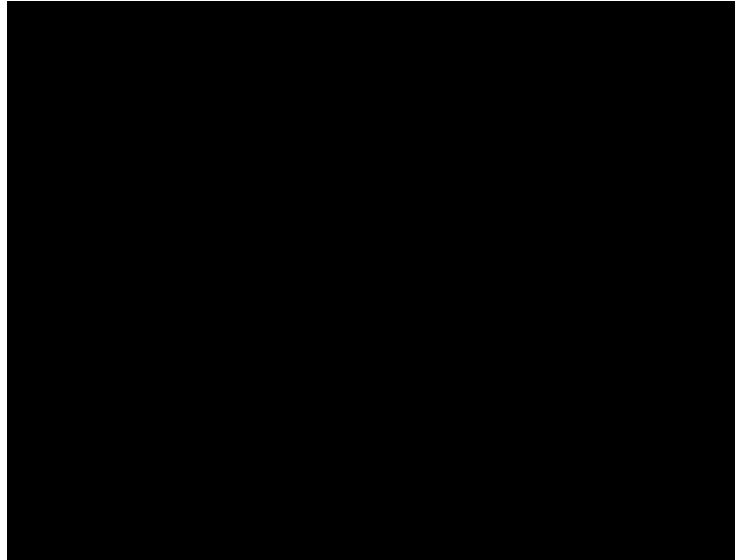
<sup>404</sup> Series of cables from Ed Woehler to Walter Strohm dated between 6-11 September 1950, MGM Archives, USC, accessed July 2008.

<sup>405</sup> Undated letter from Peter Ballbush to Arthur Freed, *An American in Paris*, Box 1, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

<sup>406</sup> Production Note written by Ed Woehler, dated 2 August 1950, Box 1, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

<sup>407</sup> Knox, p.141.

a recognisable Parisian feel throughout the film for the viewing audience. The dream ballet allowed the creative team to present different aspects of French culture through the evocation of individual artists in the mise-en-scène.



**Figure 2.12 Studio based Parisian street scene with Jerry (Gene Kelly) and French children performing 'I Got Rhythm' in *An American in Paris***

The only real footage of Paris is the establishing montage images at the start of the film that are mainly taken from French travelogue films, 'Tourist Paris' and 'Flight to Paris'.<sup>408</sup> Minnelli, Freed and Kelly as self-confessed Francophiles aimed to create and capture an American perspective of Paris as a romantic ideal, full of recognisable Parisian characters and locations to an American audience (figure 2.12).<sup>409</sup> Freed was a knowledgeable and avid modern art collector, Kelly had visited Paris many times and spoke the language, whereas

<sup>408</sup> Request to purchase 'certain parts of atmosphere shots of Paris from the 35mm negative' of 16mm Technicolor short 'Tourist Paris', letter from Secretary to Vincente Minnelli to French National Tourist Office, 8 August 1950; Inter-office Communication from Vincente Minnelli to William Levanwy on MGM headed paper, 'Returning 'Tourist Paris' and 'Flight to Paris' to French National Tourist Office', 7 August 1950, Vincente Minnelli Papers, Folder 3 *An American in Paris* (1951) Production, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>409</sup> There is scholarly writing about Paris as Utopia: Richard Dyer, argues that in setting *An American in Paris* in a stylised recreation of Paris landmarks, the context suggests that 'utopia is implicit in the world of the narrative as well as in the world of the numbers' in Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', *Only Entertainment*, p.18.

Minnelli had an idealised view of French culture acquired through books, magazines and films. A number of the core production team had lived and worked in Paris including Sharaff and Scenic Designer Cedric Gibbons. Sharaff outlines her thoughts for the ballet in an undated incomplete typewritten note on Beverley Hills Hotel and Bungalows notepaper: the ballet described has elements of the final version but uses additional locations and a different storyline including characters acting as villains to separate the lovers.<sup>410</sup>

Kelly and Minnelli's seven-page story outline states the premise for the ballet as:

In essence the entire ballet is a representation of a painter thinking about Paris – what the city means to him, the effect it has on him and the trials, the frustrations, joys and attending miseries that accompany his life in Paris, and his falling in love. The entire ballet should suggest not essentially a fantasy, but more a half fantasy, that half real world which makes things even more real. So, in the piece we must try to accomplish choreographically, dramatically, and scenically what the great impressionist painters accomplished in their medium through the use of color and light and forms.<sup>411</sup>

According to Minnelli, as cited in Knox, the story had to be about emotions otherwise it would be too confusing for audiences, it was a 'kind of delirium and therefore a jumble in his mind'.<sup>412</sup>

There are nine distinct scenes within the ballet using six locations that represent different artists: Dufy, Renoir, Utrillo, Rousseau, Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec. According to the completed ballet outline, 'the décor of the

<sup>410</sup> *An American in Paris* Production Notes, Folder 3, Vincente Minnelli papers, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>411</sup> 'American in Paris' ballet story outline by Gene Kelly and Vincente Minnelli, 6 September 1950, okayed by Arthur Freed, *An American in Paris* script folder 1, Vincente Minnelli papers, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>412</sup> Knox, p.139, p.144.

ballet will be its most distinguishing feature as the uniqueness and originality, for each individual scene will be done in the styles of different painters.’<sup>413</sup> It was important for Kelly and Minnelli that the ballet ‘should reflect an artist’s viewpoint and both the scenery and the costumes should be done so that they seem painted.’<sup>414</sup> Stephen Harvey (1989) states that ‘by combining exuberant American brushstrokes with a Gallic palette, the ballet’s style and substance fuse into a remarkable cross-cultural whole.’<sup>415</sup> Significant architectural features of Paris are evident, helping to create the sense of place. These include the banks of the River Seine, the *Place de la Concorde* fountain, bridges, *Place de l’Opéra* and the music halls of Montmartre. Carrying the colour from backdrops through and onto the floor helped to create the feel of being absorbed and surrounded by the painting.<sup>416</sup> Jerry comments on the balcony of the Black and White Ball that ‘Paris is the best and worst place in the world to be in love’ and this is reflected in the scenes within the ballet.

John Alton who had worked with Minnelli on *Father’s Little Dividend* was the cameraman for the ballet, though he did not work on the rest of the film. He had never worked in Technicolor before but he used fewer lights than standard and was a fast worker.<sup>417</sup> His style included ‘shooting directly into a light or using less than the minimum of light deemed necessary for a good negative.’<sup>418</sup> ‘The secrets of the ballet’s photography was the *fumata* (smoky) quality, which

<sup>413</sup> *An American in Paris* Ballet Complete, 9-6-50, Margaret Herrick Library, January 2014; *Reel Travel Blog* has directly compared examples of the different artists’ paintings with each of the different scenes within the ballet in ‘Anatomy of a Ballet’ Parts 1-13, 4 July 2015, originally published on 25 February 2012 at [vacheespagnole.wordpress.com](http://vacheespagnole.wordpress.com), <<https://reeltravelblog.wordpress.com/2015/07/04/anatomy-of-a-ballet-part-1-raoul-dufy/>> accessed 23 April 2019.

<sup>414</sup> *An American in Paris* Ballet Complete, 9-6-50, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2004.

<sup>415</sup> Harvey, *Directed by Vincente Minnelli*, p.98.

<sup>416</sup> George Gibson, Head of Scenic Art Department, as quoted in Knox, p.154.

<sup>417</sup> Knox, pp.162-3.

<sup>418</sup> Fordin, p.327.

changed all the colours to pastel', stated Alton.<sup>419</sup> The seamless transition between scenes was achieved by 'match-cutting', whereby 'the action of the dancer is exactly matched from the end of one scene to the beginning of the next.'<sup>420</sup>

Due to the nature of the ballet outline the original and complete 'An American in Paris' composition as written by Gershwin would not fit exactly to the ballet. A contemporary restoration of the dream ballet sequence using the original 'An American in Paris' Gershwin score clearly demonstrates that six minutes were cut and five minutes of new music were added.<sup>421</sup> The MGM music team of Conrad Salinger, Johnny Green and Saul Chaplin worked together on the musical arrangement to ensure its fit with the ballet, and with the individual artists' scenes. According to Knox this entailed composing some additional music, reordering sections, condensing and stretching sections to match the choreography.<sup>422</sup> This is borne out in archive materials stating that there were '7 uses of "LA SORELLA" based on an excerpt from "LOS INNOCENTES" – 4 bars each in length, Composer/lyricist Estelles, Belgado, Silva, Gallini'.<sup>423</sup> Green had learned the score from Gershwin himself and stated 'I learned it from George; I play it the way George wanted it. The tempi and the sauciness

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Christian Esquevin, 'An American in Paris: Art on Film', *Silver Screen Modes* blog, 28 June 2014, <<http://silverscreenmodes.com/an-american-in-paris-the-mgm-blogathon/>> accessed 23 April 2019.

<sup>421</sup> The 'American in Paris' ballet with original Gershwin score in full <<https://vimeo.com/60145841>> accessed 2 May 2016.

<sup>422</sup> Knox, pp.154-5.

<sup>423</sup> Turner, MGM Scripts A-687 *An American in Paris* (1951), February 21 1952, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014; Gershwin's original 'An American in Paris' symphonic tone poem was constructed of six distinct musical themes in the score: First Walking, Taxi Horn, Second Walking, Left Bank, Blues and Charleston and was seventeen minutes in length. The use of 'La Sorella' in the original composition is a fleeting reference, Spencer Reese, 'Music in Motion: Interpreting Musical Structure through Choreography in Gershwin's *An American in Paris*' (2019), *Doctoral Dissertations*, 2172, <[https://opencommons.uconn.edu/dissertations/2172?utm\\_source=opencommons.uconn.edu%2Fdoctoral%2F2172&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](https://opencommons.uconn.edu/dissertations/2172?utm_source=opencommons.uconn.edu%2Fdoctoral%2F2172&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages)> accessed 26 August, 2019, p.10.

of the times, the spirit, the sentimentality, and the blues that sound like blues.<sup>424</sup>

The original budget for the ballet was \$353k but the final expenditure exceeded \$500k making the total budget for the film almost \$3m, twice the production cost of the average MGM film at the time.<sup>425</sup> The ability to garner European distribution for the film due to its subject matter was a contributory factor to securing such a large budget.<sup>426</sup>

The investment in the seventeen-minute ballet and its importance to the film is highlighted in the film's trailer with superimposed titles popping in and out reading: 'With the AMERICAN IN PARIS ballet – GREATEST DANCE ENTERTAINMENT EVER PROJECTED ON THE SCREEN'; and in the opening credits of the film: 'And Presenting The American in Paris Ballet' placed immediately after the credits for Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron and the three supporting players of Oscar Levant, Georges Guetary and Nina Foch; thus the ballet figured as the fifth title credit.<sup>427</sup>

### **Prologue to 'The American in Paris Ballet'**

In an early scene in *An American in Paris*, French singer Henri Baurel (George Guetary) tells his friend, concert pianist Adam Cook (Oscar Levant) about his love for a young woman called Lise Bouvier (Leslie Caron). This scene plays a pivotal role in introducing the character of Lise as well as introducing Caron to

<sup>424</sup> Knox, p.90.

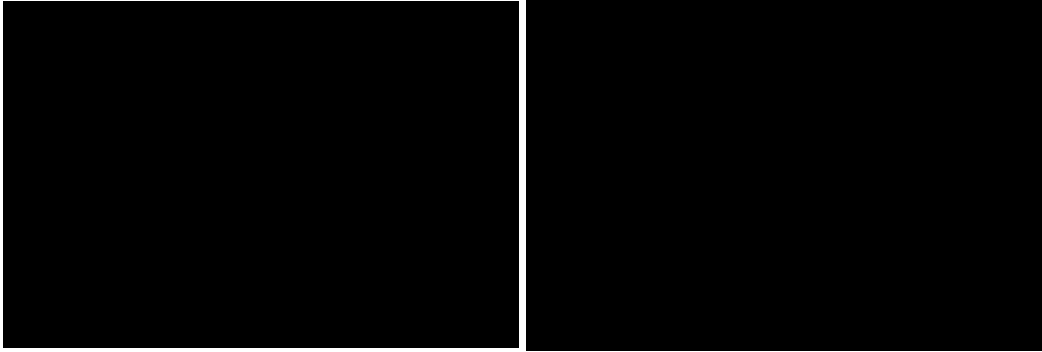
<sup>425</sup> MGM Inter-office Communication 9 March 1950 from Joe Finn to JJ Cohn, cc Messrs Strohm, Freed, Minnelli, outlining additional estimate costs of \$30,350 to the original budget of \$353,000, Vincente Minnelli Papers, Folder 3, *An American in Paris* (1951) production, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>426</sup> It was also one of the last films that MGM's Studio Head Louis B. Mayer signed off before being replaced by Dore Schary.

<sup>427</sup> Turner/MGM Scripts A-684 *An American in Paris* 1951, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

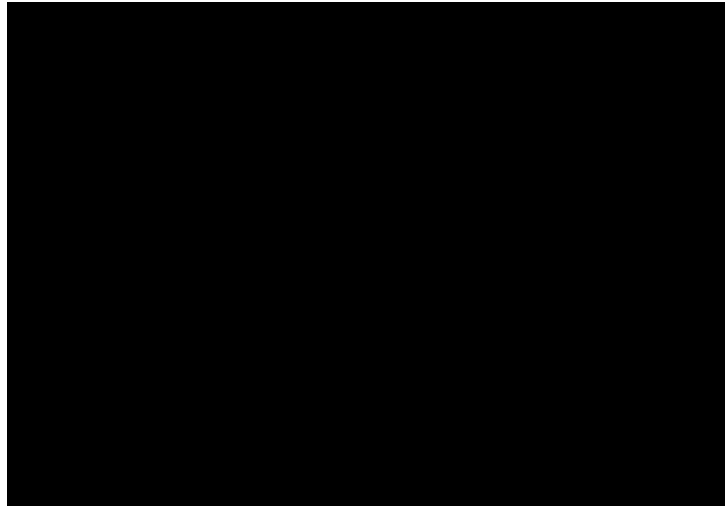
the viewing audience for the first time. As Bourel describes Bouvier, the audience sees Lise dancing in different styles to explain the different aspects of her character to Cook and to impress on the audience that Caron is a classically trained ballet dancer. There are five sections: 'Beauty' danced *en pointe* in traditional classical ballet style to slow music with Caron dressed in a pink satin full skirted dress; 'Exciting' is danced in flat pumps laced around the ankle with Caron wearing a figure hugging purple dress with a split to the waist dancing provocatively around a high backed wooden chair to the sound of slow jazz music; 'Sweet and Shy' again danced *en pointe* with Caron dressed in a yellow satin gown holding flowers; 'Vivacious and Modern' with Caron dressed in a white flapper dress and tap shoes dancing the Charleston, even though that originated in the 1920s (figure 2.13a); 'Reads incessantly' is danced in ballet pumps with black fitted top and trousers and cap with Caron reading a book and dancing holding onto a bar (as if it was a ballet barre) and stretching into the splits (figure 2.13b); and 'Gayest' with Caron again dancing *en pointe* but wearing a small blue satin tutu and pirouetting fast towards the camera. The mise-en-scène for each section is a single bold monochromatic scheme with minimal furnishings and a contrasting monochromatic coloured costume (figures 2.13a and 2.13b). This dance sequence with the overlying narrative by Baurel, introduces the audience to the concept of different dance styles and mise-en-scène to evoke different moods and emotions, anticipating the dream ballet at the conclusion to the film.





**Figures 2.13a and 2.13b Introducing Leslie Caron as Lise Bouvier (2.13a) and as a classically trained dancer (2.13b) in *An American in Paris***

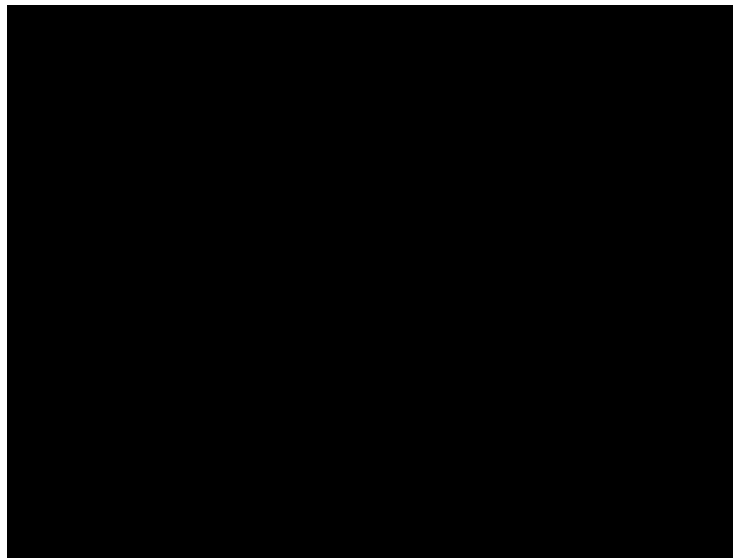
The dream ballet is positioned immediately preceding the final scene in the film that takes place at the Black and White Ball in Montmartre (figure 2.14). Kelly, thinking he has lost Lise to Henri draws a sketch of an open gate on the back of an invitation, then rips it in two and it drifts to the ground. He walks towards the balcony edge and leans over looking across the Paris skyline. The wind rustles as the camera pans downwards to show the two pieces of the sketch joining together.



**Figure 2.14 Milo (Nina Foch) and Jerry at the Black and White Ball (*Beaux Arts Ball*) in *An American in Paris***

### **'The American in Paris Ballet'**

The ballet starts with the visual cue of the camera slowly zooming into a close up of Kelly's face, enhanced by the audio cues of the wind dying down and the music softening. The reconstituted black and white sketch of the *Cheveux de Marly*, the sculpted horses at either side of the *Champs Elysées* becomes visible through Kelly's face, and as his face fades away the black and white drawing appears as a stylised backdrop; on the ground lies a single red rose (figure 2.15). The rose symbolises Jerry's love for Lise and Lise herself as a leitmotiv throughout the ballet. When Jerry is seen in an earlier scene painting a portrait of Lise, she is holding a red rose. Kelly had already used a red rose as a symbol of love, and as a way to transition into and out of the 'La Cumparsita' dream ballet in *Anchors Aweigh*. Minnelli had used a similar idea with a red carnation in the 'Will You Marry Me?' dream ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief*.



**Figure 2.15 Jerry and the transition into 'The American in Paris Ballet'**

**Scene 1 (Dufy) (Intro 16 seconds, Color Change 20 seconds, *Place de la Concorde* 2:30), Actual running time in the film 1:31:20 - 1:34:35<sup>428</sup>**

Jerry appears walking slowly forward towards the camera in the middle of the frame, partly transparent, with the black and white drawing still completely visible behind him. He is casually dressed in a short-sleeved black t-shirt with white open collar, black trousers, white socks and black loafers. The lack of colour in the drawing and now the stage setting and Jerry's costume, implies the loss of love and is also a reference to the Black and White Ball in the previous scene; Paris has been drained of colour now that Jerry has lost Lise. Jerry picks up the rose as the music builds to a crescendo; he turns round quickly to see the sketch being flooded with red, white and blue shades, the rich colours that are associated with the artist Raoul Dufy, and the French flag. He drops the rose to the ground. A group of beautiful women, the 'Furies' dressed in pure white and in scarlet dresses with matching headdresses and scarves entangle him as he moves around them while they lead him into the *Place de la Concorde*.<sup>429</sup> The arrival of the Furies and/or the *Pompier*s performs the bridge from one scene to another throughout the ballet.<sup>430</sup>

<sup>428</sup> Timings and titles for each scene within the ballet stated in an undated note titled 'Timing on Dance numbers for Ballet', Folder 3, *An American in Paris* (1951) production, Vincente Minnelli papers, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>429</sup> In Greek mythology, the women could be viewed symbolically as 'Furies' according to Irene Sharaff - the 'three goddesses of vengeance' in Greek mythology who sought justice through the punishment of guilty victims, <<http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/Fi-Go/Furies.html>> accessed 21 April 2019. Alternatively they could be described as 'Sirens' who were 'singing enchantresses' that could lure sailors to their death,

<<https://www.greekmythology.com/Myths/Creatures/Sirens/sirens.html>> accessed 21 April 2019, or 'Circes' – Circe was a powerful enchantress who could turn humans into animals,

<[https://www.greekmythology.com/Other\\_Gods/Circe/circe.html](https://www.greekmythology.com/Other_Gods/Circe/circe.html)> accessed 21 April 2019. This idea is also represented in the ballet *Giselle* whereby the 'Willies' are the spirits of abandoned young girls seeking revenge whose dancing torments men to their death, <<http://www.danceit.org/Giselleing.html>> accessed 21 April 2019.

<sup>430</sup> *Pompier*s, translates as Firemen; they are dressed in traditional French firemen's uniform but with a military twist and brass helmets.



**Figures 2.16a and 2.16b Raoul Dufy, 'Place de La Concorde', date unknown (2.16a) inspired the setting for Scene One of 'The American in Paris Ballet' (2.16b)<sup>431</sup>**

This first scene in the *Place de la Concorde* is inspired by the paintings of Dufy (figure 2.16a).<sup>432</sup> It was designed to include a vast number of different characters:

Midinettes from the shop, elegant couples from Maxim's, gendarmes, pompiers, sailors with colorful, red, white and blue costumes, representing the colours that Dufy primarily worked with in his paintings – all the people that mean to everyone all over the world the Paris that we love. <sup>433</sup>

Jerry is immediately seduced by the 'Furies'. They represent metaphorically his rich sponsor Milo Roberts (Nina Foch) who was wearing an off the shoulder dress in an earlier scene in the film. These women, though wearing *pointe* shoes, dance both *relevé en pointe* and flat-footed encircling Jerry, arms outstretched.<sup>434</sup> They represent the sexual and intoxicating beauty of 'Gay Paris', the city of painters and bohemian lifestyle that had inspired Jerry to

<sup>431</sup> Raoul Dufy, 'Place de la Concorde', date unknown, *Fontesdart*, <<https://www.fontesdart.org/18199/>> accessed 25 April 2019.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid, Dufy painted and sketched a number of scenes of the *Place de la Concorde*, as did his brother Jean Dufy that are sometimes mistakenly attributed to Raoul Dufy in blog posts regarding the 'American in Paris' ballet.

<sup>433</sup> *An American in Paris* Ballet Complete 9-6-50, Vincente Minnelli Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>434</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

remain after the Second World War. This is a contemporary jazz dance style, dancing with bended knees, but with arms outstretched or bent at the elbow, fingers splayed wide. The camera follows Jerry as he dances through and around the female dancers, *pompier*s, people in evening dress and children all dressed in hues of red, white and aquamarine colours. The *Place de la Concorde* set has undulating floors, gas lamps, an obelisk and a fountain. The dancing is energised, frenetic, uplifting, matching the fast beats of the music, with all the characters jumping, turning and running, not fully connecting with each other, denoting the busy heart of Paris. He fully embraces Paris, excitedly running around the *Place de la Concorde*, dancing with and being seduced by the Parisian characters and immersing himself in the feel of the city. One of the 'Furies' dressed in white, encircles him with her red scarf turning him around on one leg (figure 2.16b). He hesitates, caught up in the moment, but he does not respond to her advances and she pulls away and leaves him. Jerry *pirouettes* on *demi-pointe* on one foot multiple times and bends down with his fists clenched over his face in desperation and frustration. Once again Jerry is entranced by the 'Furies' in red as the music quickens, joining in with their movements, even kissing and embracing one of them as the rest *pirouette en pointe*. It is a brief seduction as Jerry remembers he is searching for Lise, so he and the women run away in different directions. A group of *pompier*s, inspired by Dufy's paintings such as 'The Band' (figure 2.17), march right to left across the screen with a light fast step, arms swinging to a brassy motif in the music.<sup>435</sup> This motif is featured in a number of the scenes whenever they appear.

<sup>435</sup> Raoul Dufy, 'The Band', 1949, *Tate*, <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dufy-the-band-p01703>> accessed 22 April 2019. Dufy painted a number of images of marching bands.

**Figure 2.17 Raoul Dufy, 'The Band', 1949 inspired the *Pompieri* that first appear in Scene One of 'The American in Paris Ballet'<sup>436</sup>**

At the Greutert fountain Jerry encounters a distinctive ethnic character from Dufy's paintings – a man dressed in white and aquamarine robes, red neckerchief, white and red turban and wearing medals on his chest. He is North African and is the only non-white character in the entire ballet and film. He dances a short solo as Jerry watches, incorporating sideways moves of the head while keeping his body still – an ethnic gesture denoting his African heritage and an example of cultural stereotyping.

The light fades to darkness denoting nighttime, the street lamps light up; the tone darkens as Jerry is caught in a spotlight and hears an air raid siren, evoking his memory of the war. He tries to escape its focus and runs through the square, which is now full of bustling people. He stops in profile to the camera as he spots Lise and he stretches his arm out to her. She is dressed in a white sparkly dress with a transparent skirt and sleeves and red waistband, holding a red rose in her left hand; the dress is similar to the dress she was wearing at the Black and White Ball and mirrors the transparency of the water in the fountain. Lise jumps onto the fountain and runs around the centerpiece looking for Jerry, but as Jerry jumps onto the fountain to reach her, he is again confronted by the temptation of the 'Furies' in red and Lise vanishes.

This first scene evokes the wonder and excitement of Jerry, seduced by the city of his dreams and the temptation of Milo, his benefactor, yet still aware of his outsider status. The choreography captures a young man exploring Paris,

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

indulging in all that the city has to offer and the people that he meets and his initial infatuation with and pursuit of Lise.

**Scene 2 (Renoir) (Flower market 1:48) Actual running time 1:34:36 – 1:36:39**

Smoke fills the screen and fades into the flower market scene accompanied by slow quiet music as early morning sunlight filters through trees. As the smoke rises Jerry walks over a bridge and slowly down steps into the flower market of Madeleine emerging out of darkness and covered in dappled light. This scene is inspired by the 'Pont Neuf' painting by Pierre Auguste Renoir and his numerous studies of flowers in vases (figures 2.18a and 2.18b).<sup>437</sup>

**Figures 2.18a and 2.18b Pierre Auguste Renoir, 'Pont Neuf', 1872 inspired the setting for Scene Two (2.18a) Pierre Auguste Renoir, 'Flowers in a Vase', 1866 inspired the mise-en-scène for Scene Two (2.18b) of 'The American in Paris Ballet'**<sup>438</sup>

Kelly ignores a flower girl and spots a red rose, highlighted in a spotlight, in the centre of a bank of white flowers on a flower stand. He picks out the rose, smiles and as he closes his eyes, Lise *bourrées* in *en pointe* wearing a light blue dress covered in spring flowers and petals with a headdress of flowers to match.<sup>439</sup> All the characters in the scene freeze motionless. Jerry is daydreaming about Lise in the *mise-en-abîme*, dream within a dream structure. She represents the delicate and fragile form of a flower: 'the *femme-fleur* of the Surrealists, for whom woman is always the bridge to the unconscious'.<sup>440</sup> Jerry carefully holds her as she leans back against him *en pointe* (figure 2.19). They

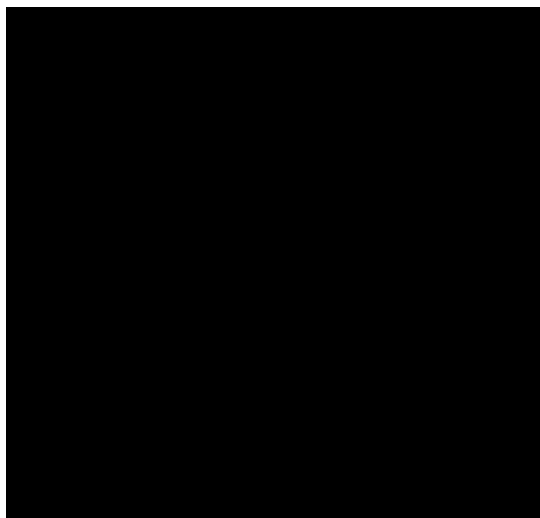
<sup>437</sup> Pierre Auguste Renoir, 'Pont Neuf', Paris, 1872, *National Gallery of Art Images*, <[https://images.nga.gov/en/search/do\\_quick\\_search.html?q=%221970.17.58%22](https://images.nga.gov/en/search/do_quick_search.html?q=%221970.17.58%22)> accessed 2 May 2016; Pierre Auguste Renoir, 'Flowers in a Vase', 1872, *The Athenaeum*, <<http://www.the-athenaeum.org/art/detail.php?ID=4142>> accessed 25 April 2019.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>439</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>440</sup> Dalle-Vacche, p.70.

begin a slow *pas de deux* in a predominantly traditional classical ballet style. Lise balances *en pointe*, often on one foot, the other stretched out in a *battement en devant* before moving her working leg *rond de jambe* to the side at an angle to her body in *arabesque* position, with pointed foot, while Jerry holds her and lifts her.<sup>441</sup> These movements express his masculine strength and her delicate female nature in a dance of romantic heterosexual seduction and love.<sup>442</sup>



**Figure 2.19 Kelly and Caron dancing the *pas de deux* in Scene Two of ‘The American in Paris Ballet’**

The dance evokes the romantic spirit of Paris, the city that Jerry sees through new eyes once he has fallen in love with Lise. Near the end of the scene, Jerry starts to walk away, but he cannot, the lure of Lise is too much for him and he turns back to take hold of her outstretched arms. This scene highlights Caron’s classical ballet training as she dances with precision, grace, poise and control, with extended *allongés* motions.<sup>443</sup> In the ballet outline for this scene, it states ‘as they dance she weaves daisies and corn flowers in her hair, and gathers a

<sup>441</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>442</sup> Hanna, p.166.

<sup>443</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.



huge armful of purple asters.’<sup>444</sup> This does not feature in the final film. The scene ends with Jerry, his arms wrapped around Lise, her head buried in his chest, repeatedly turning in a circle as he holds Lise off the floor, her legs bent at the knees with pointed feet. Jerry’s eyes are shut while Lise is holding the red rose over his shoulder. It is not known why this scene was changed from the original ballet outline. It could be that Kelly wanted a more subtle reference to Lise represented as flowers through her costume and the choreography, or that the introduction of flowers within the dance would have interrupted the narrative flow, romantic mood and feeling of the dance, or simply that they tried and rejected it. It would also have reduced the impact of the start of the next scene with Kelly realising he was daydreaming about Lise.

### **Scene 3 (Utrillo) (1:37) Actual running time 1:36:40 – 1:37:37**

Jerry opens his eyes as he continues turning and discovers that he is on his own standing in a narrow empty street holding a large bunch of colourful flowers in his arms. Realising that he was daydreaming, Jerry lets the flowers fall to the floor, brushing the petals from his clothes in anger and disappointment.

The following short scene is set in a narrow winding empty street inspired by the work of Maurice Utrillo, known predominantly for his French town and cityscapes (figures 2.20a and 2.20b).<sup>445</sup>

<sup>444</sup> Ballet outline, Vincente Minnelli papers, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>445</sup> Maurice Utrillo, ‘Paris Street’, 1914, *Wikiart*, <<http://www.wikiart.org/en/maurice-utrillo/paris-street>> accessed 2 May 2016.



**Figures 2.20a and 2.20b Maurice Utrillo, 'Paris Street', 1914 (2.20a) inspired the setting for Scene Three of 'The American in Paris Ballet' (2.20b)<sup>446</sup>**

The scene starts mournfully with Jerry leaning against a wall (figure 2.20b). It differs greatly from the original ballet outline in which Jerry and Lise dance another *pas de deux*.<sup>447</sup> The emptiness of the street mirrors Jerry's feelings of isolation and loneliness. Four American servicemen, dressed in uniforms of khaki, grey/white and aquamarine with splashes of colour, quickly interrupt him. The original music programme notes by Deems Taylor reference the American yearning for home and suggests that the servicemen represent America, as does tap dancing.<sup>448</sup>

On seeing their lonely countryman, they grab Jerry and thrust him into the air like a long-lost friend. They shake hands in friendship and start to dance in unison in an energetic Broadway hoofing style that is distinctly American, in contrast to the European classical ballet style of the previous scene. The servicemen lead Jerry into a shop where stripey jackets on mannequins seen in the window disappear one by one in quick jump cuts. The four men emerge from the shop wearing the multi-coloured stripey jackets, beige trousers, black and white shoes, straw boaters and carrying canes. Their whole demeanour

<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> 'American in Paris' Ballet outline, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>448</sup> Music Copyright Department, 21 February 1952, Turner/MGM Scripts A-687 *An American in Paris*, (1951), Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

has changed dramatically; all four now lean forward, left hands in their pockets, striding ahead in a line with a straight wide-legged gait, shaking their canes whilst smiling, in the style of the legendary American Vaudeville showman George M. Cohan.<sup>449</sup> As they turn to walk up the street, the music changes to the *pompier*s' brassy motif. The *pompier*s from scene one march across the street from left to right leading the viewer into the next scene.

#### **Scene 4 (Rousseau 4:00) Actual running time 1:37:38 – 1:41:19**

The *pompier*s march through and around sand dunes, over a bridge and into a carnival setting. The camera pans down to reveal a group of children dressed in shades of red watching a Punch and Judy show. The design of the set was influenced by Henri Rousseau's 'A Centennial of Independence' painting showing Parisians dancing in coloured costumes surrounded by flags, plus Rousseau's paintings of wild animals (figures 2.21a and 2.21b).<sup>450</sup>

**Figures 2.21a and 2.21b Henri Rousseau, 'A Centennial of Independence', 1892 (2.21a) inspired the setting for Scene Four, Henri Rousseau, 'Tiger in a Tropical Storm (Surprised!)', 1891 (2.21b) inspired the mise-en-scène for Scene Four, seen in (2.23)<sup>451</sup>**

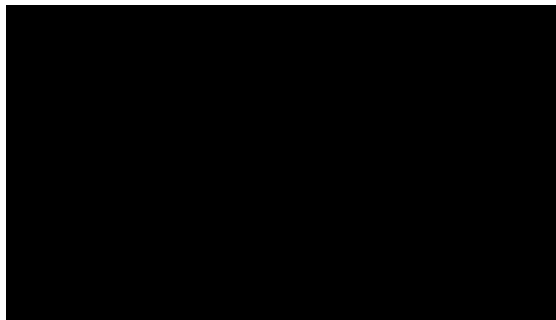
Acrobats, clowns, a strong man and a flag seller, dressed in brightly coloured costumes of orange, yellow, red, pink, blue and green, perform against a painted backdrop of zoo animals, flagpoles, cages and trees, imitating the distinctive Rousseau style.

<sup>449</sup> George M. Cohan was a multi-talented performer, playwright, lyricist and composer, known for his major influence on American musical comedy on Broadway. Cohan had an unusual straight-legged, flat-footed style of hoofing, epitomised by James Cagney in the biopic *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (Michael Curtiz, Warner Brothers, 1942).

<sup>450</sup> Henri Rousseau, 'A Centennial of Independence,' 1892, *Getty*, <<http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/816/henri-rousseau-a-centennial-of-independence-french-1892/>> accessed 2 May 2016; Henri Rousseau, 'Tiger in a Tropical Storm (Surprised!)', 1891, *Wikiart*, <<http://www.wikiart.org/en/henri-rousseau/tiger-in-a-tropical-storm-surprised-1891>> accessed 2 May 2016.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*

Lise, dressed in a multi-coloured stripey bodice and orange full skirt and with a group of six female friends, also dressed in multi-coloured stripey dresses dance excitedly amongst the carnival characters *en pointe*. Rousseau's paintings, particularly 'The Sleeping Gypsy' and the carnival from his 'Notre Dame' paintings inspired the women's costumes, designed by Irene Sharaff (figures 2.22a and 2.22b).<sup>452</sup>



**Figures 2.22a and 2.22b Henri Rousseau, 'The Sleeping Gypsy', 1897 (2.22a) inspired the female costumes in Scene Four of 'The American in Paris Ballet' (2.22b)<sup>453</sup>**

The women all wear straw boaters and white gloves, which represent French doves, according to Sharaff.<sup>454</sup> The scene takes place in the *Place de la Bastille* on 14 July, (Bastille Day) and is boisterous, loud and joyful. The Parisians are expressing their happiness through dancing together; even the *pompier*s join in dancing with Lise and her friends. Kelly mixes European classical ballet for the women including *pas des chat, pliés* with *battements en relevé* and alternating *balancé* steps providing lilting movements embodying the musical movements, with a faster paced American tap dance for the men.<sup>455</sup> His choreography once again utilises Caron's classical training but creates a more contemporary American style by incorporating character

<sup>452</sup> Irene Sharaff as quoted in Knox, p.144; Henri Rousseau, 'The Sleeping Gypsy', 1897, *Wikiart*, <<http://www.wikiart.org/en/henri-rousseau>> accessed 2 May 2016.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>454</sup> Irene Sharaff as quoted in Knox, p.144.

<sup>455</sup> Reese, p.118.

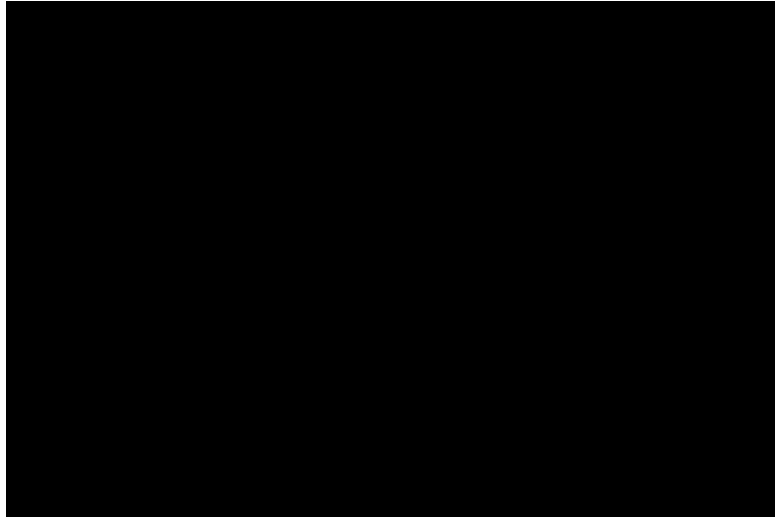
gestures (clasped hands, hands holding hats, waving of the hands) counterpointed with references to George M. Cohan's particularly angular style of hoofing.

Kelly and the American servicemen stride across the bridge into the carnival waving their hats and canes in the air. This section of the scene compares and contrasts two very different styles of dance referencing the Old World (France) and New World (America) using a call and response technique, often used by African American tap dancers and in country/folk dancing. As the music builds and quickens, the female ensemble dances a series of *fouetté* turns alternating legs as they dance in a circular motion.<sup>456</sup> This is followed by a series of *châinés* turns *en relevé* providing visual buoyancy reflecting the music.<sup>457</sup>

Jerry's brash, noisy, physical and fast tapping, whilst always looking at Lise out of the corner of his eye, results in a few light steps *en pointe* from Lise, turning away from Jerry, yet waiting for another response from her suitor. Jerry's tap solos become increasingly more complex as he attempts to impress Lise, who looks away, though occasionally glancing backwards to watch him. This scene is playful, flirtatious and fun, demonstrating the first flush of attraction between the couple. Lise starts to mimic and follow Jerry bending forward, walking *en pointe* with straight legs, and showing her acceptance of his attention. The couple is joined in dance by the spectators, including the *pompiers* as they parade around the carnival in the style of Cohan (figure 2.23).

<sup>456</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>457</sup> Reese, p.119.



**Figure 2.23 Kelly dancing with American men in the style of George M. Cohan and Caron and French women mimicking the dance style *en pointe* in Scene Four of 'The American in Paris Ballet'**

Harvey (1989) states that 'the sprinting diagonals Minnelli executes turn a production number tableau into a three-dimensional celebration.'<sup>458</sup> Lise & Jerry dance out of the scene, drop their hats and his cane to the floor and stand motionless in silhouette facing each other against an orange smoke-filled backdrop.

**Scene 5 (Blues 1:35) Actual running time 1:41:24 – 1:43:31**

The music slows down and changes into a blues style, accompanied by swirling mist, marking a change of tone to a more sensual and erotic mood. When Jerry bends down to pick up Lise, there is a match cut to Jerry holding her in his arms. As the orange light fades into blue the couple is now alone on top of the *Place de la Concorde* fountain. Jerry is wearing an aquamarine version of his costume whereas Lise is wearing a fitted bodice and net three quarter length skirt cut to reveal her legs in the same aquamarine colour with a

<sup>458</sup> Harvey, p.107.

red rose choker at her neck. She wears flat, open-footed strappy shoes to provide flexibility of movement and to appear almost barefoot.

The ballet outline describes this scene as follows: 'the two lovers, in a strong, physical *pas de deux*, come close for the first time to the blues strain of Gershwin's music. They do a lusty, sensual dance.'<sup>459</sup> According to the outline the scene was originally planned to take place on the Alexander the Third Bridge and references no artists. This slow dance in the style of a classical *pas de deux* but incorporating contemporary choreography allows the couple to be more physical with each other. Therefore, the dance becomes sensual as the music builds and lights change to red denoting passion. According to Harvey, 'this sinuous mating dance around the pagan gods of the fountain is really a trio – Kelly, Caron and Minnelli's camera as dogged voyeur.'<sup>460</sup> As with the earlier *pas de deux*, Jerry demonstrates his masculinity by holding Lise while she balances in positions and different styles of lifts, but this time Lise dances with bended knees and includes floor work. Lise starts by slowly extending her left leg in a *battement en devant* position and turning her working leg *rond de jambe* into an *arabesque* position and leans into Jerry.<sup>461</sup> The two lovers dance around each other on the level of the water and in between the statues on the fountain, but this time it is less playful and more intimate as Jerry follows Lise's every move. After one of the lifts, Lise exits into the splits with Jerry holding onto one foot while her other foot is on the ground, allowing her to then move into a turn. At one point they mimic their walk alongside the Seine earlier in the film during the 'Love is Here to Stay' duet (the moment they acknowledge their love for each other), walking hand in hand, back to the camera. The scene

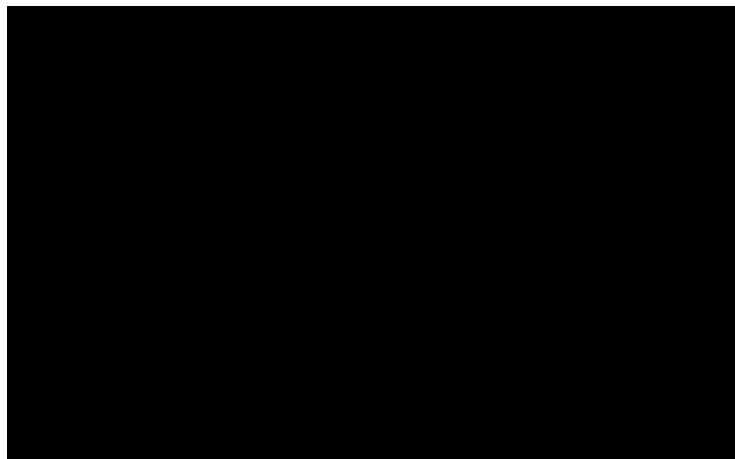
<sup>459</sup> 'An America in Paris' Ballet outline, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>460</sup> Harvey, p.107.

<sup>461</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

ends with a kiss and the light fades to place the couple in silhouette, Jerry with his back to the camera.

Unlike other scenes within the dream ballet, Caron's character starts out as the dominant character with Kelly's adoring suitor bending to her will in submissive positions, often on one or two knees whilst Caron dances above him (figure 2.24). By the end of the scene Caron has submitted to Kelly's advances, as in a traditional *pas de deux*. Despite the provocative style of choreography against the backdrop of the bluesy Gershwin music and darker lighting, the scene avoided the attention of the censors. Caron's dancing in this scene is balletic and her dancing with Kelly displays codified intimacy.



**Figure 2.24 Kelly and Caron dancing a sensual *pas de deux* on the fountain in the *Place de la Concorde* in Scene Five of 'The American in Paris Ballet'**

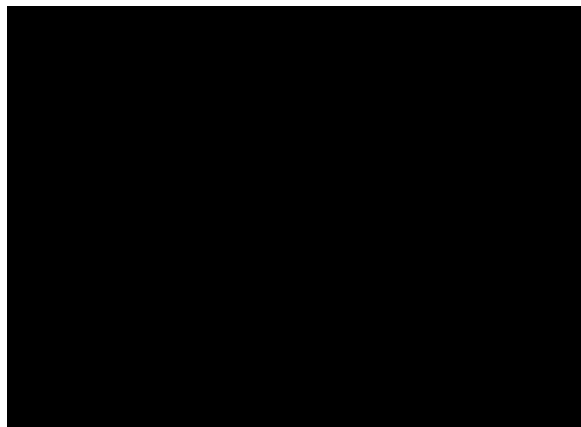
Towards the end of the *pas de deux* Kelly lifts Caron and she straddles his waist with bent knees and flexed feet, and arches her back fully while Kelly sways her from side to side. She slides down his thigh into a supported hinge. A year later Kelly would perform a similar move, but without the full arch, with Cyd Charisse in the 'Vamp' dance in 'The Broadway Ballet' dream ballet, in a



dance that the PCA found problematic. (This scene will be examined in Chapter Four).

**Scene 6 (Van Gogh) (*Place de l'Opéra* 1:05) Actual running time 1:43:32 – 1:44:32**

Wind blows Lise's skirt as the lights change to yellow. She is now wearing a brown and dark green long sleeved, three quarter length dress, with fitted bodice, transparent sleeves, a headdress including a red rose and flat ballet pumps (figure 2.5b). Her costume is inspired by Van Gogh's 'Agostina Segatori Sitting in the Café du Tambourin' (figure 2.25a). Jerry wears the same style of costume but now in dark brown.



**Figures 2.25a and 2.25b Vincent Van Gogh, 'Agostina Segatori Sitting in the Café du Tambourin' 1887 that inspired Lise's costume (2.25a) for Scene Six of 'The American in Paris Ballet' (2.25b)<sup>462</sup>**

The setting has changed to the lavish surroundings of the interior of the *Place de l'Opéra* inspired by Vincent Van Gogh, evoking the *Belle Epoque* era, and is full of characters in stylish evening dress and soldiers in hues of yellow, orange, brown and green. However, Van Gogh is known for painting down at heel and poor characters, rather than the elite of society. Costume and Set

<sup>462</sup> Vincent Van Gogh, 'Agostina Segatori Sitting in the Café du Tambourin', *Wikimedia*, <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Van\\_Gogh\\_-\\_Agostina\\_Segatori\\_im\\_Caf%C3%A9\\_du\\_Tambourin.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Van_Gogh_-_Agostina_Segatori_im_Caf%C3%A9_du_Tambourin.jpeg)> accessed 2 May 2016.

Designer Irene Sharaff found the inspiration for this scene from Van Gogh's pattern of his 'Cypresses' painted at Arles (yellows, greens and sunflowers) (figure 2.26).<sup>463</sup>

**Figure 2.26 Vincent Van Gogh, 'Wheatfield with Cypresses', 1889, one of his paintings that inspired the colour palette for Scene Six<sup>464</sup>**

Jerry and Lise dance past characters that then come to life joining in the dance. The other couples dance in a civilised European courtly style, the men holding the women's hands aloft as they turn around them. Jerry and Lise are a couple in love, celebrating their love for each other publicly and sharing their enthusiasm with passers by. In the primary diegesis Jerry and Lise were not able to demonstrate their love for each other publicly. Towards the end of the scene, a character dressed as Henri Toulouse-Lautrec approaches Jerry and Lise wearing a landscape-shaped sandwich board advertising an exhibition. The couple looks at the sandwich board then turns it round to reveal '*Du Chocolat*' – a character from a Toulouse-Lautrec painting. Jerry immediately strikes the same pose in profile.

**Scene 7 (Toulouse-Lautrec) (2:10 including Scene 8) Actual running time 1:44:33 – 1:46:17**

Sharaff used Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's paintings and sketches of real-life characters such as 'Chocolat Dancing in the Achilles Bar' (figure 2.27a) and dancer Jane Avril and the Moulin Rouge as her inspiration for the costumes in this scene.<sup>465</sup>

<sup>463</sup> Knox, p.144; Vincent Van Gogh, 'Wheatfield with Cypresses', 1889, *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, <<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1993.132/>> accessed 2 May 2016.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 'Chocolat Dancing in the Achilles bar', 1896, *Web Gallery of Art*, <<https://www.wga.hu/support/viewer/z.html>> accessed 2 May 2016; images of Jane Avril and the Moulin Rouge by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Courtauld Gallery*,



**Figures 2.27a and 2.27b Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 'Chocolat Dancing in the Achilles bar', 1896 (2.27a) in comparison to Kelly as 'Du Chocolat', and with Caron as Jane Avril, another Toulouse-Lautrec character in Scene Seven (2.27b) of 'The American in Paris Ballet'<sup>466</sup>**

The camera pans into the line drawing of 'Du Chocolat' and fades into Jerry as 'Du Chocolat' dressed in skin-tight beige long sleeved top and leggings, cap pulled down over one eye and black shoes (figure 2.27a). Kelly attempted to find out what style of dancing 'Du Chocolat' was known for, but despite extensive research he was unable to discover anything useful.<sup>467</sup> Therefore Kelly used the music as his inspiration for the choreography in this solo dance. The music is brassy and lively with some repetition and Kelly's choreography invokes a Broadway jazz style of dance with short steps, bent knees, crazy legs and big hand and arm gestures that are repeated throughout the dance (figure 2.27b).<sup>468</sup> According to Dalle-Vacche, 'Minnelli recovers the black origins of the Hollywood musical by introducing jazz music with Lautrec and tap dancing with Rousseau', although these subtle references to cultural

<https://courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/what-on/exhibitions-displays/archive/toulouse-lautrec-and-jane-avril-beyond-the-moulin-rouge> accessed 24 April 2019; Knox, p.144.

<sup>466</sup> Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 'Chocolat Dancing in the Achilles bar', 1896, *Web Gallery of Art*, <https://www.wga.hu/support/viewer/z.html> accessed 2 May 2016.

<sup>467</sup> Fordin, p.344; 'Lautrec depicted a black man from Bilbao who would perform for his own pleasure after his appearances at the *Nouveau Cirque*', Dalle-Vacche, p.75.

<sup>468</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

appropriation are not explicit.<sup>469</sup> The dance is playful and a little risqué with the twist of the bottom to camera, wiggling of the body and legs, jazz *pirouettes*, smirking and glances to camera. This sets the scene for the move into the Toulouse-Lautrec style nightclub setting with Can-Can dancers. At the centre is Jane Avril danced by Caron. Caron wears a bright yellow wig, black, white and orange hat and dress with black stockings and gloves and heeled shoes (figure 2.27b). At first, she is seen dancing the Can-Can with a group of women in similar attire but is then left dancing on the stage on her own as '*Du Chocolat*' approaches her. He bobs on his toes excitedly before jumping onto the stage to join her. He dances around her on his haunches then kneels as she fan kicks over his head, ruffling her skirt to reveal her legs. When the two jump down from the stage to continue dancing, Caron no longer dances the Can-Can but follows Kelly's lead dancing in his style reprising some of '*Du Chocolat*'s earlier steps. As he drops to his knees Caron fan kicks her leg over him three times whilst turning. He kneels arms outstretched, hands shaking. Caron and the other Can-Can dancers encircle '*Du Chocolat*' jumping on one leg while holding the heel of the other foot aloft in a recognisable Can-Can position. '*Du Chocolat*' turns onto his back and the camera cuts to an overhead shot showing Jerry performing an East European folk dance interchanging and lifting his alternate hands and feet off the floor – a masculine dance demonstrating physical prowess and the grafting of folk dance steps into Kelly's 'American' style of dance.

**Scene 8 (Ending section I:25, Ending section II :35) Actual running time 1:46:18 – 1:46:31**

The next scene starts with '*Du Chocolat*' and Jane Avril dancing towards the camera, lightly hopping from one foot to the other, holding hands with the other

<sup>469</sup> Dalle-Vacche, p.75.

hands aloft. They disappear from view and when they appear again they have now reverted back to Jerry and Lise. The camera cuts to place them back in the *Place de l'Opéra* again wearing the costumes from the previous scene. Crowds of people follow them as they surge towards a bank of mirrors at right angles to each other. Jerry and Lise, hands on each other's waist, spin round quickly in front of the mirrors surrounded by women in yellow and orange dresses who also swirl around with their skirts billowing out. The camera pans down into the billowing skirts, then there is a match cut to reveal spinning red skirts. The camera pans backwards and upwards to reveal the 'Furies' in red from the first Dufy inspired scene twirling around in front of the mirrors.

**Scene 9 (4:21) Total ballet timing: 16:21 Actual running time 1:46:32 – 1:47:35**

The dancers move away revealing Jerry and Lise still turning in the same position from the end of the previous scene. Jerry is back in his black costume and Lise is wearing the white costume from the first scene. The characters from every scene in the ballet surround them as they all dance into the *Place de la Concorde*. Jerry and Lise jump onto the fountain. Everyone dances in unison, before Jerry and Lise run to opposite sides of the fountain and stand with one foot on a statue and the other on a higher statue, leaning backwards, one arm in the air, mirroring each other and the flow of the simulated water. A long crane shot from above shows everyone standing facing forwards arms outstretched to the sky, jumping lightly and turning (figure 2.28).



**Figure 2.28 Kelly and Caron dancing with all the dancers from the dream ballet in the *Place de la Concorde* in Scene Nine**

As they all turn and run towards the fountain, there is a jump cut and everyone except Jerry disappears. He jumps down and runs out of the scene and the camera cuts back to the gateway from Jerry's sketch from the start of the ballet and a mid-shot of Jerry in the centre. He spots the rose on the ground as he starts to become transparent; the sketch is visible through him once again. He turns around to see the colour draining out of the sketch returning it to black and white. He slowly turns back round to pick up the flower and holds it aloft (figure 2.29). The camera pans into an extreme close up of the rose with a spotlight focusing on the flower with a dewdrop - red against a black background. The music builds to a crescendo and the rose dissolves into Kelly's face as the concurrent audio and visual cues mark the end of the ballet.



**Figure 2.29 Jerry picking up the rose at the end of 'The American in Paris Ballet', mirroring the start of the dream ballet**

The following scene starts with the same mid-range shot that preceded the ballet of Jerry leaning over the balcony at the Black and White Ball, gazing out over the Paris skyline. He suddenly sees the taxi return to the bottom of the stairs with Henri and Lise. She jumps out of the car, chastely kisses Henri and turns to run up the stairs. Kelly runs back into the Ball, pushes his way through the crowds and runs down the stairs to meet Lise halfway. They kiss on the mouth and embrace, before slowly walking down the stairs together hand in hand. The camera tracks back as the couple walks away into the distance marking the end of the film.

### **'The American in Paris Ballet' as an expression of emotions and moods**

The ballet is epic in scale and style with approximately 500 costumes; according to Sharaff that is akin to the scale of a Broadway musical show.<sup>470</sup> However in *Life Magazine*, an article about the film references 220 costumes.<sup>471</sup> The disparity between these figures may reflect the oral history nature of Knox's collection of interviews, recorded over twenty years after the production of the film. The use of different painters from the Impressionist and

<sup>470</sup> Knox, p.143.

<sup>471</sup> 'Movie Supermusical' in *Life Magazine*, 23 April 1951, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

Post-Impressionist periods allows Kelly to create different styles of choreography reflecting different moods and intensity of feelings aligned to the changes in pace of Gershwin's music. The narrative flow of the ballet evokes each stage of Jerry's love affair with Lise. The expression of a range of emotions explores his personal love story: from the initial attraction, flirting and intoxication, to falling in love, from the joy and exuberance of being in love, to sexual longing, and finally to profound loss, devastation and emptiness, interwoven with his love for art and the city of Paris. As the dream takes place at the point in the primary narrative where Kelly believes he has lost the love of his life to his French friend Henri, the dream can only end in sadness and loss, returning him to his current situation. However, this sadness only lasts for a few seconds of screen time because as soon as Lise gets out of the car, all is clearly resolved. Andrew Sarris states 'it always struck me that there was a fatal emotional rupture in the plot between the black and white *Beaux Arts Ball* and the climactically rainbowish *American in Paris* ballet.'<sup>472</sup>

As I have already argued, the dream ballet creates a space whereby characters can express emotions and feelings with their whole bodies, without dialogue, in an integrated form with the highly stylised mise-en-scène designed to reflect and enhance different moods. Here this provides a holistic experience creating self contained worlds as a series of mini dream ballets that are visual manifestations of Jerry's confusion, sense of loss, happy and sad memories. As an American G.I. Jerry does not share his deep emotions with friends, though he does confide in Adam and Henri about his love for a young French girl (before realising the connection with Henri). He can only express the range of emotions he feels at the loss of Lise through physical expression in a dream

<sup>472</sup> Andrew Sarris Foreword, Knox, p.xi.



state. Dance sequences in musicals were usually approximately one to four minutes in length and express a singular state of mind and emotion tied to the point of placement in the primary diegesis. For Jerry the three elements of his love for Lise, art and Paris are intrinsically connected in his mind, hence the loss of Lise drains his life of colour and his emotional connection to Paris and to art is potentially, irrevocably broken. According to Dalle-Vacche, 'Lisa's (sic) pivotal role in Jerry's balletic dream spells out the painter's genuine love of painting.'<sup>473</sup> For Kelly this complex intermingling of personal emotions required time to tell the story utilising the seasons through an integrated dream ballet with Renoir representing Spring, Rousseau Summer and Dufy Autumn, though not necessarily in the linear seasonal order.<sup>474</sup> The length of the dream ballet enabled Kelly to fully express his 'American' style of masculine dancing in his trademark casual clothes and loafers, mixing tap, ballet, modern, folk and jazz dance, juxtaposed with the feminine European classical ballet style. In an article in *Dance* magazine in 1951 Kelly stated 'For *An American in Paris* we wanted to do a ballet without an actual storyline or plot, a ballet that suggested, rather than narrated, a ballet which said more with things unsaid, than with things said'.<sup>475</sup> However despite Kelly's assertion, the ballet does have a storyline that mirrors the film's narrative as an emotional reprise, though it adds another layer of expression and meaning to the diegesis.

### **Critical and commercial response to *An American in Paris***

The film gained predominantly positive media coverage at the time of its release in America, UK, France and other international territories. Many reviews specifically singled out praise for the dream ballet: 'brilliant artistic achievement'

<sup>473</sup> Dalle-Vacche, p.68.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid, p.70.

<sup>475</sup> Gene Kelly, *Dance* magazine, August 1951, pp.9-12, p24, *An American in Paris*, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

in the *Daily News, L.A.*; 'truly cinematic ballet' in the *New York Times*; *The Sunday Times* summed up many critics' feelings at the time: 'may even make fresh converts to the American musical film. [...] The American in Paris ballet is surely destined to become a classic'; and 'Birth of the Cinematographic Ballet' in *Ce Matin-Le Pays*.<sup>476</sup>

In an Audience Preview survey in New York in 1951, audience comments included references to *The Red Shoes*, television and Broadway.<sup>477</sup> *An American in Paris* garnered the highest recommendation for any MGM musical to date, with 98.1% of audiences stating that they would recommend the film.<sup>478</sup> Comments from another Audience Preview included 'best musical of the year', 'MGM at its best', 'Kelly will never top this.'<sup>479</sup> J.R. Vogel, Vice President of Loew's New York stated the reason for increased ticket prices for *An American in Paris* was that it is an 'unusual attraction.'<sup>480</sup>

The original estimated production cost for the film was \$1,948,848, but the final cost totalled \$2,723,903 (of which \$542,000 was for the ballet).<sup>481</sup> On its first release the film grossed in excess of \$8,005,000.<sup>482</sup> The film won six Academy Awards including Best Picture. Gene Kelly was presented with a special Honorary Academy Award: 'In appreciation for his contribution to the creation and improvement of the motion picture musical film; not only because of his

<sup>476</sup> *Daily News L.A.*, 10 November 1951, p.17; *L.A. Times*, 10 November 1951; Bosley Crowther, *New York Times*, undated; *Ce Matin-Le Pays*, 3 July 1952, *An American in Paris*, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008; *The Sunday Times*, 27 August 1951, Vincente Minnelli papers, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed July 2008.

<sup>477</sup> *An American in Paris* Audience Preview Survey, 14 August 1951, Loew's 72nd Street, New York, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>479</sup> *An American in Paris* Audience 2nd Preview, 1st Report, Bay Theatre, Pacific Palisades, 25 April 1951, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

<sup>480</sup> Memo from Joseph R. Vogel, Vice President Loew's New York, 10 September 1951, *An American in Paris*, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

<sup>481</sup> Production Budget, 1 August 1950, *An American in Paris*, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008; Fordin, p.328.

<sup>482</sup> Fordin, p.331.

versatility as an actor-singer, director and dancer, but because of his specific and brilliant achievements in the art of choreography on film'.<sup>483</sup> Arthur Freed was presented with the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award for consistent high standards in motion picture production and for 'his extraordinary accomplishment in the making of musical pictures'.<sup>484</sup>

This concludes the analysis of *An American in Paris*. The next section addresses cultural appropriation in dance as presented in my corpus.

### **Cultural appropriation in dance in Hollywood musicals**

Susan Smith (2005) acknowledges the body of work that deals with race in relation to the musical which 'has subjected black and non-white performers to various strategies of exclusion and containment, while at the same time appropriating their musical styles and performing traditions by the dominant mainstream culture'.<sup>485</sup> Smith discusses how 'extremely talented black performers often fell victim to racial stereotyping', such as tap dancer Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson who usually played a servant and was often paired with child star Shirley Temple, and was 'effectively rendered somewhat childlike himself and, as a result, 'de-sexed or sexually neutralised' on film, unlike his white performer counterparts.<sup>486</sup> Dyer (2000) asserts that 'blackness is contained within the musical, ghettoised, stereotyped, and 'only entertainment,' [...and that] 'it is whites' privilege to be able to do this, and what that tells us about the white dream of being in the world.'<sup>487</sup> In other words, white performers are not restricted by space on screen and are free to occupy

<sup>483</sup> Ibid, p.344.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid, p.345; Robert S. Sennett states that 'its Academy Award-winning production design is probably the greatest single achievement in art direction in film history', Sennett, p.78.

<sup>485</sup> Smith, *The Musical: Race, Gender and Performance*, p.5.

<sup>486</sup> Smith, p.11 including quote by Donald Bogle from the television documentary *Fascinatin' Rhythm*, (2001).

<sup>487</sup> Dyer, 'The Colour of Entertainment' in Marshall and Stillwell, eds., p.25.

whatever and wherever they desire, unlike black and minority ethnic performers. The appropriation of the 'black art of tap dance' was standard practice on stage and in Hollywood and Dyer cites Astaire at the 'greatest exponent' of this practice.<sup>488</sup> Even when paying homage to or dancing with black performers, Astaire and other white performers such as Kelly, always danced the dominant role.<sup>489</sup>

The next section addresses the cultural appropriation of ethnic dance, its representation and questions of authenticity. I am limited in space so will consider this through a single example, 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet in *The King and I*.<sup>490</sup>

### **Background to *The King and I***

*The King and I* (29 March 1951 – 20 March 1954, 1246 performances) was a musical interpretation of the film *Anna and the King of Siam* (John Cromwell, Twentieth Century Fox, 1946) that was in turn an adaptation of the 1944 best-selling novel of the same name by Margaret Landan. The novel was based on Anna Leonowens' memoirs *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870) and *Romance of the Harem* (1873).<sup>491</sup> This was the first time that Rodgers and Hammerstein had written a show specifically for a star, Gertrude Lawrence.<sup>492</sup> In the 1956 film adaptation Deborah Kerr (her singing voice dubbed by Marni Nixon) was cast opposite Yul Brynner reprising his stage role.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid, p.29.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> Another example of similar cultural appropriation of ethnic dance is the 'Limehouse Blues' ballet in *Ziegfeld Follies*.

<sup>491</sup> *The King and I*, Music by Richard Rodgers, Book and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-king-and-i-1935#>> accessed 23 April 2019; *Anna and the King of Siam* (John Cromwell, Twentieth Century Fox, 1946), <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0038303/?ref=mv\\_sr\\_1?ref=mv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0038303/?ref=mv_sr_1?ref=mv_sr_1)> accessed 23 April 2019; Anna Leonowens, <[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/edwards\\_anna\\_harriette\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/edwards_anna_harriette_14E.html)> accessed 23 April 2019.

<sup>492</sup> Stage star Gertrude Lawrence had purchased the rights to Landan's book and presented it via her lawyers to Rodgers and Hammerstein as a perfect vehicle for a musical stage adaptation

### **'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet in *The King and I***

'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet, loosely based on Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) was the last dream ballet that Robbins choreographed on stage or screen. The ballet is written and narrated by Burmese slave girl Tuptim (Puerto Rican Rita Moreno) who is imprisoned in the harem of King Mongkut of Siam (Russian Yul Brynner) and is unable to be with her Burmese lover Lun Tha (Mexican-American Carlos Rivas). The ballet story mirrors her plight and follows slave girl Eliza who is trying to escape her master Simon Legree to be with her lover George. The ballet is performed as a theatrical presentation for the King, the English governess Anna and visiting British dignitaries. For the film plot summary see Appendix 14.

Robbins's biographer Deborah Jowitt states that *The King and I* offered Robbins the chance to 'research and reinvent another era [...] another culture' though he 'was not interested in being scrupulously authentic.'<sup>493</sup> Robbins, costume designer Irene Sharaff and set designer Jo Mielziner all conducted research into South East Asian cultures, predominantly Cambodia and Laos, not specifically Siam (now Thailand) due to more availability of research material. Robbins was inspired by Raymond Cogniat's book *Dances of Indochine* (1932) that includes text and images of costumed dancers from Cambodia and Laos (figure 2.30), and George Corslier's short story with

in which she would star, although she died in the second year of the show's original Broadway run, Ethan Mordden, *Rodgers and Hammerstein* (New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1992), pp.127-136. Arguably Yul Brynner became the star of the show and went on to perform the role 4,625 times on stage throughout his career, <[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000989/bio?ref\\_=nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000989/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm)> accessed 23 April 2019.  
<sup>493</sup> Deborah Jowitt, *Jerome Robbins, His Life, His Theater, His Dance* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), pp.180-1.

accompanying images 'Royal Dancers of Cambodia' (January 1922) and images he collected from magazines and newspapers.<sup>494</sup>

**Figure 2.30 Raymond Congiat's book *Dances of Indochine* (1932) that includes text and images of costumed dancers from Cambodia and Laos<sup>495</sup>**

The credit for one image collected by Robbins states:

Negative image of 'The "lakhon," or ancient drama of Siam, is performed by dancers, especially trained from childhood. These four are part of the royal troupe. Nearly all of the plays are scenes from the Sanskrit epic, the "Ramayana", or feats of half-legendary kings. Conventions of costume and gesture and a fixed manner of acting discourage individual interpretation. Gods and royal persons wear spired crowns.<sup>496</sup>

The credit for an image acquired from New York's Museum of Modern Art states:

The six-year old child is a little Siamese girl, already well known as an accomplished danseuse. She was trained by her grandmother. Her fingers do not yet reach back to her wrists as they will later, but her right arm is double jointed so that she can perform the sinuous movements required.<sup>497</sup>

Another image with the title 'Ballet Dancers of Cambodia are Incarnations of Rhythm' details how the girls attending the state-maintained ballet school at Phnom Penh learn to perform 'the delicate and intricate steps that accompany symbolic dances' and highlight the whiteness of the dancers' faces and arms created by 'generous application of powder.'<sup>498</sup>

<sup>494</sup> Raymond Congiat, *Danses d'Indochine* (Paris: Editions des Chroniques du Jour, 1932), Folder 22 Series I: Theatrical Productions, 1944-2000 and n.d. *The King and I*, 1950-2000 S\*MGZMD130, Box 51 of 581, NYPAL, accessed January 2014; Folders 19-21, *ibid.*

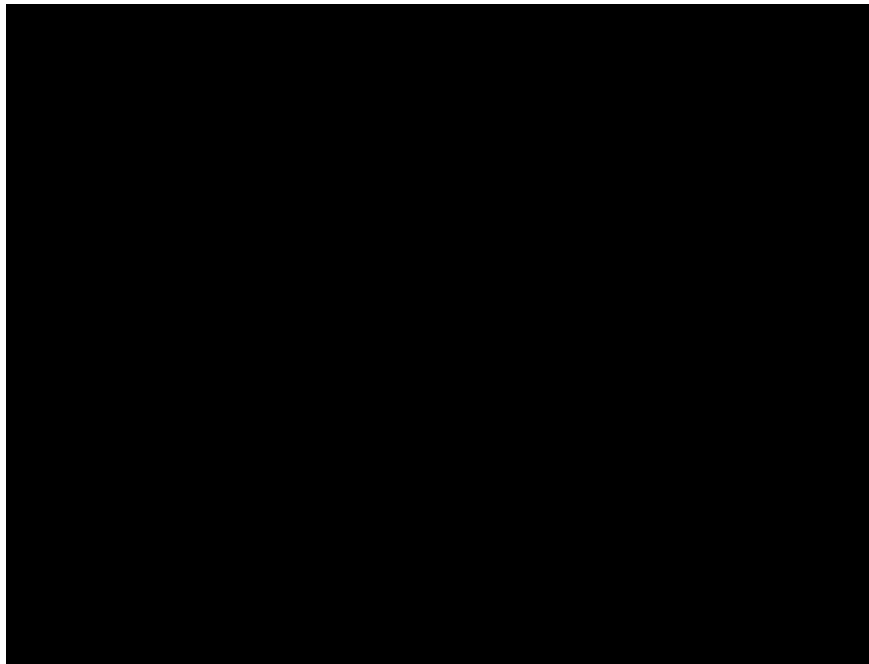
<sup>495</sup> Raymond Congiat, *Danses d'Indochine* (Paris: Editions des Chroniques du Jour, 1932), *Contrées lointaines*, <<http://www.contreelointaines.fr/des-livres-et-des-objets-avec-de-lesprit/danses-dindochine-cambodge-laos-annam-tonkin/>> accessed 23 April 2019.

<sup>496</sup> Folder 20, Series I: Theatrical Productions, 1944-2000 and n.d. *The King and I*, 1950-2000 S\*MGZMD130, Box 51 of 581, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>498</sup> Folder 19, *ibid.*

Robbins's staging and choreography for the ballet was also heavily influenced by traditional and ancient Japanese Noh and Kabuki styles of theatre, including the use of symbolic props such as ribbons to represent rain and fabric to represent water (figure 2.31).<sup>499</sup>



**Figure 2.31** The symbolic representation of rain using ribbons and water using fabric in 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet in *The King and I*

Robbins worked closely with dancer and teacher Mara von Selheim who had studied Cambodian dance in the court of Phnom Penh, as well as Japanese dancer Michiko Iseri who became his 'Consultant on Oriental Dancing' and leading dancer Yuriko, who had studied with Teiko Ito, a dancer of Asian styles

<sup>499</sup> Noh theatre involves music, dance and drama and originated in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The performers are male, wear heavy and rich costumes, use masks to represent demons and spirits. Their movement is slow, the language is poetic but the tone is monotonous, with plots drawn from legend, history, literature and also contemporary events. Themes in the stories relate to ghosts, spirits, dreams and supernatural worlds, <<https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2091.html>> accessed 23 April 2019. Kabuki Theatre was originally performed by women and uses stage assistants wearing black to ensure the seamless flow of the production. Costumes are elaborately designed, strong make-up, wigs and exaggerated actions that are highly stylised. Plots are based on historical events, moral conflicts, love stories, conspiracies and well-known stories. Both Noh and Kabuki theatre use live music played on traditional instruments and use bridges in the minimal design to link elements of the stories, <<https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2090.html>> accessed 23 April 2019.

of dance.<sup>500</sup> All the principal performers in the dream ballet in the original stage production and in the film were female dancers. The choreography included 'flexible hand gestures, hyperextended elbows, crawls and the 'celestial walk' – standing on one bent leg, the dancer raises the other leg bent behind her, flexed foot to the sky' and similar poses when kneeling.<sup>501</sup> This mixing of different styles of Asian dance and theatre was supplemented by American/Broadway flourishes of humour including the dogs wagging their tails (dancing waving one leg in the air while kneeling on the other, sniffing the ground), the lead character Eliza shaking rain and snow from her doll (representing her child) and Buddha's angel teaching Eliza to skate on the newly formed ice whilst escaping Simon Legree. Brooks Atkinson in his *The New York Times* review of the original stage production comments in relation to Robbins's choreography that he 'put together a stunning ballet that seasons the liquid formalism of Eastern dancing with some American humor.'<sup>502</sup>

For the film adaptation Robbins worked with the same principal dancers but embellished elements of the ballet including the music and props and expanded the number of musicians and chorus. Trude Rittman, Richard Rodgers' dance pianist had composed the music for the original ballet. Robbins wanted a percussive score that simulated a gamelan and that was tailored specifically to match his choreography.<sup>503</sup> In the film adaptation he changed Rittman's music to include a gamelan and enhanced the percussion to further support accents in the choreography. In a three-page, twenty-point inter-office memo dated 19 November 1955, Robbins instructed the conductor Alfred

<sup>500</sup> Jowitt, p.181.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

<sup>502</sup> 'Strictly on its own', Brooks Atkinson 'At the Theater', *New York Times*, 30 March 1951, *ibid*, p.184.

<sup>503</sup> According to Richard Rodgers' autobiography, he specifically made no attempt to duplicate Asian music, 'it would never have sounded genuine', *Richard Rodgers: Musical Stages, an autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1975), p.220.



Newman in detail about aspects of the music, for example, 'Bars 296 through 300: The chorus is a little too loud for Tuptim and the ear doesn't follow what she is saying. This is very important, as it is the ending and the last words of Tuptim, and the most tender of the whole ballet, especially through 296, 297 and 298.'<sup>504</sup>

There has been considerable academic discourse exploring the standard Hollywood practice of 'whitewashing' African-American music, performance and performance styles, particularly tap and jazz dance, as referenced in the Review of Literature. Such writing foregrounds the invisibility of the influence of African-American performance in white performers' work on screen, such as dances choreographed and performed by Astaire and Kelly. In comparison there has only been limited critical discussion of *The King and I*'s attempts towards an authentic representation of South East Asian court life whilst at the same time presenting American cultural references that reinforce the dominant post-war American and Western Christian ideology.<sup>505</sup>

In the original stage production of *The King and I* David Ewen (1958) commented on the critics' references to the show's 'authenticity and the good taste with which the Orient was recreated.'<sup>506</sup> It was standard practice on Broadway and in Hollywood at the time to cast non-authentic actors in stereotypical ethnic roles with the aid of make-up and styling that to current

<sup>504</sup> Twentieth Century Fox inter-office memorandum, 3pp, From Jerry Robbins to Mr. Alfred Newman, copied to Ken Derby, Ed Powell, June Graham, Date November 19 1955, Subject The King and I, Folder 13, The King and I, The Jerome Robbins Professional Papers, Series I: Theatrical Productions, 1944-2000 and n.d. *The King and I*, 1950-2000, S\*MGZMD130, Box 51 of 581, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

<sup>505</sup> There has been critical analysis of Rodgers and Hammerstein's depiction of the culture of the South Pacific and its islanders in the film *South Pacific* (Joshua Logan, Twentieth Century Fox, 1958). Most, 'You've Got to Be Carefully Taught': The Politics of Race in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*; McConachie, 'The 'Oriental' Musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein and the U.S. War in Southeast Asia'.

<sup>506</sup> Ewen, p.260.

audiences would not be acceptable. Laura Donaldson in discussing the ballet's internal audience consisting of British dignitaries and local officials sympathetic to England, states that the film therefore 'tightly sutures our spectatorial subjectivity to that body of Anglo-European values.'<sup>507</sup>

Despite Rodgers and Hammerstein's known liberal political viewpoints and attempts to tell stories without racial bias, the dominant American ideology imposed American culture on non-American stories. Hammerstein claimed when writing the book and lyrics that 'I did not want to tread on any Oriental toes.'<sup>508</sup> Also Rodgers stated that they both wanted to create 'Oriental' characters as human beings, with whom all could empathise, not as stereotypical characters.<sup>509</sup> Andrea Most in describing Hammerstein, recognises 'his ability to fight against racial prejudice on the one hand and unwittingly to indulge in it on the other' and that this 'defines the difficulties and inherent contradictions of the postwar Jewish liberal position on race.'<sup>510</sup>

The ballet's storytelling of Eliza's flight from Simon Legree owes more to Western Christian ideals than Buddhist philosophy as Buddhists do not view Buddha as a god, and therefore do not pray to Buddha or believe in angels, miracles or human sacrifice. Donaldson states that the 'transference of the highly subversive social plot from Christian abolitionism to Buddhist monarchism' is presented through parallels between Moses' liberation of the slaves in Egypt (referenced by the King in conversation before the ballet), the liberation of Eliza in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Tuptim's liberation from the

<sup>507</sup> Laura Donaldson, 'The King and I' in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or on the Border of the Women's Room, *Cinema Journal*, Vol.29, No.3, (Spring, 1990), p.11.

<sup>508</sup> Robert Matthew-Walker, *Broadway to Hollywood: The Enthralling Story Behind the Great Hollywood Films of the Great Broadway Musicals* (London: Sanctuary, 1996), p.182.

<sup>509</sup> Rodgers, p.274.

<sup>510</sup> Most, p.317.

palace.<sup>511</sup> However in the Hollywood musical tradition of the parallel love story, Tuptim's story is 'less a struggle for political and social freedom, than a desperate desire to be with the man you love'.<sup>512</sup> Tuptim and Eliza wear the same costume but in subtly different shades that differ from the rest of the cast in that their costumes reveal their midriff and one shoulder (figures 2.32a and 2.32b). Anna wears a strapless ballgown in a similar colour to Tuptim's costume and the King remarks on Anna's revealing dress (figure 2.32c), all costumes that reflect a more Western influence.



**Figures 2.32a, 2.32b and 2.32c Tuptim's (Rita Moreno) off-the-shoulder costume (2.32a), which is similar to Eliza's (Yuriko) costume in 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet (2.32b) and Anna (Deborah Kerr) wearing a strapless evening gown (2.32c) in *The King and I***

<sup>511</sup> Ibid, p.12.

<sup>512</sup> Donaldson, p.13.

Hischak states that the ballet encapsulates 'all the themes of the script while illustrating the power of both Asian and Western performance techniques.'<sup>513</sup> The integration of multiple Asian styles of theatre and dance coupled with elements of Broadway and ballet dance creates an American interpretation of a generic exotic 'East' in the form of spectacle.<sup>514</sup>

## Conclusion

'The American in Paris Ballet' tells the whole story of the love affair between Jerry and Lise in generally chronological order, apart from the final reunion, which happens in the primary diegesis. In comparison the dream ballet in *Oklahoma!* is much darker in tone, representing Laurey's anxieties and a fantasy about what might happen in the future, depending on her choices. This dream ballet operates as a way of expressing anxiety and the darkness in the dream that is not present anywhere else in the film, except near the end when Jud sets fire to the haystack on which Curly and Laurey are standing as part of a local wedding custom. The ballet in *An American in Paris* does not need to explore darker emotions or attempt to foresee the future, but it does visually present Jerry's profound sense of loss. It could therefore be argued that 'The American in Paris Ballet' is not as essential or necessary within the film as the ballet in *Oklahoma!*, which serves a specific function within the diegesis and drives the narrative forward. 'The American in Paris Ballet' represents another category of dream ballet, that of the stylised reprise of the action to date. However, it is arguably the spectacle of 'The 'American in Paris Ballet' that turned an otherwise standard 'boy meets girl' musical into a multi-award-winning film.

<sup>513</sup> Hischak, *Through the Screen Door*, p.155.

<sup>514</sup> The film was banned in Thailand in 1956 due to its many inaccuracies and its false representation of King Mongkut and is still banned to this day as it is regarded as libelous, <<https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2015/05/19/thailands-banned-king-and-i/>> accessed 24 April 2019.

This new contemporary American dance style that developed over the early to mid twentieth century derives from the mix of cultural influences. In particular the changing demographics of the major metropolitan cities which resulted from mass immigration and the movement of populations, especially African-Americans from the south to the north of America and East Europeans, in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Cultural representation, expression and the passing down of traditions through the generations have always been central to displaced ethnic communities. The practice of appropriating dance and performance styles of black performers by white performers, whether consciously or subconsciously was often invisible to audiences. In the case of *The King and I* audiences at the time were not necessarily concerned with whether cultural representation was inauthentic as there was little grasp of the distinctiveness of different Eastern cultures.

The grafting of gestures and movements from multiple sources and the desire to create new styles of dance allowed choreographers to fuse elements of traditional European classical and folk styles with contemporary modern, jazz and tap styles from different cultural backgrounds to create a new less formal, but equally artistic, 'American' style of dance.

The next chapter will explore the tensions between integrated narrative and spectacle with analysis of the dream ballets in *Daddy Long Legs* and *On the Town*. The chapter will also explore how dream ballets used the popular representation of psychoanalysis within their narratives.

## Chapter 3

### **Integrated narrative and spectacle, dream analysis and popular Freudian psychology**

According to Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans (1985) in *Blue Skies and Silver Linings*:

The fantasy or dream ballet is one of the great innovations of the stage and film musical in the late '30s and '40s. Potentially, and in a few cases actually, it relates to the rest of the narrative as night and day, the latent to the manifest, a third state underlying the familiar bifurcation of narrative and number.<sup>515</sup>

This chapter explores whether the narrative style of dance in dream ballets negatively affects the integrated nature of these musicals through unnecessary diegetic transitions and/or whether these dream ballets create a new level of meaning through the presentation of a 'third state'. This will be explored through analysis of the 'Guardian Angel Daydream' ballet and the 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' nightmare ballet in *Daddy Long Legs* and the 'A Day in New York' dream ballet in *On The Town*. This chapter also explores how the popular representation of psychoanalysis was occasionally manifest in dream ballets through identifiable codes and tropes for audiences, with brief references to the 'I Used to be Color Blind' dream ballet in *Carefree* and the 'Will You Marry Me?' dream ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief*. I will also discuss the differences between dream ballets and dream sequences in film more generally.

<sup>515</sup> Babington and Evans, p.197.

There has been extensive critical discourse on the nature of narrative integration and spectacle in the musicals genre, exploring the relationship between musical numbers and narrative in the primary diegesis. Rubin (1993) identifies the 'Tradition of Spectacle' as a nineteenth century stage tradition 'based on creating feelings of abundance, variety and wonder', as exemplified by popular entertainment such as P.T. Barnum and the *Ziegfeld Follies*.<sup>516</sup> He describes Busby Berkeley as the early movie musicals' 'purest and most celebrated representative' of this type of theatrical spectacle.<sup>517</sup> Mellencamp (1991) states that 'the Hollywood musical is a cinematic genre characterised by movement between the 'once upon a time' of the 'fictive narrative', and the 'here and now' of the 'performed spectacle'.<sup>518</sup> Mellencamp further states that the spectacles presented in Hollywood musicals 'momentarily displace or halt the forward movement of the diegesis.'<sup>519</sup> Cohan (2005) identifies a role for the dream ballets in providing a sense of spectacle: 'the set-piece fantasy ballet or opening night show number [...] disrupt the integrative form to offer a pleasure other than that of following a story, [...] watching spectacle purely as spectacle'.<sup>520</sup>

### **The dream ballet production process**

Dream ballets were treated as set pieces by the creative team and studios, usually filmed at the end of the production schedule reflecting the additional time required for creating, rehearsing and shooting such complicated and expensive sequences. Most dream ballets take place in an alternative space to

<sup>516</sup> Rubin, p.4.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid, pp.6-7.

<sup>518</sup> P. Mellencamp, 'Spectacle and Spectator: Looking through the American Musical Comedy' in R. Burnett, ed., *Explorations in Film Theory* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.3. as quoted in Lauren Patullo, 'Narrative and Spectacle in the Hollywood Musical: Contrasting the Choreography of Busby Berkeley and Gene Kelly', *Research in Dance Education*, Vol. 8, No.1, (April 2007), p.73.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid, p.77

<sup>520</sup> Cohan, *Incongruous Entertainment*, p.62.

the primary diegesis. This space is often an abstract version of some of the film's locations and usually includes additional characters only present in the dream ballet. This creates a sense of spectacle but with its own narrative form. With no dialogue the dreamer is reliant on understanding codes to interpret the dream in the primary diegesis.

Choreographers used their own forms of choreographic language to create distinctive dream ballets as described in Chapter Two. Many choreographers developed a written story outline before beginning the process of choreographing steps and working on dancers. This story outline was approved by the film's director, or in the case of *Oklahoma! Carousel* and *The King and I*, by the films' producers and originators of the Broadway stage shows: Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II.

Two of Astaire's and Kelly's dream ballet dance partners: Cyd Charisse and Leslie Caron were trained in classical ballet. They had to learn to adapt their style to fit with Astaire's ballroom and jazz tap style, and to Kelly's jazz ballet style when dancing together. It was the director that made the creative decision to include a dream ballet in a number of musical films in which Astaire starred, unlike Kelly who advocated for the inclusion of dream ballets. A 1975 BBC radio documentary about Astaire, narrated by David Niven, states that 'Fred could not do ballet and did not want to, he felt it was 'too cut and dried''.<sup>521</sup> In *Silk Stockings* (Rouben Mamoulian, MGM, 1957) Astaire sings and dances with Janis Paige in a number titled 'Stereophonic Sound' written by Cole Porter. The song and performance mock the fashion for new technology and new styles of

<sup>521</sup> *The Fred Astaire Story Part II Daddy Long Legs: 1951-1956*, (BBC Radio 2, 1975), Paley Center, Los Angeles, accessed January 2014, although Astaire has received some ballet training as a child as stated in Chapter One.



performance in film, including the trend for ballets in musicals. The lyrics include: 'he's got to have glorious Russian ballet, or modern ballet, or English ballet, or Chinese ballet or Hindu ballet or Bali ballet or any ballet in stereophonic sound'.<sup>522</sup>

A more detailed examination of the primary and secondary emotional codes within the dream diegesis is necessary to explore the choreographic layering of meaning, and in particular examining the differing perspectives between the male and female dream protagonists. I will explore this in detail in Chapter Four through analysis of the dream ballets in *Singin' in the Rain* and *Carousel*.

### **Integrated narrative aspirations**

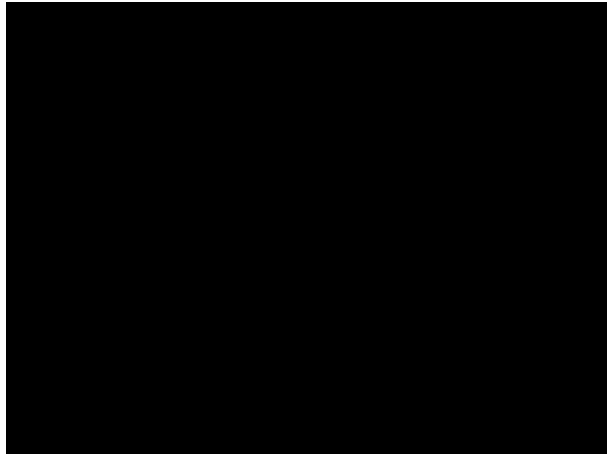
The desire to integrate song and dance numbers into the narrative to advance the plot was a common shared aim within the MGM Freed Unit artistic and production teams. Kelly stated '*Meet Me in St Louis* [was] probably the first all-round Freed Unit picture on which Arthur found the level we should be working on' (figure 3.1).<sup>523</sup> Minnelli explained that he liked to 'feel that numbers should be given as much importance as dramatic sequences, that they should be woven into the story completely in a way that hadn't been hitherto.'<sup>524</sup>

<sup>522</sup> 'Stereophonic Sound, *Silk Stockings* (1957),

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGzWbZVLUtU>> accessed 2 May 2019.

<sup>523</sup> Reference to Arthur Freed, MGM Producer in Graham Fuller, 'An American in Paradise: Gene Kelly' in John Boorman, Tom Luddy, David Thomson, Walter Donohue, eds., *Projections 4: Film-makers on film-making* (London: Faber & Faber, 1995), p.281.

<sup>524</sup> Casper, *Vincente Minnelli and The Film Musical*, p.34.



**Figure 3.1 Esther Smith (Judy Garland) singing 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' to her sister Tootie (Margaret O'Brien) in her bedroom window in *Meet Me in St Louis***

In discussing dance-led musicals, Delamater (1978) states that:

The songs and dances generally did have a direct connection to the diegesis of the film even if they didn't necessarily advance the plot; that those films one could call dance musicals were imbued with a dance spirit which was reflected in the camera work and the general movement of the film.<sup>525</sup>

Delamater's explanation of the concept of integration extends further through the 'integration of the entire cinematic process' and not just that the musical numbers and dances should advance the plot.<sup>526</sup> He suggests that:

The way in which the dances in a particular film are photographed, for example, suggests a kind of integration of the film making process with the dance process and that together they contribute to the integrity of the film.<sup>527</sup>

Kelly explained his rationale for filming dance in an article in *Dance* magazine in 1951, prior to the release of *An American in Paris*. With reference to the

<sup>525</sup> Delamater, p.134.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid*, p.98

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid*.

dream ballet he claimed that: 'the integration of music and dance in theatre spectacle has been done successfully, [...] but the integration of these with design, costuming and color has seldom been totally successful.'<sup>528</sup>

B. Sutton discusses musicals and narrative integration between plot and number through the classification of two kinds of musicals:

There are those which make clear separations between the two [...] and those which attempt to cement over the rift and present the number 'naturally' as part of the plot.<sup>529</sup>

Lauren Pattullo explains that in Sutton's suggestion the first type of musical 'can be described as 'aggregate', maintaining a definite distinction between narrative and spectacle as two separate aspects of the film.'<sup>530</sup> She claims that the second type of musical, as exemplified by the work of Kelly, 'attempts to bridge the gap between narrative and number, aiming for integration of spectacle into the film's narrative structure.'<sup>531</sup> Pattullo states that the films of Kelly and Minnelli 'do achieve a similar disconnection from reality' to Busby Berkeley's films through the dream ballet scenarios.<sup>532</sup>

Delamater explains with reference to Kelly that the process of integration was:

To move easily and naturally from the regular narrative portions of the films into the numbers and back again; that requires a dancing persona, though not necessarily a character within the diegesis who is explained to be a dancer.<sup>533</sup>

<sup>528</sup> 'Gene Kelly', *Dance*, (August 1951), pp.9-12, *An American in Paris*, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC Cinematic Arts Library, accessed July 2008.

<sup>529</sup> B. Sutton, *American Cultural History 1930-1939* in Pattullo, pp.73-4.

<sup>530</sup> Pattullo, p.74.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>533</sup> Delamater, p.150.

To achieve this process of integration, Kelly needed to create musical content that not only furthered the narrative but also appeared to ‘arise ‘naturally’ from the narrative’.<sup>534</sup> This Kelly achieves through the creation of ‘ordinary Joe’ characters that struggle to articulate their true feelings and whose emotions can only be fully explored and shared through the medium of song and dance. Unlike Astaire, Kelly only occasionally portrayed a professional performer in his films, and therefore musical numbers do not commonly take place in a stage setting.<sup>535</sup> Kelly uses ballet to convey a sensitive, introspective aspect of a character’s persona, whereas tap, according to Delamater, is used to portray the more simple aspects of Kelly’s characters.<sup>536</sup> With reference to the dream ballet in *An American in Paris*, Delamater suggests that ‘integration is achieved when the dances in the films become “exterior manifestations of a character’s interior feelings” and thus “contribute to the multiple levels of meaning in the film,”’ as discussed in Chapter Two.<sup>537</sup>

Kelly’s ‘ordinary Joe’ dancing persona mixes both the confident, cocky and brash working class American male that he usually expressed in solo dances or dances with male partners using predominantly tap and jazz dance styles, and the more romantic character when dancing with a female partner in a classical ballet inspired *pas de deux*.<sup>538</sup> Astaire’s assured, sophisticated and suave upper class male persona was always expressed through solo jazz tap

<sup>534</sup> Pattullo, p.79.

<sup>535</sup> Astaire, when working with Hermes Pan, insisted that Pan was given choreographer credit, even though Astaire predominantly developed the choreography himself, Delamater, p.101, pp.107-8. Pan supported Astaire in working out the female dance partner’s steps in the duets. Pan and Astaire did not work together on any of the dream ballets in which Astaire starred after *Carefree* (1938).

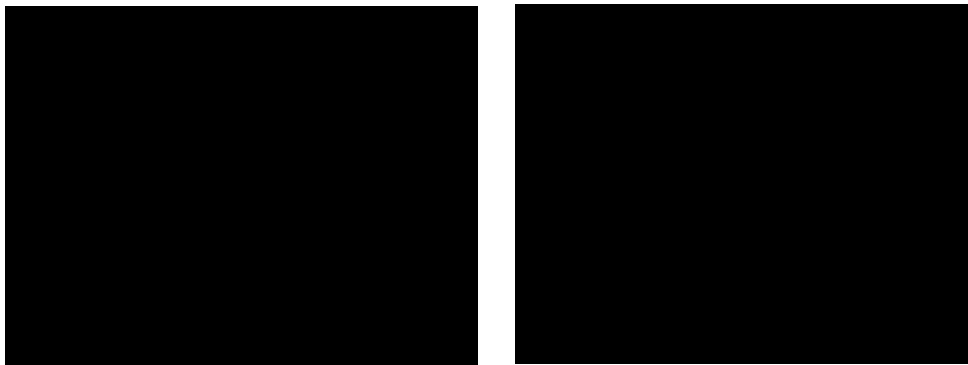
<sup>536</sup> Ibid, p152.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid, p.164.

<sup>538</sup> With the exception of films outside the body of this corpus such as *Me and My Gal* (1942) and *Les Girls* (1957) where Kelly’s character is a professional performer.

routines, whereas his romantic persona was present in ballroom dance styles with a female partner.<sup>539</sup>

John Mueller argues that in the RKO Astaire-Rogers musicals of the 1930s the two lead characters expressed their romantic inclinations primarily through song and dance numbers (figures 3.2a and 3.2b).<sup>540</sup>



**Figures 3.2 Astaire and Rogers dancing in the flirtatious 'Isn't This a Lovely Day (to be Caught in the Rain)?' (3.2a) and the romantic 'Cheek to Cheek' (3.2b) both from *Top Hat* demonstrating different stages in their romance**

Therefore, the romantic narrative was developed through the musical numbers, though it was not until Astaire joined the MGM Freed Unit in the late 1940s that he began to work on integrated musicals.

In 'Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical,' Mueller references six ways in which 'musical numbers can relate to the plot'. These include:

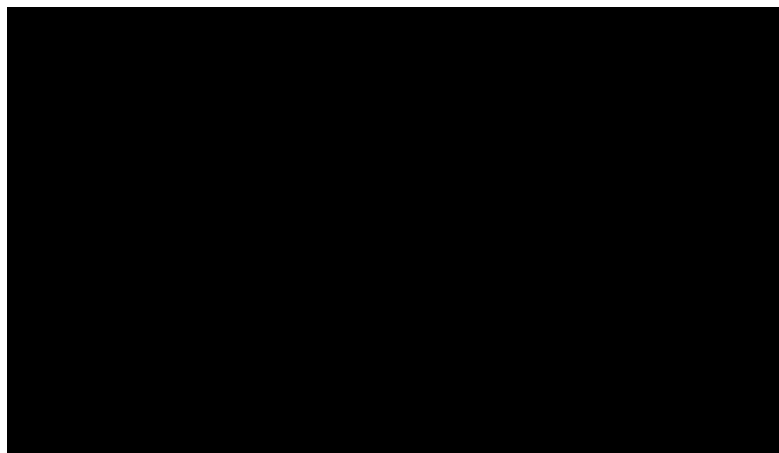
Numbers which are completely irrelevant to the plot; numbers which contribute to the spirit or theme; numbers whose existence is relevant to the plot, but

<sup>539</sup> Leslie Caron in a television interview discussing the making of *Daddy Long Legs* stated that Astaire hated ballet because he had big hands and so he hid two fingers of each hand when dancing to make his hands look smaller, *Fred Astaire: Change Partners and Dance*, (PBS TV, 14 March 1980), Paley Center, L.A., accessed January 2014. At MGM and Twentieth Century Fox Astaire worked with a range of different choreographers, including classical ballet trained Eugene Loring and Roland Petit.

<sup>540</sup> Mueller, 'Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical', pp.28-30.

whose content is not; numbers which enrich the plot, but do not advance it; numbers which advance the plot, but not by their content; and numbers which advance the plot by their content.<sup>541</sup>

Mueller's categories relate to the historical development of musicals, starting with the early sound musicals. In these musicals song and dance numbers with no relevance to the plot were inserted in between dramatic or comedic scenes that reflected Broadway revue style shows. Backstage musicals in the early 1930s including *42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon, Warner Brothers, 1933), *Gold Diggers of 1933* (Mervyn Le Roy, Warner Brothers, 1933) and *Gold Diggers of 1935* (Busby Berkeley, Warner Brothers, 1935) celebrated the backstage theme through some of the musical numbers (figure 3.3).



**Figure 3.3 An example of the backstage musical, *42nd Street* starring Ginger Rogers, Ruby Keeler and Una Merkel**

As discussed in Chapter One, the narratives often focused on aspiring Broadway starlets hoping for their big break in show business. Busby Berkeley choreographed musical numbers that were often designed purely as spectacle. This enabled him to use a variety of unusual camera positions, including

<sup>541</sup> Ibid, pp.28-30.

overhead, floor level and extreme close-up shots to show scale, kaleidoscopic imagery, symmetry and changing shapes to create a glamorous Hollywood aesthetic of feminine beauty (figures 3.4a and 3.4b). All of these techniques and inclusions were completely irrelevant to the plot and did not contribute to the narrative of the film.



**Figures 3.4a and 3.4b Examples of Busby Berkeley choreographic spectacle in *Dames* (3.4a) and 'The Shadow Waltz' in *Gold Diggers of 1933* (3.4b)**

The Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney 'putting on a show' MGM musical films of the late 1930s and early 1940s including *Babes in Arms* (1939), *Strike up the Band* (1940) and *Babes on Broadway* (1941), all directed by Berkeley demonstrate musical numbers whose existence is somewhat relevant to the plot but whose content is not. The Astaire-Rogers films of the 1930s include a range of musical numbers from the specialty dance number irrelevant to the plot, solo dances by Astaire whose numbers enrich the plot but do not advance it, through to the romantic falling in love dances which advance the plot of the film but not through their content. Hence using Mueller's approach to narrative integration, it is not until *Meet Me in St Louis* that musical numbers were seen

to advance the plot through their content, thereby creating a new style of integrated narrative.<sup>542</sup>

The next section will examine two dream ballets in *Daddy Long Legs* to ascertain the level of integration with or digression from the primary narrative, using Delamater's theory on integration regarding dance musicals.

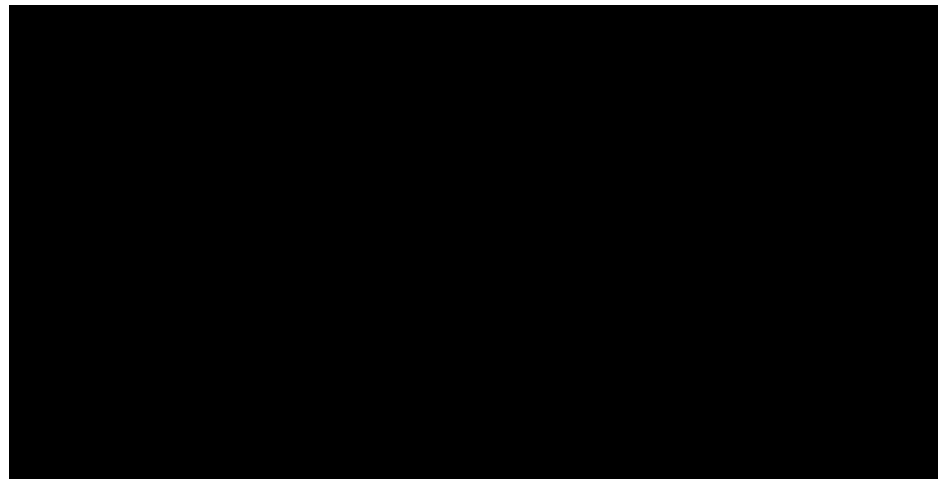
### ***Daddy Long Legs***

Fred Astaire plays the eponymous *Daddy Long Legs*, a mystery benefactor (Jervis Pendleton III) who sponsors a teenage French orphan girl Julie Andre (Leslie Caron) through college after spotting her in an orphanage whilst stranded in France.<sup>543</sup> Another character in the orphanage glimpsed a shadow of Julie's mystery benefactor's long legs and told Julie, hence the nickname. Pendleton is informed that Julie is eighteen years old and is due to leave the orphanage for college. Pendleton watches her teaching younger orphans and he can see she is already a beautiful young woman (figures 3.5a and 3.5b). This early scene is carefully coded implying that he is interested in her sexually, not just philanthropically. See Appendix 7 for the plot summary.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> There have been several film versions of *Daddy Long Legs*, adaptations of the best-selling novel of the same name by Jean Webster. The first film was titled *Daddy-Long-Legs* (Marshall A. Neilan, Mary Pickford Company, 1919) starring Mary Pickford. The second version of *Daddy Long Legs* (Alfred Santell, Fox Film Corporation, 1931) starred Janet Gaynor and Warner Baxter. The story was adapted as a vehicle for Shirley Temple as the younger sister of an orphan, with whom their benefactor falls in love, in *Curly Top* (Irving Cummings, Fox Film Corporation, 1935). There is a German adaptation entitled *Vadertje Langbeen* (Friedrich Zelmik, Neerlandia, 1938), and a South Korean adaptation *Daddy-Long-Legs* (Jeong-sik Kong, Wellmade Entertainment, YooBin Pictures, 2005).





**Figures 3.5a and 3.5b Jervis Pendleton III (Fred Astaire) watching Julie Andre (Leslie Caron) from the window of the orphanage (3.5a) and Julie teaching the younger children in the orphanage, unaware she's being watched by Pendleton (3.5b) in *Daddy Long Legs***

Pendleton has not told Julie that he is her mystery benefactor when they first meet, so has to learn to change his ways and express his emotions before they can become a romantic couple. Julie dreams and fantasises about her benefactor, sending him letters that he does not read. Whilst Pendleton ignores the letters and professes to be uninterested in his ward, he is overcome with the feeling of the inappropriateness of his desire for her. This is evident after they first meet as he immediately leaves for a trip abroad, therefore removing the sense of him blamefully imposing himself on her. It is only pressure from his staff and family that leads him to read her letters, meet her in person and inevitably fall in love. In 1955 Astaire was 56 years old and Caron was 26 and

the age difference features strongly within the narrative of the film. It is this issue that has to be resolved; we will see that the dream ballets and Astaire's star persona play an important function in helping to position him and Caron as an acceptable romantic couple. The film has to demonstrate that Julie's desire for Pendleton is substantial and real, so it is her desire that drives the narrative. This is explored in the dream ballets, especially through the narrative of the second dream ballet.

The two dream ballets are both told from the perspective of the female lead character. Roland Petit, selected as choreographer for *Daddy Long Legs* by Leslie Caron, stated that Astaire found it difficult to dance classical steps, so Astaire insisted that Caron dance his style of dance (except in the dream ballets).<sup>544</sup>

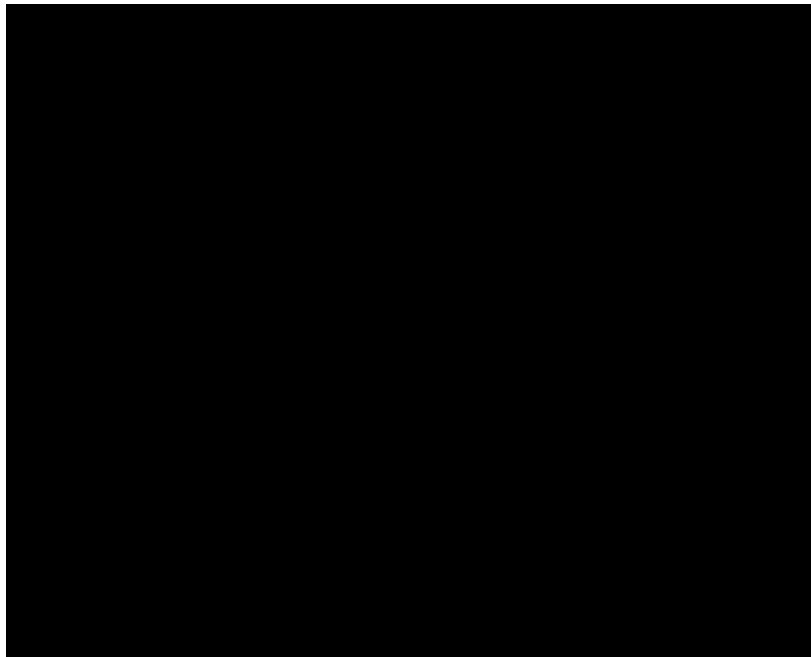
### **'Guardian Angel Daydream' ballet**

The first dream ballet, the 'Guardian Angel Daydream' appears when Pendleton reads one of Julie's letters in which she fantasises about her benefactor as a Texan oilman, an international playboy and finally her guardian angel. The ballet takes place forty-two minutes into the film and lasts seven minutes. Pendleton's assistant Griggs (Fred Clark) explains to him that Julie is in love with him and is sharing a college dormitory with Pendleton's niece. The explanation demonstrates that both Griggs and Pendleton's secretary Alicia Pritchard (Thelma Ritter) have been reading Julie's many letters over the last three years. Griggs persuades Pendleton to read her letters. He sits down with

<sup>544</sup> Caron had worked with Petit in Paris prior to moving to Hollywood. Choreographer Petit discussing the making of *Daddy Long Legs*, *Fred Astaire: Change Partners and Dance*, Paley Center, L.A., accessed January 2014.

a leather folder packed with letters that Griggs has handed to him and spreads out his legs on the sofa in his opulent office to read the first letter in the folder. The dream ballet is staged in three distinct episodes interspersed by Julie's voice reading out lines from her letters as Pendleton silently reads. The manipulation of the images of Pendleton presented in each episode resembles a child's dress doll whereby the child has multiple outfits that can be pinned on the doll. Pendleton hears Julie's voice in his head saying:

[...] Oh well on second thoughts, please don't answer, not that you will, it is just as much fun not knowing anything about you and leaves me free to imagine anything I want, you could be anything, sometimes I think you are the Texas millionaire [...].



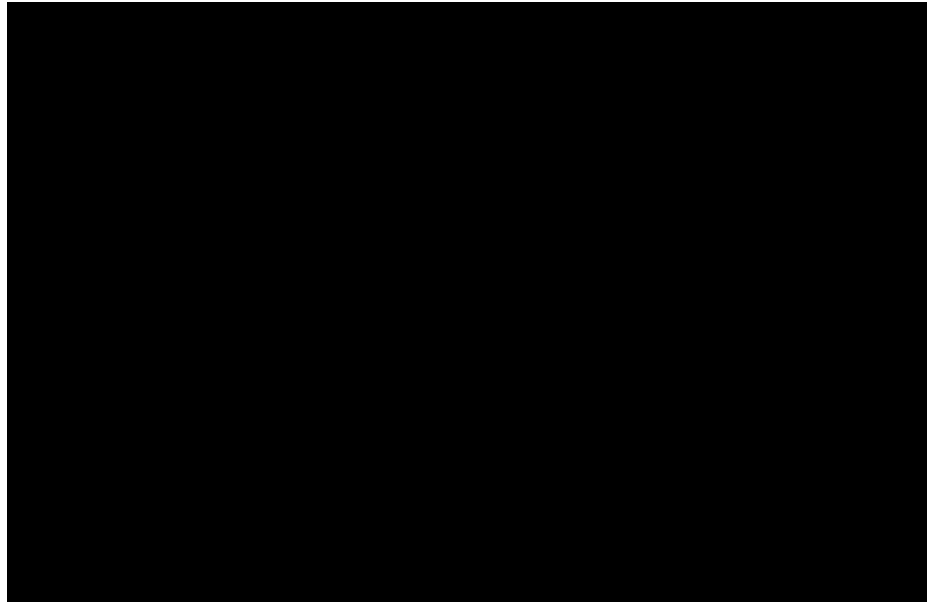
**Figure 3.6 Astaire as the Texan millionaire oilman in episode one of the 'Guardian Angel Daydream' ballet<sup>545</sup>**

The camera then pans right to left to a large screen on his office wall, which is anomalous in the mise-en-scène. The screen fills with smoke and the ballet

<sup>545</sup> *The Blonde at the Film Blog*, <<https://theblondeatthefilm.com/2013/11/15/daddy-long-longs-1955/>> accessed 1 March 2019.

begins as Julie's voice says, 'there is a special department in the United States Treasury that only works on your income tax report'. A stylised stage space appears with monochromatic yellow colour flooring and background and line drawing sketches of the lower portions of oil wells are visible to the right and left. In the centre a pair of orange leather cowboy boots and a white Stetson hat appear, then a jump cut to Pendleton, on his own, smiling to the camera, wearing the boots and hat along with a dark tailcoat, white shirt, waistcoat and gold chain, white flower and pocket handkerchief, orange tie to match his boots and grey striped trousers awkwardly tucked into the boots (figure 3.6). The smiling Pendleton slowly takes off his hat and gold coins fall to the floor. He then turns and takes long strides to the right, thumbs in his waistcoat before turning away from the camera to face a large drawing of a Million Dollar bill plastered across the back of the stage (figure 3.6). He turns back towards the camera which pans into a mid-range shot, his arms outstretched, he then removes his hat again and more gold coins fall to the floor. The music quickens, the camera pans out to a long shot and Pendleton launches into a solo tap routine with jazz inflections and exaggerated country-dance motifs, such as the expansive wide-legged walk of someone who rides horses, raising his Stetson, shouting 'yahoo' and high jumping kicks with bended knees. He mimes singing to the soundtrack with the lyric 'daddy daddy, why's your legs so long?' He stretches his legs out to each side and continues dancing exaggerated movements to the lyric 'daddy daddy, where do you get those stilts?' The dance routine moves between tap, jazz and country-dance styles as the music changes. His movements become more exaggerated as the music quickens and he dances to the instructions from the unseen country-dance caller, including mimicking tripping up and someone treading on his foot. As he jumps repeatedly in mid air with high bended knees, the action is paused.

Swirling smoke fills the screen again and Julie's voice says, 'well maybe not, you're probably an international playboy'.

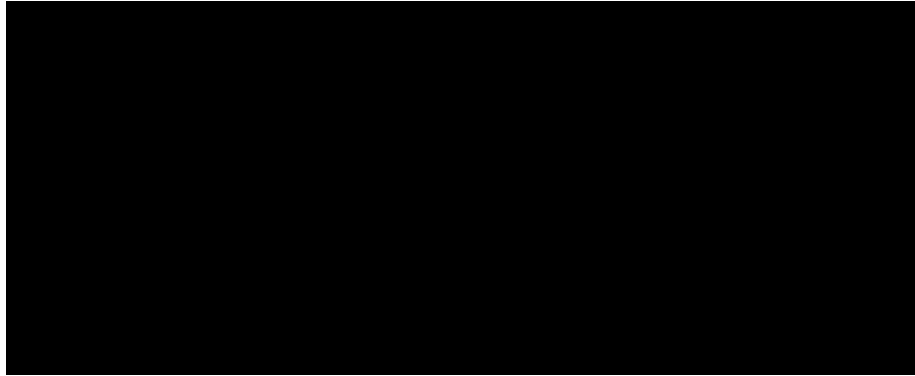


**Figure 3.7 Astaire as the International Playboy in episode two of the 'Guardian Angel Daydream' ballet**

The screen changes to an orange colour backdrop and bright pink stage, this time with stylised line drawing sketches of tall palm trees at either side of the stage. As with the first episode, Astaire's costume appears first. Here it is a top hat, spats, monocle, grey gloves and a wooden cane, before a jump cut to Pendleton wearing the hat and spats, holding the cane in his right hand, wearing tails, this time with a grey tie and purple flower, a monocle in his left eye whilst smoking a cigarette in a holder, and holding the gloves in his left hand. He is noticeably older than his first persona, with grey hair and a large moustache. The scene has very little dance content, but the choreography employs exaggerated movements. Pendleton slowly walks right to left into a stylised club setting towards a scantily clad hatcheck girl. He hands her his cane, gloves and hat before pinching her cheek. She falls backwards onto a chair, legs in the air. More women continually approach him, first a photographer, then a candy girl offering him chocolate. He repeats the gesture

and they swoon and fall to the ground too, as if fainting. As Pendleton walks slowly down stairs in the centre of the frame women in evening dress approach him. He either pinches their cheeks and they fall to the ground or he brushes them aside and they also fall to the ground, all longing for him with outstretched arms. A woman reaches for him, he ignores her, she falls to the ground and he steps over her (figure 3.7). He takes hold of another woman and ballroom dances with her briefly and leaves her frozen in mid position, arms in the air. He twirls his moustache as a woman watches him. She then dismisses him with a wave of her hand and his monocle falls out. He grabs her by the wrist, twirls her round at speed and she stops while facing forward with her legs wrapped around him. She pulls his face close to hers with her gloved hand on his cheek as if she is about to kiss him. The action stops in a freeze frame as Julie's voice says 'no, no, no, no, no, I don't like you like this'. The swirling smoke fills the screen as Julie's voice says, 'I prefer to think of you as my guardian angel.' We understand that the sequence has ended because it was becoming too explicitly sexual for Julie's imagination.

Julie is present in the third episode. Her style of dancing is predominantly classical ballet with jazz inflections, whereas Pendleton dances ballroom with ballet and jazz inflections, emphasising their generational and cultural differences. In this episode, although Astaire and Caron are together on the dream stage, he is an intuitive presence in her line of vision – the audience can see him, but she cannot.



**Figure 3.8 Astaire as the Guardian Angel to Caron in episode three of the 'Guardian Angel Daydream' ballet**

The episode starts with a chalk drawing of an angel on a stylised pale pink brick wall above a stone seat. A jump cut shows Pendleton sat leaning against the wall at an angle on the top of the seat obscuring the angel drawing but with the wings still visible. He is dressed in dark-coloured tails, with grey trousers, similar to the previous two episodes, but younger in appearance with a white flower in his lapel. Pendleton jumps down from the seat, looks at the drawing, acknowledging his role as guardian angel, before turning away. He gracefully turns and walks left to right towards a street of stylised shops, almost beckoning the camera and audience to follow him. The camera pans out to a long shot as Pendleton turns slowly forward until the audience can see Julie at the end of the street. She is walking slowly with her head down, arms behind her back passing in front of the differently coloured shop fronts in the exaggeratedly tall thin buildings. Pendleton jumps onto a doorstep, hiding out of sight, but smiling and watching Julie. She is wearing a black and white striped jumper, pale blue scarf tied around her waist, black trousers and pink *pointe* shoes. Throughout this episode Pendleton mirrors Julie's moves behind her. Pendleton's portrayal throughout this episode is in a physically restrained mode in relation to Julie.

Julie bends forwards from her hips, legs straight, with turned out feet looking longingly into an ice cream parlour window.<sup>546</sup> There is a reverse cut to the view of Julie from inside the window as she sways from side to side. Pendleton appears behind her mirroring her moves and they wave their hands in unison. He jumps into the shop, puts a coin in the till and pulls out an ice cream, twirls around with it above Julie's head before allowing her to take it. Julie's desire for an ice cream expresses her child-like rather than her sexual appetite. She strides across the road walking with turn out with Pendleton behind her as she reaches another shop (figure 3.8). She performs two *pas de bourrée* movements that Pendleton copies in a more relaxed style.<sup>547</sup> He spots an overhanging ledge with paint tins that is tilting and falling towards Julie; with a point of his finger he stops it falling. Julie dances around him *en pointe*. As she walks with turn out to another shop selling pink ballet *pointe* shoes, she looks at a cut out of a black and white photograph of a ballet dancer spinning *en pointe* and tries to stand *en pointe* but cannot. Pendleton lifts her shoulders without touching her, using only the upward movement of his hands. Julie jumps *en pointe*, he then wiggles his fingers at her legs, and she starts to dance *en pointe*. She runs around *en pointe*, places the ice cream in the pocket of a black and white cut out of a man, as Pendleton struggles to keep up with her.

Julie runs away diagonally towards the camera, followed by Pendleton. She leaps forward (*grand jeté en avant*) and there is a jump cut to another location with a sky backdrop in shades of blue and white. Julie's extended, pointed foot is visible in mid air, from behind. Julie continues to run, followed by Pendleton and she turns to face the camera and stops. The dance takes the form of a *pas*

<sup>546</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

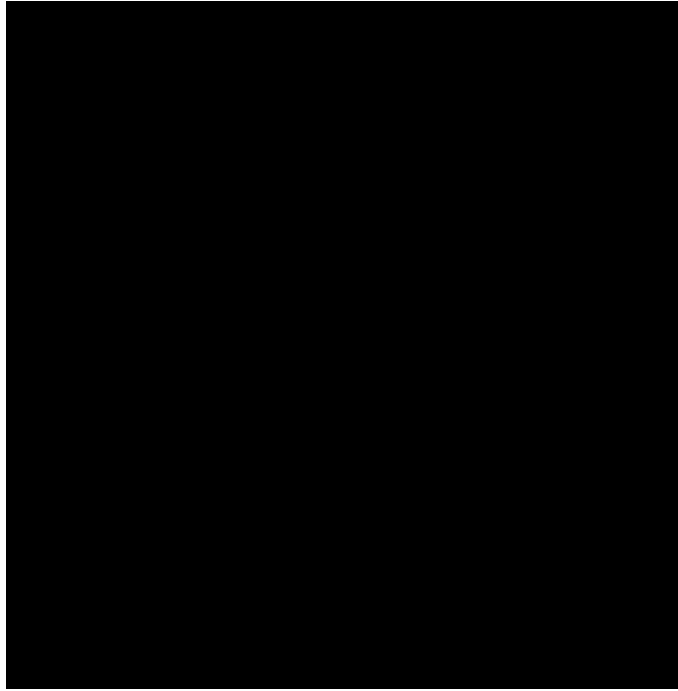
<sup>547</sup> Ibid.



*de deux* with Julie dancing ballet steps including *pirouettes*, *grands battements*, *jetés*, *pas de bourrées*, *soutenu en tournant* and *arabesques* with some jazz ballet inflections, particularly bending over, bent knees and waving of the hands.<sup>548</sup> Pendleton mirrors her moves in a ballroom style with jazz ballet inflections. During the dance Pendleton guides her and controls her movements by a sweeping gesture of his hands, he occasionally touches her waist and at one point she leans backwards against his side and extends her straight leg upwards (*grand battement*) (figure 3.9).<sup>549</sup> Most duets involve the male dancer guiding his female partner providing the physical support for her to perform balance and lift movements in an expression of love. This duet is expressly non-sexual with Pendleton providing a safe guiding influence with minimal physical touching. The episode ends when the two stop and Pendleton pulls a star from the sky and hands it to Julie; she then walks away, leaving him alone smiling (figure 3.9). The music fades and blue swirling smoke fills the screen then disappears to reveal Pendleton's office screen.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 3.9 Astaire and Caron dancing a duet in episode three of the 'Guardian Angel Daydream' ballet<sup>550</sup>**

The camera pans left to right to show Pendleton lying on his sofa smiling and reading Julie's letter. Her narration restarts: 'oh it's very confusing, I wish I knew who you really are, I wish one day you would write and tell me, your lonesome Julie'. He smiles, drops the letter to the ground and the camera pans out from a mid to a long shot revealing a pile of Julie's letters on the floor. The implication is that he has read every letter and that he is now a changed man. He immediately gets up and changes his behaviour, keen to find out more about Julie and to meet her in person.

The first two comical episodes demonstrate Julie's naivety and stereotypical perceptions of brash, confident, successful rich older men. In the third episode Pendleton is a benign, non-threatening guiding force in Julie's life and she is

<sup>550</sup> *The Blonde at the Film* Blog, <<https://theblondeatthefilm.com/2013/11/15/daddy-long-longs-1955/>> accessed 1 March 2019.

portrayed as young, wholesome and innocent. Pendleton is portrayed as a man with Julie's best interests at heart; there is no suggestion of romance or sex.

The ballet is an example of a mix of two very different dance styles, classical ballet performed by Caron and Astaire's unique Broadway style combined with ballroom, both with jazz inflections. Darryl Zanuck, head of Twentieth Century Fox believed that the casting of Caron with 'her foreign accent and the cachet of ballet would define the feminine side of the film.'<sup>551</sup> It could be argued that the two styles rupture the integrated narrative through their visual and narrative incompatibility in the third episode. Certainly, the finale *pas de deux* may have been visually more appealing with two leads dancing in the same style. This episode was choreographed to show off Caron's ballet prowess rather than Astaire's ballroom, Broadway and tap style and to express to the audience the idea of the two leads as a potential couple. The bridging of the two styles is achieved through the jazz inflections interspersed into both styles. In all episodes of the dream ballet, Astaire's character has been established as a gentleman, always wearing tails. This also positions him for the audience as the familiar Astaire character – an upper class, confident gent that dances ballroom when dancing with a female partner. Astaire was often portrayed as a mentor to a woman who needed to be trained in some way, thus providing narrative stages in and metaphors for lovemaking.<sup>552</sup> *Daddy Long Legs* is one of the few films that Astaire does not play a professional performer. His character contrasts with his young ward in age and social status. As Pendleton he is a wealthy, successful, well-dressed, well-travelled man, whereas Julie is an orphan dependent on a benefactor for her education and has few possessions. When Caron is first seen in the dream ballet, she is already

<sup>551</sup> Decker, p.110.

<sup>552</sup> Delamater, p.109.

wearing ballet *pointe* shoes and casual clothes, signalling to the audience that she will be dancing classical ballet but in a contemporary style. As Petit was a ballet choreographer he was keen to choreograph classical ballet in the dream ballets but had to accommodate Astaire's very different style. However Astaire does perform some ballet steps adapted to his style, such as the *pas de bourées*.<sup>553</sup> Astaire had already adapted ballet turns and arm movements into his style throughout his film career, so whilst not executing them in the same precise way as Caron, the two were complementary in style.

As stated in the Introduction, the use of classical ballet, as in many other dream ballets, provided an 'ethereal quality, weightlessness and height [that] lends itself to the nature of dreams', according to Delamater.<sup>554</sup> This works particularly well in relation to the ongoing theme of 'Daddy Long Legs' running throughout the film. In the primary diegesis Astaire's character has strong jazz credentials. These are depicted in Pendleton playing the drums along to jazz records in his office and his mastery of the contemporary swing dance performed with Julie and the students at her college ball in the 'Sluefoot' dance sequence, to the music of Ray Anthony's band.<sup>555</sup>

The ballet, whilst not performed on a diegetic stage, is primarily shot as if on a stage, with limited camera movements. Delamater notes that Astaire's style changes after 1940 when previously all his dances were photographed in 'full figure and long takes (often single takes) with multiple camera set ups, to noticeable integration of camera and dance, with match cutting on action.'<sup>556</sup>

<sup>553</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>554</sup> Delamater, p.102.

<sup>555</sup> Ray Anthony and his Orchestra were one of the few remaining dance hall bands still having hit records at the time of filming, Decker, p.202.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid, p.111.

This change marked a more 'general equality of relationship between camera and dance rather than subordinating of camera to dance in his earlier work.'<sup>557</sup> The function of this dream ballet is to focus on one of the main issues that the film is addressing – what possible relationship can the couple have other than the fantasy that Julie has about her mystery benefactor? During this dream ballet the audience sees that Julie has formed a real attachment to a romantic, fantasy ideal of her benefactor.

Although this film was produced at Twentieth Century Fox using its own production team, the mise-en-scène in both dream ballet sequences is heavily influenced by the MGM House style – with the use of bold and monochromatic colours in the first two episodes, unusual perspectives in the sets and staging, and abstract, highly stylised settings and roughly drawn motifs, as described in Chapter One.

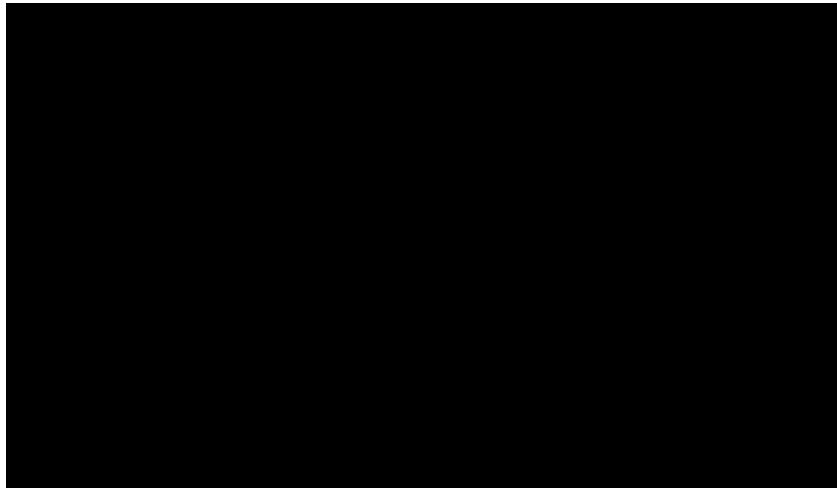
The narrative of the dream ballet is a visual representation of Julie's letters, sent in the primary diegesis. Pendleton's changed behaviour as a direct result of reading the letters, contributes to the narrative in the primary diegesis, rather than disrupting it.

### **Prologue to the 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' nightmare ballet in *Daddy Long Legs***

The second dream ballet takes place 1 hour 37 minutes into the film and lasts six minutes. It is a sleeping daydream manifesting Julie's emotions of anxiety, confusion, jealousy, anger, fear and longing for Pendleton, the man she has fallen in love with, though at this stage she is unaware that he is her mystery benefactor. In the scene preceding the dream ballet Julie has shut herself in

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

her college room. She sits on the windowsill listening to a song with the lyrics 'when you're feeling blue, dream that's the thing to do'. She is despondent about Pendleton, who is travelling the world being photographed with beautiful women in exotic locations, as shown in newspaper cuttings. She pulls her writing folder down from the dressing table and sits on the floor desperately sifting through numerous newspaper cuttings, reading out loud the photo captions detailing where Pendleton is, including Rio and the Paris Opéra (figure 3.10).



**Figure 3.10 Julie in her college bedroom looking through press cuttings of Pendleton in Rio, Hong Kong and Paris in *Daddy Long Legs***

In despair she sits on her bed to write a letter to Daddy Long Legs as the music and lyrics swell 'dream, dream, dream'. As she writes, she reads her words out loud, 'may I please come to see you, I am desperately in need of advice and there is no-one I can turn to but you'. Julie leans back on the bed, closing her eyes to the sound of the lyric 'dreams can be just as real as they seem, so dream, dream, dream'. The camera pans right to the open window as a gust of air blows the curtains and the newspaper cuttings. The audio and visual dissolves signal the start of the dream ballet to the audience.

### The 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' nightmare ballet



**Figure 3.11 Caron in the stylised hotel corridor, referencing Pendleton's hotel corridor seen earlier in the film, at the start of the nightmare ballet 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio'**

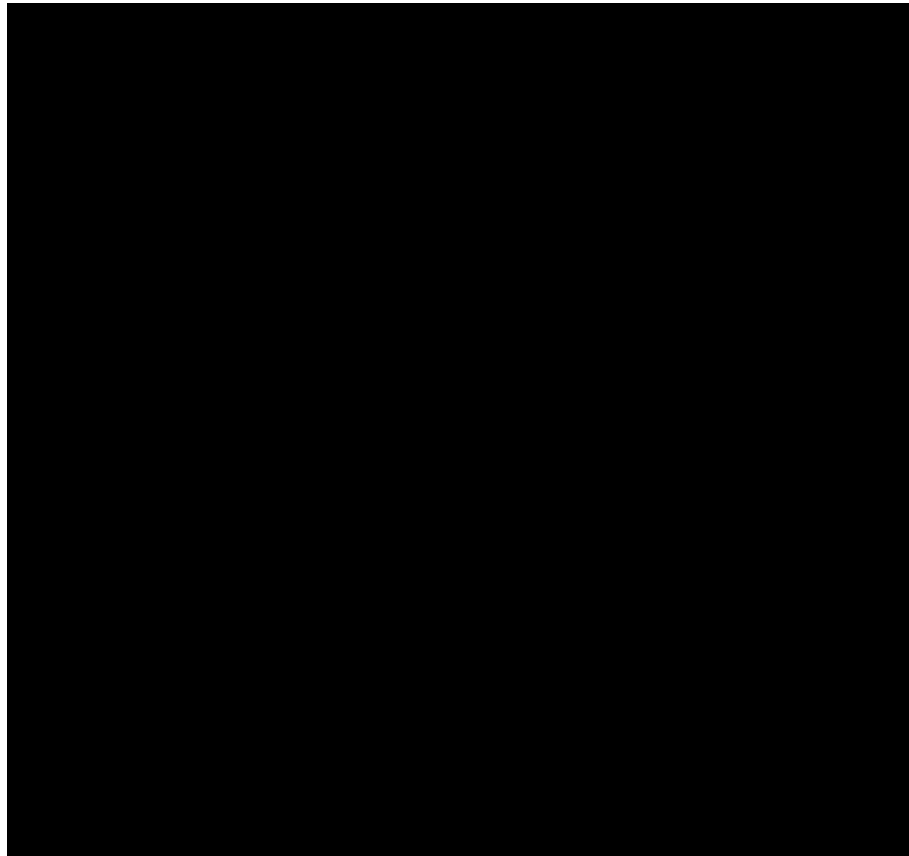
The image of Julie's bedroom fades into a stylised hotel corridor in pinks and purples, as seen through a gap in a curtain. The room numbers are the same as Pendleton's hotel corridor, which we have seen earlier in the film. Julie runs through the curtain and into the corridor, with her back to the camera wearing the same clothes that she fell asleep in, a day dress, cardigan and flat ballet pumps. She turns to face the camera, then runs towards a door as she hears Pendleton singing 'something's gotta give', the song he sang to her on the balcony of his hotel room (figure 3.11). The camera pans into a close up of Julie's face hearing the music coming from another door. She turns and runs through the door. The camera cuts to the other side of the door and Julie appears dressed as a ballerina in white bodice with wings on the back, short tutu, tights and *pointe* shoes. She looks around, sees a poster on the wall for 'L'Opéra de Paris présente Mlle Julie Andre dans Le Papillon'. She looks down at herself, realising she is dressed as 'Le Papillon', then around the room and runs to join a group of dancers preparing for their performance. They are in a brightly coloured dressing room with multi-coloured ballet costumes hanging on the wall, and mirrors and chairs positioned in the centre. The dancers help Julie into her full ballet tutu; she is dressed as the prima ballerina, all in white. She

performs a mix of classical ballet positions, *arabesques*, *pirouettes*, *échappés* interspersed with jazz styling whilst preparing in the dressing room.<sup>558</sup> The scene moves to a spiral staircase – hand-drawn at the top but with dancers running down real stairs at the bottom. Older men dressed in full eveningwear and holding flowers are waiting for the dancers at the bottom of the stairs. Julie looks at all of them, but none are Pendleton. She tiptoes onto the back of a red stage with a high proscenium arch and prepares for the start of the ballet. She is lifted onto the shoulders of one of the male dancers (figure 3.12). They turn to face the audience as the curtain is raised. The only member of the audience that is visible is Pendleton who can be seen in the distance sitting in a box, dressed in white tie and tails raising binoculars to his eyes (figure 3.12). The camera cuts to a mid-range shot of Pendleton looking through the binoculars, and then cuts back to a mid-range shot of Julie from the audience perspective. She starts to perform the ballet with her arms outstretched and fluttering like a butterfly. Another quick reverse shot shows Pendleton lowering his binoculars and the camera pans out to a long range shot of the ballet (figure 3.12). The next 1 minute 40 seconds is a fast paced classical ballet sequence choreographed to present Caron as the prima ballerina, performing with a large *corps de ballet*.<sup>559</sup> During the dance there are two cuts to Pendleton and reverse shots of close ups of Julie's face to show that she has spotted him in the audience.

<sup>558</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.



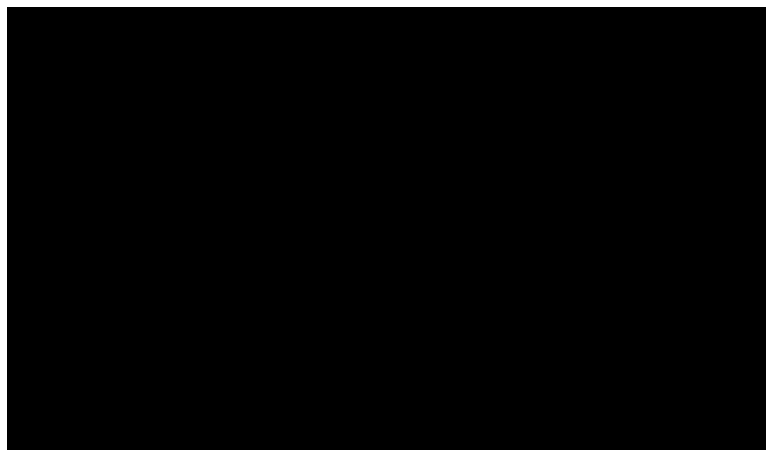


**Figure 3.12 Julie as the butterfly 'Papillon' dressed in a tutu performing with the *corps de ballet* on stage watched by Pendleton in episode one of the nightmare dream ballet 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio'<sup>560</sup>**

At the end of the sequence, the dancers hear slow hand clapping and the film cuts to a mid-range shot of Pendleton clapping. She runs off stage and into Pendleton's box. The film cuts to the other side of the door to show Julie running back into the same hotel corridor as in the start of the dream; she is now wearing the day dress and cardigan again. She turns to look at the hotel doors; all the numbers are the same – 3203 (the number of Pendleton's hotel room in the primary diegesis). She looks down to see what she is wearing and turns towards another door and walks away from the camera. Once again she hears Pendleton singing 'something's gotta give' and she walks through a different door. The film cuts to inside the door, and as the lighting changes to

<sup>560</sup> *The Blonde at the Film* Blog, <<https://theblondeatthefilm.com/2013/11/15/daddy-long-longs-1955/>> accessed 1 March 2019.

red the camera focuses on a close up of Julie's face. The camera then slowly pans round to show a neon sign on the wall – 'Hong Kong Café' and a glass-beaded curtain with accompanying percussion music symbolising glass clinking against glass. The camera slowly pans into the curtain and a female hand pulls it back. There is a reverse cut to show Julie, now dressed in a tight-fitting strappy orange beaded dress with slits up to each thigh and one strap hanging off her right shoulder, black belt and choker and orange sparkly heeled shoes. She forlornly jazz walks into the bar looking at each of the men, obviously looking for Pendleton, as she stretches her legs in exaggerated movements. She spots him in a corner dressed in a light suit and straw boater playing cards and drinking with two women. She runs towards him with one arm outstretched, he turns, glances at her and then looks away. She then performs a jazz dance to a saxophone soundtrack, with every man in the bar in a series of solos, duets and group dances (figure 3.13).



**Figure 3.13 Caron dancing in a jazz dance style in episode two of the 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' nightmare dream ballet**

Her movements include backbends, reverse shoulder rolls, long outstretched legs and high kicks, knee bends, fast turns, and when in hold leaning on the man, legs outstretched or curled round his legs in tango style. Every man is lustily vying for her attention except Pendleton who occasionally watches her,

blank faced. When she frees herself from the clutches of a man she runs to Pendleton, arms outstretched. A reverse shot shows her pleading face, then a shot showing another man, dressed the same as Pendleton, sat at the table lighting a cigarette. Julie runs out of the club.

The camera cuts to Julie running out of a different hotel corridor door dressed as a Pierrot. She is now in a multi-coloured street setting with tall coloured buildings. She is wearing the traditional Pierrot costume of black skullcap, white pantaloons, white flowing top with a big black fuzzy button. Pierrot is a sad, lonely figure pining for love, representing innocence and naivety, a character that would be recognised by audiences, as it has been a regular figure in *Commedia dell'Arte*, art, film, drama, poetry, literature, music, ballet, opera and mime for centuries.

There is very little dance content in this episode, especially for Caron, but the choreography employs stylised movement. The supporting carnival players perform athletic, gymnastic style dance moves evoking circus acrobatics. Julie runs across a black and white wavy floor that suggests Rio pavements. An overhead shot reveals a red sign saying 'Rio' that blows away in the wind. The wind causes Julie to twirl round and round until she sees Pendleton in the distance, dressed in a blue blazer, white slacks and straw boater. She runs across the square towards him but he disappears behind an array of carnival characters carrying balloons. As she moves among the carnival dancers she keeps catching glimpses of Pendleton. The carnival dancers are wearing variations of colourful clown costumes, some wearing hats, feathers, others in

whiteface, while others hold gruesome masks.<sup>561</sup> As she moves towards him, she is repeatedly lifted away by the carnival dancers (figure 3.14).



**Figure 3.14 Caron as Pierrot surrounded by dancers in episode three of the 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' nightmare dream ballet**

She sees three men wearing suits and top hats on stilts, two in black, one in white – symbols of Daddy Long Legs – with Pendleton stood in between. Julie rushes towards them but as she does so the three stilted men walk towards her and she cowers backwards in fear as Pendleton once again disappears. The dream ends with Julie spinning, head tilted back, arms outstretched, eyes shut in despair, and being carried aloft by the carnival clowns, whilst the music builds to a crescendo.

The music fades as the image dissolves back to Julie's bedroom. The scene starts with a view of the newspaper cuttings on Julie's floor. A single cutting floats down to land on top of the pile, with the headline 'In Rio for Carnival, Jervis Pendleton III celebrated American Industrialist' above a photograph of him arm in arm with two women in carnival clown costumes. The camera cuts to Julie restlessly sleeping on her bed, while her college mate and Pendleton's niece, Linda (Terry Moore) is shouting her name from outside. On entering

<sup>561</sup> Pierrot usually appeared in whiteface makeup, though Julie is not wearing whiteface makeup.

Julie's room, Linda asks if she wants her to post the letter. Julie finishes writing and hands it to Linda who looks at the address, then to the newspaper cuttings on the floor and shakes her head. The following scene shows Alicia Pritchard and Griggs arguing about the letter they have just received from Julie.

This second dream ballet is required to dramatise the issues that the film is addressing in relation to establishing a credible romantic coupling and explores the external manifestations of Julie's inner turmoil. In an earlier scene in the film after Pendleton has arrived back in America following his trip to France and the orphanage, he asks the American ambassador for help to adopt Julie.

When the ambassador discovers that Julie is eighteen, he immediately assumes that Pendleton has ulterior sexual motives. Pendleton argues that any such assumption is 'narrow-minded, bigoted and evil' and he continues by saying 'my motives are as pure as...'. The ambassador and Griggs both interrupt him. To reassure his colleagues and himself, Pendleton states that his subsidising of Julie's education has to be a secret so that she can never discover his identity. This reinforces the need for the second dream ballet showing Julie, rather than Pendleton, as a figure expressing desire and as the instigator of the romantic relationship.

The manifestation of inner turmoil is explored in a similar way to 'The American in Paris Ballet's exploration of the lead character Jerry Mulligan's raw emotional state at the loss of his love. The 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' ballet presents three different aspects to Julie's character: (i) the butterfly - young, excitable, flighty, (and in American and French culture seeing a butterfly signifies that your loved one is near); (ii) the nightclub performer – sultry, sensual, sexy; and (iii) Pierrot – the lonely, tragic figure pining for a lost love.<sup>562</sup> The first two characters are

<sup>562</sup> The representation of butterflies in American and French culture, *French Language Blog*, <<https://blogs.transparent.com/french/les-papillons/>> accessed 12 November 2017.

connected, showing Julie as an empowered female figure. Firstly, Julie is a prima ballerina, star of the show in *Papillon* and secondly, she is a woman trying to use her allure to attract Pendleton. The final character of Pierrot shows a shift from empowerment to an expression of loss. Despite performing as three different types of women, Julie is still unable to secure Pendleton's romantic interest. The 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' ballet demonstrates the seriousness and genuineness of Julie's emotional state. The resultant letter expresses her despondency and results in Pendleton's secretary taking matters into her own hands and orchestrating the next steps in the faltering romance. The ballet forcefully expresses Julie's desire and that it is her desire that dominates rather than Pendleton's desire. The sub plot of Alicia and Griggs mirrors the main plot, offering an example of the woman (Alicia) who said no at the wrong time, turning down Griggs' marriage proposal years before. As a result, Alicia wants to ensure that Julie does not repeat her mistakes and suffer the same loss of love. By interfering in Julie and Pendleton's relationship Alicia and Griggs can achieve fulfilment by ensuring another couple's successful union. Pendleton is resisting his feelings for Julie and therefore an external intervention is required to force him to admit that he has romantic feelings towards his ward. As a result, he changes his behaviour once he feels that his concerns about the differences in age and social status between him and Julie have been allayed. This ballet is not a wish-fulfilment or problem-solving ballet or merely spectacle; it creates a third layer of textual and emotional meaning enriching the diegesis, as referenced by Babington and Evans in the introductory quote to this chapter.

This marks the end of my analysis of *Daddy Long Legs*. The next section will focus on an analysis of the integrated nature of the 'A Day in New York' ballet in *On the Town*.

### **Background to ‘A Day in New York’ ballet in *On the Town***

The film tells the story of three sailors on 24-hour shore leave in New York and the three women they meet and fall in love with.<sup>563</sup> See Appendix 10 for the plot summary.

The style of dance in ‘A Day in New York’ is the contemporary Broadway jazz style, as exemplified by choreographers Jack Cole and Robert Alton. This dance style, which is evident throughout the majority of the film, suits the upbeat, fast-paced storyline. At this point in Kelly’s film career he was still exploring and developing his own American style choreographed for the camera, rather than on stage, a hybrid fusion of different traditional, classical and contemporary dance styles with moving camera work, as discussed in Chapter Two. According to Delamater:

Kelly came to represent the integrated film musical [...] his dance routines – rarely under the supervision of another choreographer – not only epitomize the characters within the context of the films but also incorporate a dancing style which is both eclectic and unique.<sup>564</sup>

In Dyer’s *Only Entertainment*, he explores how emotional signification can be related to specific entertainment forms, and particularly with reference to the mode and time of cultural production.<sup>565</sup> This analysis includes *On the Town* as an example of how musical numbers evoke different emotions and feelings.<sup>566</sup> For example the ‘A Day in New York’ ballet is described as expressing

<sup>563</sup> *On the Town* was the first Hollywood musical to use on location scenes shot in New York and an early sightseeing montage in the film shows many famous New York landmarks.

<sup>564</sup> Delamater, pp.132-3.

<sup>565</sup> Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, p.18.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid*, Table 3.1, p.20, p.23.

intensity, a term Dyer qualifies by explaining that his description of intensity within this context is:

The capacity of entertainment to present either complex or unpleasant feelings [...] in a way that makes them seem uncomplicated, direct and vivid, not 'qualified' or 'ambiguous' as day-to-day life makes them, and without intimations of self-deception and pretense.<sup>567</sup>

There were three ballets in the original Broadway stage production of *On the Town* (1945 - 1946) reflecting its origin as a ballet conceived and choreographed by Jerome Robbins. Leonard Bernstein called the ballets 'dance episodes' and they were: the 'The Great Lover Displays Himself' dream ballet in which 'Gabey falls asleep on the subway and dreams of sweeping Miss Turnstiles off her feet'; '*Pas de deux*' whereby Gabey watches a scene in Central Park of a 'sensitive high-schoolgirl lured then cast off by a worldly sailor'; and the 'Times Square' ballet where 'all the sailors congregate in Times Square for their night of fun'.<sup>568</sup> In memos in the Arthur Freed collection, there are references to Freed wanting composer Bernstein to arrange and direct the dream ballet in *On the Town*, and that he was in discussion with Kelly and Bernstein regarding the ballet.<sup>569</sup> However Kelly wanted to direct the dream ballet himself and he worked with the in-house music department, particularly Conrad Salinger and Johnny Green. Salinger and Green combined elements of two of Bernstein's pieces from the original dance episodes: 'The Great Lover

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Leonard Bernstein <<https://leonardbernstein.com/works/view/97/three-dances-episodes-from-on-the-town>> accessed 3 January 2018.

<sup>569</sup> Undated memo from D.O. Decker states that Freed wanted Bernstein to arrange and direct the ballet in *On the Town*; memo dated 16 May 1949 from R. Monta to Freed referenced that Freed was in discussions with Kelly regarding the ballet and Bernstein too, *On the Town*, Box 17, Arthur Freed Collection, Cinematic Arts Library, USC, accessed July 2008. Images 14-15 and the list of songs on <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/on-the-town-1614/#songs>> show that the 'Great Lover Displays Himself' is also called the 'Imaginary Coney Island' ballet, and on the track listing for the original Broadway cast recording, All Music, <<https://www.allmusic.com/album/on-the-town-original-broadway-cast-mw0000196449>> accessed 27 May 2019.



Displays Himself' and the 'Times Square' ballet, plus the refrain of 'New York, New York' and additional scoring to produce the seven-minute score for the ballet.<sup>570</sup> Kelly's narrative for his *On the Town* dream ballet incorporates some of the narrative ideas from the first and third ballet from the original stage production, but without the same clarity in the storytelling.

### **Jazz dance in 'A Day in New York' dream ballet**

'A Day in New York' takes place 1 hour 14 minutes into the film. The dance is a fast-paced Broadway jazz dance, with bent knees creating a lower centre of gravity, use of outstretched and bent arms and a variety of moves including: inside and outside turns, paddle turns, piqué turns, pivot turns, *chassés*, hitch-kicks, fan kicks, jazz glissades, hitch-slides, lunges, isolations, contractions, ball changes, forced arches, body rolls, hip lifts, jazz layouts and jazz walks.<sup>571</sup> Choreographer Jack Cole is credited as the pioneer of jazz dance and he originally developed this style on Broadway combining modern dance and popular jazz steps that focused on 'emphasised isolations, rapid directional changes, angled placement and knee slides' (figure 3.15).<sup>572</sup>

<sup>570</sup> Audio clips from the original Broadway score, Leonard Bernstein, <<https://leonardbernstein.com/works/view/8/on-the-town>> accessed 3 January 2018.

<sup>571</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>572</sup> Jack Cole and jazz dance <<https://www.thoughtco.com/jazz-dance-basics-1007436>> accessed 2 January 2018.



**Figure 3.15 Kelly completing a knee slide in the 'A Day in New York' ballet, a move previously made famous by dancer/choreographer Jack Cole**

However the roots of jazz dance 'had their foundations in the culture of African slaves', but it was not until 'The Jazz Age' that the wider population began to appropriate the work of Black musicians and dancers.<sup>573</sup> Unlike tap, where the feet articulate the syncopated rhythms, in jazz dance the whole body absorbs and articulates these rhythms.<sup>574</sup> According to dancer Gemze de Lappe, Cole's trademark jazz style, originated from the Lindy step and consisted of 'lyric movement, soft *plié*, fluid upper body and jumps, famous knee slides, and the hinge in modern dance by throwing weight away from where you're falling [...] and he wanted you to be on the movement on the beat'.<sup>575</sup> All these moves are evident in the 'A Day in New York' dream ballet. 'Jazz dance has always been a reflection of the trends and temper of the times', but its evolution includes many dance forms including 'African dance, ballet, modern dance, show dance,

<sup>573</sup> Gus Giordano, *Jazz Dance Class: Beginning Thru Advanced* (New Jersey: A Dance Horizons Book, Princeton Book Company, 1992), p.vii.

<sup>574</sup> Genné, p.225.

<sup>575</sup> Liza Gennara interviewing dancer Gemze de Lappe, audio recording \*MGZTC 3-2382, TOFT, NYPAL, accessed January 2014.

theater dance, social dance, and East Indian folk movement.’<sup>576</sup> Jazz dance relies on strong technique including ‘flexibility, center placement, clean lines, multiple turns [and] leaps’.<sup>577</sup>

### **Prologue to ‘A Day in New York’ dream ballet**

Gabey (Gene Kelly) walks Hildy’s (Betty Garrett) roommate Lucy (Alice Pearce) home and drifts slowly away from the brownstone building, holding his navy cap in his hands. He is resigned to thinking that he has lost Ivy Smith (Vera- Ellen) and he has very little time left of his shore leave. He spots a poster on a wall stating: ‘The Messrs Rupert present A Day in New York – A Comedy in 3 Acts with music, featuring Richard Corlane, Byron Swade, Faith Selburn, Music by Gregory Nagen, Book by Backerly, Lyrics by Curtis Kenworth, 43<sup>rd</sup> St. Theatre’.<sup>578</sup> Gabey stops, reads out loud ‘A Day in New York, a comedy in 3 acts’. He leans back against the wall with a half smile, looks down then up to signal the visual transition into the daydream, as the non-diegetic music swells and the camera zooms into a close up of the poster.

The ballet is an emotional reprise of the three sailors’ shore leave in New York, told from Gabey’s perspective from falling in love with Ivy to the moment where he loses her at 11.30pm.

Freed described the dream sequences thus: ‘I am right in calling them “bizarre sequences” rather than “dream sequences” since they’re similar to the things people often imagine while they are wide awake.’<sup>579</sup> Freed was concerned that

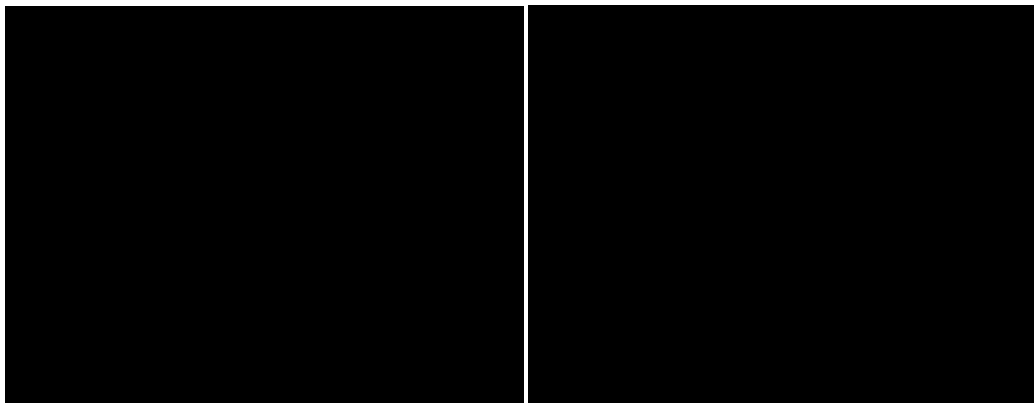
<sup>576</sup> Giordano, p.vii.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

<sup>578</sup> All these names are fictional.

<sup>579</sup> Dennis Lee Calling, ‘Arthur Freed’ in *Films in Review*, vol. XV, no.9, (Nov 1964), p.538, Vincente Minnelli papers, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014.

substituting professional dancers for the Frank Sinatra, Jules Munshin, Betty Garrett and Ann Miller parts in the ballet, would 'bewilder audiences', but he supported Kelly's vision.<sup>580</sup> Kelly, in a recorded conversation with his third wife, librarian, archivist and writer Patricia Ward Kelly stated that the dream ballet 'didn't quite work [...] I was sure it would work [but then admitted] I was bloody well wrong.'<sup>581</sup> Kelly replaced the four principals with dancers as only Vera-Ellen was equipped to do the kind of jazz dancing that Kelly wanted. There is no visual transition between the actors and dancers for the audience, and the choice of costume colour for the female dancers contradicts the previous scene, thereby creating added confusion (figures 3.16a and 3.16b).



**Figures 3.16a and 3.16b Previous scene showing female dancers with Hildy Esterhazy (Betty Garrett) in yellow, Claire Huddesen (Ann Miller) in pink and Ivy Smith (Vera-Ellen) in green (3.16a), and image showing the substitution of lead female dancers in different coloured costumes, with Vera-Ellen in pink (3.16b) in the 'A Day in New York' dream ballet<sup>582</sup>**

The transition into the dream ballet as Gabey reads a poster for a 'Comedy in 3 Acts' with a list of fictional names suggests to the audience that it is about to see a stage production, though not necessarily a daydream. It is not made

<sup>580</sup> Joseph Andrew Casper, *Stanley Donen* (New Jersey & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1983), p.34.

<sup>581</sup> Patricia Ward Kelly, *Gene Kelly: The Legacy*, recorded conversations with Gene Kelly 1986-96, Facebook, 2 June 2017, accessed 3 June 2017.

<sup>582</sup> One of the female dancers in the dream ballet was regular Kelly contributor Carol Haney (dressed in green in figure 3.16b), who had previously been choreographer Jack Cole's dance partner and assistant.

clear that the names are fictional; this is particularly significant as so many of the locations in the film are authentic or are authentic reproductions of New York landmarks.

On its release in 1949 there was some criticism by critics and preview audiences of *On the Town*'s dream ballet. In an audience preview report for *On the Town* one audience member commented on the ballet as 'very unnecessary, [...] not believable or even convincing' [and] 'particularly scene in the clouds'.<sup>583</sup> In a Motion Picture Research Bureau Preview Report, 5% of those questioned stated that the ballet was too long, whereas others stated that the ballet was the best liked sequence.<sup>584</sup>

### **The 'A Day in New York' dream ballet**

The transition into the ballet starts with Gabey looking up into the middle distance, to the sound of bluesy jazz and a visual dissolve from the poster to reveal a superimposition of a stylised New York skyline as the backdrop to a theatrical stage set. In front is a tall raised platform with a rounded edge and there are three stairs at the right-hand side leading down to a flat floor. The set is minimal and grey in colour. Three sailors dressed in sailor whites run from the back of the stage onto the platform with Kelly in the centre, all with arms outstretched, as the orchestral version of 'New York, New York' starts, referencing the start of their day in the city. They turn to face the back of the stage acknowledging New York, then turn back round and jump down onto the floor. The frenetic dancing in unison, including running around the stage, *jetés*,

<sup>583</sup> *On the Town*, First Preview, 2<sup>nd</sup> Report, 9 September 1949 Pacific Palisades, *On the Town* Box 17, Arthur Freed Collection, Cinematic Arts Library, USC, accessed July 2008.

<sup>584</sup> *On the Town* Motion Picture Research Bureau Preview Survey (331 interviews), Loew's 72<sup>nd</sup> Street Theater, New York, 22 November 1949, *On the Town*, Box 17, Arthur Freed Collection, Cinematic Arts Library, USC, L.A., accessed July 2008.

*pliés*, scissor steps and a variety of turns and kicks, is an expression of joy and excitement as the three sailor friends arrive in New York.<sup>585</sup>

The sailors only stop dancing when they see two women stood on the platform to the right of the screen, above the stairs. One is dressed in a three-quarter length yellow dress with a fitted leotard bodice, full skirt and split up to the waistband holding a pink scarf, the other in a similar dress in green, holding a yellow scarf. Both are wearing heeled ballet pumps. When Ivy does eventually appear she is wearing a pink dress, which reflects the colour of the dress she was wearing in the earlier 'Main Street' number, when she danced for the first time with Gabey in Symphonic Hall, rather than the green dress from the previous scene (figures 3.16a and 3.16b). The music changes to a slow jazz beat. The two female dancers stand in the same pose, staring out past the sailors, right leg bent with toes touching the ground, right hand on their thigh, left hand on their waist. As the men bend down to get a closer look at their legs, the women alter their pose, change legs and wiggle. The women slowly jazz walk down the stairs and into the centre of the stage at a diagonal angle to the camera, holding out and waving the scarves in a long jazz arm position. The men turn and follow the women stopping at the base of the stairs watching them. The women continue to dance slowly holding out the scarves, in a wide-legged, bent knee stance with outstretched arms, kicks, low *pliés* and quick changes in direction. When they turn to face the sailors in a sharp movement and hold their jazz fourth position, Gabey faints, held up by his two sailor friends. As the women drop the scarves to the floor, the two sailors drop Gabey and slide in on their knees to pick up the scarves as Gabey watches. The women dance around the sailors, fan-kicking over their heads as the sailors

<sup>585</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

crouch below, retrieving the scarves. The women move away out of shot and the three sailors get up, adjust their neckerchiefs, caps and trousers and jazz walk towards the women. The camera pans across the stage as the same two sailors dance with the same two women, still holding their scarves aloft. The men place their caps on the heads of the women, staking their claims, flap their arms in a Charleston move, looking skyward, then clasp their hands behind their backs. The men dance opposite their partners who respond mirroring their moves but with outstretched arms. Gabey watches closely becoming increasingly jealous. The couples hold each other in close ballroom hold, cheek to cheek, dancing with elongated jazz steps, bent knees, and holding hands in the air, the other hand around the waist or shoulder. Gabey moves between the couples and follows one couple as they move back across the stage towards the stairs. Gabey taps the sailor on the shoulder and as he looks around Gabey slips in to dance with the woman in green. He continues to dance in the same style twirling his partner before she stops, and whilst she waves the scarf in his face, Gabey is distracted allowing the other sailor to step back in, and he kicks Gabey to the ground. Gabey slides across the floor on his back and stops in front of the Miss Turnstiles poster set in a vertical stand next to a lamppost.

Gabey jumps to his feet and starts walking towards the out of shot sailor, but he stops, stands upright on *sous sus* then drops to his knees in a knee hinge position to look at the poster.<sup>586</sup> He turns onto his back in a back fetal position; then he quickly flips over to sit on his knees as the lights fade to black except for a spotlight on the poster and Gabey.<sup>587</sup> He places his cap on the corner of the poster, points to Ivy then to himself and curls up next to the poster smiling as the lights fade to black.

<sup>586</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

The next scene is an example of *mise-en-abîme* as Gabey's emotional reprise daydream leads to a sexual curiosity fantasy dream within a dream, a format Kelly would later repeat in *Singin' in the Rain* in the self-realisation dream ballet, 'The Broadway Ballet'. The lights brighten to reveal a central white spotlight against a red wall in a ballet studio representing the place where Gabey and Ivy first met. Dyer (1993) states, 'as befits a dream sequence in a culture informed by a vague Freudianism, the tone of the reprise is more passionate and sexual and yet only at the end introducing any dependency.'<sup>588</sup> In the centre is Ivy wearing a black ballet leotard with polo neck and long sleeves, red and white scarf tied around her waist, black seamed tights and black ballet shoes tied around the ankles. She is practicing positions in her jazz ballet class and her position at the barre when first seen in profile is jazz fourth position. The music is slow and Ivy combines classical ballet positions with jazz positions, *attitude croisée devant*, *grand battement jeté balance*, *battement fondu développé relevé en attitude* with arm in jazz second position moving to jazz fifth, and holding the barre with the other hand.<sup>589</sup> The camera pans out to reveal a white spotlight to her right featuring Gabey with his back to the camera, still dressed in his sailor whites. She holds her position and turns to look at him and as he moves towards her, the camera zooms in to a mid-range shot. The following dance takes place on and around the ballet barre within the central spotlight against the red wall. Gabey does not touch Ivy, until they move away from the barre at the end of the dance and she only lightly places her arm on his shoulder to facilitate one move along the barre. Sometimes they dance in unison, mirroring each other, side by side, or opposite each other on opposing sides of the barre and also moving back and forward, switching sides.

<sup>588</sup> Dyer, 'Heterosexuality and dance in the musical' in *In the Space of a Song* (2012), first published in Helen Thomas (ed.), *Dance, Gender and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p.95.

<sup>589</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.



At other times they are 'arranged in separate and contrasting positions around [the barre], positions that are organised, however, into sequences whereby each dancer repeats what the other has just done, not exactly, but in ways suggesting similarity or equivalence.'<sup>590</sup> At one point Ivy lies along the bar face down as Gabey crouches underneath. The barre acts at first as a barrier between them, a barrier to overcome, then as a line that unites them. Dyer states that 'there is no suggestion of dependency or relative power here and all the movements signify pleasure, most obviously (and most explicitly sexually) in the contrast of his crotch to the barre, her opening her legs out from the crotch.'<sup>591</sup> The dance shows off Kelly's athleticism and Vera-Ellen's strength and grace as they move seamlessly on, around, under, and over the barre (figure 3.17a). At the end of the dance, Gabey holds Ivy in his arms, her legs bent, feet off the floor and with pointed feet, clinging to his side, whilst he slowly turns round repeatedly. He lowers her to the ground and kneels, with their arms around each other (figure 3.17b).



**Figures 3.17a and 3.17b Kelly and Vera-Ellen performing a sensual dance around the barre in the mise-en-abîme sequence in the 'A Day in New York' dream ballet**

Dyer describes this movement thus, 'a movement involving her dependence on him but also connoting the ebbing away, for both of them, of passion and,

<sup>590</sup> Dyer, *In the Space of a Song*, p.95.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*

perhaps, orgasm.’<sup>592</sup> Ivy stands and holds out her arms to Gabey to help him to his feet. They embrace and kiss briefly as Ivy backs away from him, holding hands until they let go as the music quietens. They stop, turn away from each other and take a final look over their shoulders for one last glance. Gabey walks away out of the spotlight into shadow, and as he reaches the smaller white spotlight from the start of the scene, the lights fade to black. According to Patricia Ward Kelly’s later recorded conversations, Kelly said that the scene ‘was a good example of how he used color to create a ‘kind of sexual symbolism’ that would pass muster with the censors.’<sup>593</sup> He further stated ‘we broke no rules [...] but there it was. It was sexy as any dance I’ve ever done [...] what it is saying is that I was seducing her, she was seducing me, and we were having sex [...] and I didn’t touch her.’<sup>594</sup> I will discuss how certain styles and uses of choreography were employed to avoid Production Code regulations in Chapter Four.

This barre dance is the only time that Vera-Ellen’s character is sexually provocative, in contrast to the two other female leads whose characters in the primary diegesis are sexually confident/aggressive. This sexual representation in the barre dance is directly opposite in style and tone to the ‘Main Street’ dance when Gabey and Miss Turnstiles first meet. The ‘Main Street’ dance employs a faux community dance style that is innocent and naïve representing their small-town origins.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

<sup>593</sup> Patricia Ward Kelly, *Gene Kelly: The Legacy*, Facebook, 9 May 2017, accessed 10 May 2017.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid. Patricia Ward Kelly stated that when she tried to boost a post with an image from this scene Facebook denied the post stating ‘it doesn’t follow our Advertising Policies for advertising adult products or services. We don’t allow images or videos that show nudity or cleavage, even if it’s portrayed for artistic or educational reasons,’ *Gene Kelly: The Legacy*, Instagram, 9 May 2017, accessed 10 May 2017.

The lights brighten to reveal a central spotlight on the empty New York stage set including the Miss Turnstiles poster.<sup>595</sup> Gabey appears from the left side of the stage on the platform, he drops to his bottom, legs and arms outstretched and smiling. He jumps down onto the stage to the sound of the music from the start of the dream ballet. Gabey repeats some of his earlier dance moves, putting on his cap, straightening his trousers and kissing the poster as the spotlight follows his dancing. He proceeds to dance around the stage holding the poster as if it was Ivy demonstrating his newfound love using a range of moves including fan kicks, *pas de bourrés*, pivot turns, *chassés*, crazy legs, sugar and scissor steps.<sup>596</sup> He places the poster on the platform facing the audience, bends down clinging to the edge of the platform in profile and performs dance moves reminiscent of the Sailor's Hornpipe dance.<sup>597</sup> The music builds and the lights brighten to reveal the full stage and Ivy dancing onto the platform. Gabey jumps onto the platform, takes her in his arms and passionately kisses her. The dancer in the green dress and her sailor run into view behind the lead couple. Gabey and Ivy stop kissing and both couples stand facing the audience at an angle, one arm raised in the air, as if waving in greeting. Both couples turn to face the skyline and freeze in position as the third couple appears and all repeat the waving move in unison. They all turn to face the audience, hands clasped behind their backs jumping in second position. All three sailors run and jump off the platform, knees bent, feet

<sup>595</sup> There is a continuity error in the scene on the subway train when Gabey first sees the poster of Miss Turnstiles (the same poster used in the dream ballet). When a member of the subway staff pastes the Miss Turnstiles poster onto the carriage wall in front of the three sailors, the copy is clearly visible, however when a reverse cut shows the sailors reading out loud the copy, it is completely different to what the audience has already seen. Between the three sailors they state that 'she's a home-loving girl, but she loves high society's whirl, she loves the army but her heart belongs to the navy, she is studying painting at the museums and dancing at the Symphonic Hall.' The camera then pans down the poster showing the copy: 'For the month of June meet lovely Ivy Smith. Every month some lucky little New York miss is chosen from the thousands of girls who ride the subways to be Miss Turnstiles. She's got to be beautiful, brilliant, and talented.... just an average girl! This month the fortunate lassie is – Miss Ivy Smith!'

<sup>596</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

together, arms outstretched and land on the stage. They run towards the camera and perform a barrel leap turn before jumping back onto the platform as the women sit down and slide off the platform kicking one leg in the air.<sup>598</sup> They begin to dance in unison, diagonally to the camera as the music quickens. All six continue to dance together with the men alternating between dancing on the platform and the stage. The two sailors and their girlfriends jump onto the platform and wave goodbye to Gabey and Ivy who perform a duet back in the spotlight. Ivy jumps horizontally onto the platform and Gabey follows her by jumping horizontally over her in a roll, referencing a previous movement in the ballet barre scene. They continue to dance in unison arms and legs outstretched, Gabey dropping to the floor while Ivy fan kicks over his head. They swing, arm in arm, round and round and when they stop Ivy performs a series of fast *pirouettes* while Gabey watches. He jumps down onto the stage dancing exuberantly and in unison in front of Ivy until a red flashing 11.30pm sign appears in the top left-hand corner of the screen, only seen by Ivy. The sign moves towards the camera flashing more quickly and Ivy turns and runs away whilst Gabey continues to dance. He turns around to see she has gone and begins to rush around the stage, jumping onto the platform, sliding on his knees until he ends up in front of the poster again.<sup>599</sup> The music stops for a moment then starts slowly as Gabey puts on his cap, sits by the poster while the camera pans out to a long shot. Gabey disappears behind a descending red theatrical curtain covered with the names from the original poster on the wall in the primary diegesis. The music builds to a crescendo and the image dissolves to reveal the original wall poster. The camera pans back to

<sup>598</sup> Ibid.

<sup>599</sup> Kelly discussing the challenge of filming this long knee slide in a 1970s BBC TV interview, exact details unknown, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7Z5UqbLmZA&fbclid=IwAR2zZ4jAGprPNLGPkzp9irRS\\_FETz0rWECFnJiUuDoVkbwLw6PRaMt7zLEo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7Z5UqbLmZA&fbclid=IwAR2zZ4jAGprPNLGPkzp9irRS_FETz0rWECFnJiUuDoVkbwLw6PRaMt7zLEo)> accessed 28 April 2019.

a mid-range shot to show Gabey leaning against the wall looking off into the middle distance, holding his cap as Chip (Frank Sinatra) is heard saying 'Hey Gabe!'. Chip acknowledges that Gabey is upset by the disappearance of Ivy and they leave to rejoin their friends.

This emotional reprise daydream has not resolved his problems – rather it has accentuated his feelings of love and loss. On seeing the Miss Turnstiles poster Gabey exuded boyish infatuation, which following his mise-en-abîme daydream turned into an expression of lust, desire and mutual love. His daydream allowed Gabey to relive the positive feelings of falling in love but with the accompanying recognition that his love is gone and he cannot understand why, and he is left alone to ponder and mourn his loss. The circular daydream mirrors, while not slavishly reproducing, his recollection of his day of shore leave up until the point of rupture, hence ending on a downbeat note, a device Kelly would repeat in 'The American in Paris Ballet', as described in Chapter Two. The purpose of both ballets is to function as stylised reprises of the action to date, at the point when the romantic plot of boy meets girl has been ruptured, before the successful resolution in the primary diegesis. This ends my analysis of the 'A Day in New York' ballet.

### **Dream analysis and popular representation of psychological tropes**

The following section explores how the popular representation of psychoanalysis was manifest in dream ballets through identifiable codes and tropes for audiences.

One of Freud's central arguments in *The Interpretation of Dreams* was that:

Strictly internal sources create dreams messages from the unconscious that express 'day residues' or rehashes of events in waking life, as well as repressions and unfulfilled wishes often of a sexual nature.<sup>600</sup>

Freud's founding texts had a profound impact on all forms of popular culture, and particularly his sexual interpretations of dreams and symbolic representations of death in dreams. This thesis does not have the space to explore more generally Freud's impact on popular culture or the larger map of manifestations of Freudianism in film. While Freud made the case that dreams needed interpreting, this is not problematic for dream ballets as they are not performances where psychoanalysis occupies the foreground, for the evident reason that their narratives are too obvious to require elaborate interpretation in Freudian terms. Suggestively, many dream ballets employ a daydream frame. According to Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, Freud distinguished between dreams and daydreams and he argued that daydreams did not convey the proper logic of a dream and that daydreaming is a function of the conscious not subconscious mind, as referenced earlier.<sup>601</sup>

Freud's impact was especially evident through Freudian references in film from the silent era in Hollywood, France, Italy, Germany and Russia with dramatisations of dreams using symbolism, such as *Poor Little Rich Girl* (Maurice Tourneur, Artcraft Pictures Corporation, 1917), *The Kid* (Charlie Chaplin, Charles Chaplin Productions, 1921) and *Secrets of a Soul* (G.W. Pabst, Germany 1926). By the 1940s-1960s dream sequences such as those in *Lady in the Dark* (Mitchell Leisen, Paramount Pictures, 1944), *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (Norman Z. McLeod, Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1947),

<sup>600</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* as quoted in Halpern, *Dreams on Film: The Cinematic Struggle Between Art and Science*, p.15.

<sup>601</sup> Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, *Films & Dreams: Tarkovsky, Bergman, Sokurov, Kubrick and Wong Kar-wai* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007), p.115.

*Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, Selznick Pictures, 1945), *Marnie* (Alfred Hitchcock, Universal Pictures, 1964) and *What a Way to Go!* (J. Lee Thompson, Twentieth Century Fox, 1964), exemplified the popular presentation of disguised symbols within dreams that could be decoded by a psychologist or psychiatrist within the primary diegesis. The majority of these examples of the use of dreams in films range from comedic to melodramatic and deployed extreme stylisation through the use of unusual mise-en-scène.

In his article 'The Filmic Dream and Point of View' in *Literature and Film Quarterly*, Robert Eberwein argues that:

We watch a dreamer see his dreams. We are released from the laws of time and space to enter the filmic dreams, allow the laws of time and space to enter a consciousness and, at the same time, remain aloof, outside.<sup>602</sup>

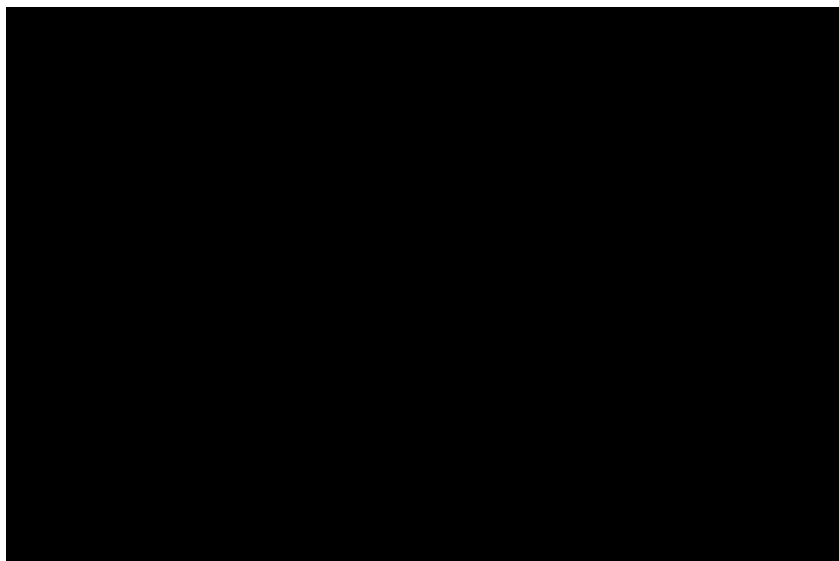
Leslie Halpern in *Dreams on Film: The Cinematic Struggle Between Art and Science* (2003) acknowledges that dream sequences 'intensify our relationships with film characters' and that Freud's sexual symbolism in dreams has always been popular with filmmakers.<sup>603</sup>

The popular representation of psychoanalysis was manifest through identifiable tropes for audiences in dream sequences and to a much lesser extent in dream ballets. These included using surrealist imagery inspired by surrealist artists whose interpretation of Freud's work was generally abstract. In the final scenes of the 'Will You Marry Me?' dream ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief* the exaggerated barren landscape evokes Dali's paintings, whereas earlier in the

<sup>602</sup> Robert Eberwein, 'The Filmic Dream and Point of View', *Literature and Film Quarterly*, 8:3, 1980, p.201, as quoted in Botz-Bornstein, p.114.

<sup>603</sup> Halpern, p.8, p.16.

dream the women's costumes and their washing of laundry reference the townswomen of Cocteau's *La Belle et La Bête* (Jean Cocteau, DisCina, 1946).<sup>604</sup> The use of the colour red was a signifier of love or sex and features in the mise-en-scène of some dream ballets including coded costume and flowers. Serafin as Mack the Black (Kelly) swings several large phallic swords around in front of Manuela (Garland) against a fiery red background in her sexual curiosity daydream in the 'Mack the Black' ballet in *The Pirate* (see figures 4.3a and 4.3b in Chapter Four). The exaggerated scale of the flora in the 'I Used to be Color Blind' ballet in *Carefree* (figure 3.18) denotes the importance of the natural world, the sense of being at one with nature and the creation of an appropriate setting in which to fall in love.



**Figure 3.18 Over-sized pastoral scene from the 'I Used to be Color Blind' dream ballet in *Carefree***

In that film the psychiatrist Dr. Tony Flagg (Astaire) informs his patient Amanda Cooper (Rogers) that dreaming will help to solve her problems, namely that she will agree to marry her fiancé Stephen Arden (Ralph Bellamy), and so he prescribes a diet of lobster to invoke a dream. The slow-motion romantic

<sup>604</sup> Wollen, p.38.



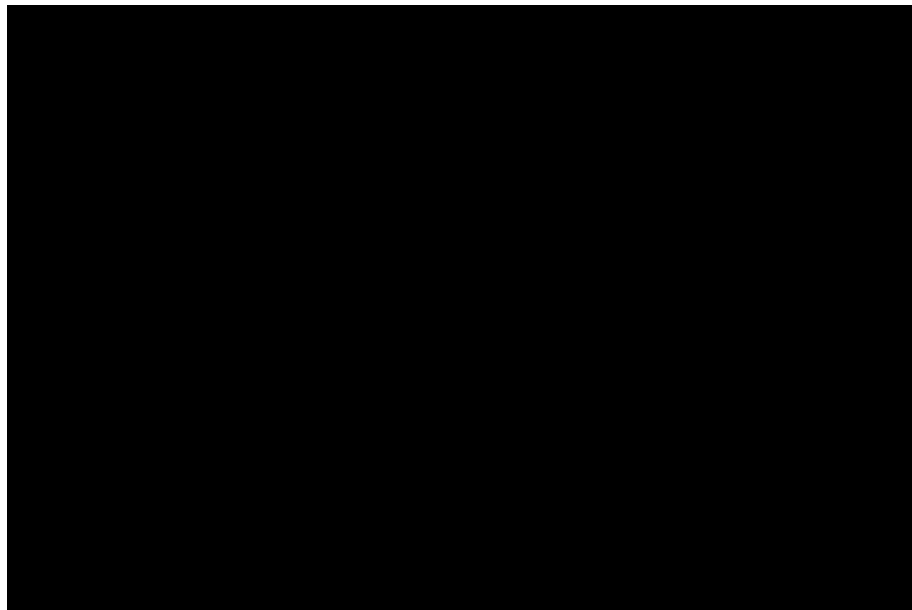
fantasy dream that results is the most balletic of all Astaire's dream ballets with multiple lifts representing a romantic *pas de deux*.<sup>605</sup> The function of the dream defeats Tony's intention as it awakens Amanda's subconscious romantic feelings towards him, not her fiancé, thereby expressing the romantic coupling that the audience is expecting. On waking in the morning following her dream, Amanda questions her Aunt Cora (Louella Gear) as to whether she believes in dreams. Following the dream Amanda changes her behaviour and seeks out Tony to declare her love for him. He hypnotises her to reverse her feelings towards him but realises that his own subconscious is telling him that he loves her too. This central element within the primary diegesis reflects the popular cultural representations of Freud's dream theory, which although never referenced by any of the characters would have been understandable to audiences. In her critical assessment of the film Croce (1972) states that *Carefree* contains 'dopey, spoof-psychiatry'.<sup>606</sup> Some details here predate Freud; Charles Dickens used a similar concept of food producing dreams in his pre-Freudian novella *A Christmas Carol* (1846) when Scrooge whilst dreaming in bed explains the visions of ghosts as a result of undigested cheese. Of course, the use of artificial enhancers – a popular filmic device – to provoke dreams was often used to enhance the comedic value or evoke a fairytale code within the film. Such dream ballets do not exist outside the moment of enactment and are not referenced within the primary diegesis. Even where there is an analyst character within the film, such as *Carefree*, the dream ballet is not discussed in detail.

A crucial element that differentiates dream ballets in film musicals from filmic dream sequences is that the narrative follows a chronological order, unlike

<sup>605</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>606</sup> Croce, p.144.

actual dreams. Walters (2008) argues that dream sequences in musicals 'may well be far more lucid and structurally organised than any dream we could ever have' thereby challenging the critical idea that dream ballets are simply designed to perform psychological functions within the primary diegesis.<sup>607</sup> The dream ballets were created so that audiences would be able to understand the dream ballet narrative, even if they did not understand all the layers of meanings within the choreography. The meanings of symbols and codes were mainly clear within the course of the dream ballet and often reinforced by the principal character immediately on waking from the dream. For example, the use of sheets and veils in the problem-posing 'Will You Marry Me?' dream ballet to entrap Johnny Parkson Riggs (Astaire) signify marriage, and on waking he finds himself entangled in his bed sheets (figure 3.19).



**Figure 3.19 Johnny Parkson Riggs (Astaire) wearing a red carnation symbolising love, trapped by veils in the 'Will You Marry Me?' dream ballet in *Yolanda and the Thief***

<sup>607</sup> Walters, p.32.

Halpern states:

Most directors don't seem to be bound by either dream theory or science. And in many cases, dream sequences are fashioned into a format that fits the director's purpose, irrespective of what science knows about dreams.<sup>608</sup>

Babington and Evans challenge Feuer's comparison between dream sequences and Freud's theory of 'dream work', stating that 'the material expressed in these dream ballets [*Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*] is both more subtle and often more anarchic than Feuer's view admits.'<sup>609</sup> Feuer's argument is that dream sequences 'come true' in the 'real world' and follow four main forms: the dreamer's romantic desires, an attempt to work out problems expressed in the narrative, the trialling of romantic partners, and a 'psychic cleansing process for the dreamer'.<sup>610</sup> In relation to *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*, Babington and Evans state that Feuer's four classifications of dream ballets cannot 'deal with the way the ballets dredge up meanings which cannot be identified with the overt desires of the protagonist, or that expose the problematic issues as distinct from being part of the problem-solving action.' I would argue that this applies also to the other dream ballets discussed in this thesis.

## **Conclusion**

Successful integration of dream ballets within the primary diegesis is reliant on a linear narrative storytelling approach that is demonstrated in all dream ballets, even those employing surrealism, symbols and codes within the mise-en-scène. With reference to Kelly's dream ballets in *An American in Paris* and

<sup>608</sup> Halpern, p.1.

<sup>609</sup> Babington and Evans, pp.199-200.

<sup>610</sup> Feuer as quoted in *ibid*, p.199.

*The Pirate*, Patullo suggests that dreams that employ surrealism and fantasy settings 'do grow out of the primary narrative and make reference to it, though in an abstract way.'<sup>611</sup> She states that in such examples 'reality is abandoned and a launch into surrealism is permitted.'<sup>612</sup>

Despite the differing forms of transition into dream ballets, each dream ballet follows a similar format of the principal character telling a chronological story through dance. The dream ballet narrative is used as a way to reveal usually a principal character's true romantic feelings and as a way to express sexual desire towards another character, as well as to the audience, that ultimately results in the dreamer's changed behaviour in the primary diegesis. Feuer states that 'the dream world is never presented as an interchangeable part designed to fit almost any musical. It is always determined by the primary narrative realm.'<sup>613</sup>

The dream ballets in *Daddy Long Legs* achieve successful narrative integration through working to acknowledge the differences of class, age and culture between the two lead characters and explore their potential romantic and sexual union within the safe space of the younger female dreamer's dreams. The dream ballet in *On the Town*, whilst contributing towards the emotional growth of the lovelorn Gabey functions primarily as spectacle, although the *mise-en-abîme* dream within a dream allows the romantic couple to express their sexual desire through coded choreography.

<sup>611</sup> Patullo, p.83.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid.

<sup>613</sup> Feuer, p.70.

We can measure the differences here by asking what would happen if the dream sequences were omitted. *On the Town* without the 'A Day in New York' ballet would still function as a coherent film, however *Daddy Long Legs* without the second dream ballet in particular, would be less coherent and less satisfying for the audience. Kelly's non-dancing characters sing and dance as a spontaneous natural expression of their emotions and it is this sense of continuity and retention of narrative persona that helps to cement over the rift between plot and number.<sup>614</sup> Patullo states that 'the notion of 'sensation', of art directly targeting the emotions, could be used to describe the overarching purpose of the musical number.'<sup>615</sup>

The next chapter will examine the presentation of sex and romance from each of the male and female dream protagonist's perspectives and how complex layering of codes within choreography was employed to avoid the imposition of cuts relating to the regulations of the PCA.

<sup>614</sup> Delamater, p.150.

<sup>615</sup> Patullo, p.84.

## Chapter 4

### **Male and female perspectives and the Production Code Administration**

Hanna (1998) states:

Even when a dancer intends only to explicate movement forms, the dancer's body is said to disappear into the movement; even when the shape of the body is obscured by costume, signs and symbols of sexuality may be read into the dance and erotic or lustful feeling aroused.<sup>616</sup>

The first section of this chapter examines how the complex layering of codes within choreography was employed to avoid the strict regulations of the Production Code Administration taking *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) and *The Pirate* (1948) as case histories. The second section examines the presentation of sex and romance from the internal dream protagonist's perspective and the differences between male and female dreamers' motivations, through analysis of 'The Veil' dance in 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' In the Rain*, the 'Girl Hunt Ballet' in *The Band Wagon* (1953) and 'Louise's Ballet' in *Carousel* (1956).

#### **The Production Code Administration (PCA)**

In order to understand the parameters within which filmmakers had to work in the period of my corpus, this section outlines the pertinent areas of the Production Code relating to musicals, and in particular dance, and how they were applied, making reference to original *Singin' in the Rain* archive material. For the film's plot summary, see Appendix 11.

<sup>616</sup> Hanna, p.5.

According to Thomas Doherty (2007) no single 'definitive and canonical' version of the Production Code exists as the Code was continually being revised in small ways. However Martin J. Quigley, co-author and one of the custodians of the Production Code at the PCA, published the then current version of the Code in the 1956 edition of the Motion Picture Almanac, which Doherty re-published in his book *Hollywood's Censor*.<sup>617</sup> It is this version of the Code, with additional reference to the Motion Picture Production Code website, that I shall refer to in this chapter, along with reference material from the PCA Archives at the Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles.<sup>618</sup>

Cooper (2013) states:

The crusade to clean up the motion picture industry was a fairly straightforward and systemic affair with regard to the spoken word and sung word. It proved to be far more ambiguous when it came to controlling the dancing body in the Hollywood musical.<sup>619</sup>

In the section of the Code titled 'VII. Dances' under 'Particular Applications' (31 March 1930-December 1956) the Code states:

1. Dances suggesting or representing sexual actions or indecent passion are forbidden.
2. Dances which emphasize indecent movements are to be regarded as obscene.<sup>620</sup>

<sup>617</sup> Doherty, p.351.

<sup>618</sup> David P. Hayes, The Motion Picture Production Code, <[https://productioncode.dhwritings.com/multipleframes\\_productioncode.php](https://productioncode.dhwritings.com/multipleframes_productioncode.php)> accessed 29 March 2018.

<sup>619</sup> Cooper as quoted in Bales and Eliot, eds., p. 98.

<sup>620</sup> Doherty, p.354; this wording was removed from the Code in December 1956.

Dance featured in the more detailed section titled 'Reasons Underlying Particular Applications as section VII.', stating that:

Dancing in general is recognized as an *art* and as a *beautiful* form of expressing human emotions.

But dances which suggest or represent sexual actions, whether performed solo or with two or more, dances intended to excite the emotional reaction of an audience, dances with movement of the breasts, excessive body movements while the feet are stationary, violate decency and are wrong.<sup>621</sup>

Costume was also singled out for particular mention in the Code in section VI:

1. Complete nudity is never permitted. This includes nudity in front or silhouette, or any licentious notice thereof by other characters in the picture.
2. Undressing scenes should be avoided, and never used save where essential to the plot.
3. Indecent or undue exposure is forbidden.
4. Dancing costumes intended to permit undue exposure or indecent movement in the dance are forbidden.<sup>622</sup>

A note under the title 'Reasons Underlying Particular Applications', section 'VI. Costume' which mostly covers nudity, states: 'Transparent or translucent materials and silhouette are frequently more suggestive than actual exposure.'<sup>623</sup> Hanna reinforces this view in stating that 'costume, which hides sexual identity may paradoxically make the spectator contemplate the essence of that which is absent.'<sup>624</sup>

A further 'Special Resolution on Costumes' added to the Code from 25 October 1939 in reference to the above four points stated that they 'shall not be

<sup>621</sup> Ibid, p.362, italics in original text.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid, p.354.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid, p.362.

<sup>624</sup> Hanna, p.23.



interpreted to exclude authentically photographed scenes photographed in a foreign land, of natives of such foreign land, showing native life.’<sup>625</sup>

I will now turn to the way these regulations were put into practice. After the PCA was satisfied that the script (including song lyrics) broadly adhered to the Code, shooting on the film could commence. In reality, negotiations between Producers and the PCA would continue during shooting, particularly in relation to some musicals where new song lyrics were being developed during the production process. In practice this was a two-stage process whereby the PCA gave outline agreement to the initial script enabling the studio to undertake production and therefore expenditure. Subsequently adjustments would be made at various stages during and post the production process to ensure the granting of a code seal on final submission. Walter Plunkett who designed the 1920s costumes for *Singin’ in the Rain* stated that if you could make a case for authenticity to a particular period then it was easier to get approval from the PCA: ‘You didn’t really have to be accurate. You just had to pretend to be.’<sup>626</sup>

Such partial judgments are represented in a letter from Joseph I. Breen, PCA to Mayer dated 27 April 1950 regarding *An American in Paris*. Breen expressed concerns regarding the revealing female bodies during dances and insisted on the removal of the implication of a ‘sex affair’ between Jerry and Milo, but made no mention of the interpretation of the choreography.<sup>627</sup>

<sup>625</sup> Doherty, p.356.

<sup>626</sup> Walter Plunkett, quoted in John Mariana, ‘Come On with the Rain’, *Film Comment*, 14. No.3, May-June 1978, p.10, as quoted in Hess & Dabholkar, p.76.

<sup>627</sup> Letter from Joseph Breen to Louis B. Mayer, dated 27 April 1950, *An American in Paris*, Box 54, Arthur Freed Collection, USC, accessed July 2008.

In the case of *Singin' in the Rain*, correspondence by mail between Breen and Mayer at MGM in relation to *Singin' in the Rain*, dated 4 January 1951 states: 'We have read the script dated December 15 1950 (received here January 2, 1951), for your proposed production SINGING IN THE RAIN, and wish to report that the basic story seems to meet the requirements of the Production Code.'<sup>628</sup> This PCA terminology allowed the studio to start production without the PCA being committed to granting a code seal. The letter continues stating, 'At the outset, we direct your particular attention to the need for the greatest care in the selection and photographing of the costumes and dresses for your women.'<sup>629</sup> The letter also requests the submission of the lyrics of all songs and then highlights a series of potential Code violations in relation to dialogue and female costumes, for example, 'Page 65: Don's line, "What are you doing later?", approaches the element of sex perversion and we ask that it be eliminated.'<sup>630</sup> There is no reference in the letter to 'The Broadway Ballet', as the storyline had not yet been fully developed.<sup>631</sup>

A detailed report was produced by a team of reviewers at the PCA for each script and film submitted by Producers. The Analysis of Film Content report on the submitted film included seven tick box sections relating to every aspect of the Code for reviewers to rate. The reviewers also produced a written synopsis

<sup>628</sup> Letter from Joseph I. Breen to Mr L. B. Mayer, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, dated 4 January 1951, Motion Picture Arts America Production Code Archives (MPAA PCA), Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014. Note the title of the film: *SINGING IN THE RAIN*, according to original film scripts dated 11 April 1951 and 26 July 1951 the film was originally titled *Singing in the Rain*, Turner/MGM scripts S-1234 *Singin' in the Rain*, From Betty Comden and Adolph Green to Producer Arthur Freed, 11 April 1951, 26 July 1951, Turner/MGM Scripts Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014. It is not clear exactly when the title was changed to directly refer to Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown's title song 'Singin' in the Rain', but in an inter-office memorandum from Producer Arthur Freed to Ralph Wheelwright, studio executive in charge of advertising display, dated 30 July 1951 the title of the film is *Singin' in the Rain*, Fordin, p.361.

<sup>629</sup> Letter from Joseph I. Breen to Mr. L. B. Mayer, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, MPAA PCA Archives, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid.

<sup>631</sup> Rehearsals for *Singin' in the Rain* started on 12 April 1951, the film went into production on 18 June 1951 and closed production on 21 November 1951. Louis B. Mayer resigned on 22 June 1951, Fordin, p.353, p.357.

of the plot summary as part eight of the report. Part One titled 'General', covered basic information such as 'material source, period, locales, story elements/angles, foreign languages and countries covered' and whether the 'ending' was 'happy, unhappy or moral'. Part Two covered the 'Portrayal of Professions', Part Three - the 'Portrayal of 'Races' and Nationals'. In the *Singin' in the Rain* Analysis of Film Report, Part Three, a typed note reads 'Oriental servant' and the 'role' was classed as 'incidental', the 'characterization' as 'indifferent' and 'not clear' in the 'U.S. Citizen' category, apparently stated as an annotation rather than an objection.<sup>632</sup> Part Four covered 'Liquor', Part Five – 'Crime', Part Six – 'Sociological Factors' including gambling, violence, prayer, marriage, adultery, illicit sex, romance, family relationships'. For *Singin' in the Rain*, in the category marked 'violence', a typewritten note in 'other' states 'Pie sling' as an annotation rather than an objection.<sup>633</sup> Part Seven titled 'Other Sociological Factors' included 'economic' and 'marital status', 'age' of the principal characters and their 'motivations', such as 'success in love', 'pleasure as the chief goal', 'professional or artistic achievement', 'marital happiness' and 'help others to be happy, succeed', amongst others.<sup>634</sup> In the *Singin' in the Rain* Report, Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds both scored (1) in the 'Success in love' category denoting 'Sympathetic – Achieved, whereas Jean Hagen scored (8) denoting 'Sympathetic and Unsympathetic – Not Achieved.'<sup>635</sup> Six reviewers signed this report, including Van Schmus, referenced in further correspondence between the PCA and MGM.

<sup>632</sup> *Singin' in the Rain* Analysis of Film Content Report, 3 January 1952, MPAA PCA Archives, Special Collections, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

There were four main conditions on the PCA certificate for release. These are abridged below:

1. That all prints of the above picture to be released with the above title, shall be **exact copies** of the picture hereby approved; and that no scene shall be added or removed from such picture, without the written approval of the Production Code Administration [...].
2. That all applicable regulations and penalties, promulgated by the Board of Directors of the Motion Picture Association of America, Inc., relative to the issuance and display of the Seal of the Production Code Administration, are and shall remain in full force as to the certificate issued herewith.
3. That any and all advertising and publicity matter [...] shall be submitted for approval to the Advertising Advisory Council of the Motion Picture Association of America, Inc. [...].
4. That, in addition to any other applicable penalties, the Production Code Administration reserves the right **to void** this Certificate, at any time hereafter, for any violation of the conditions set forth herein [...].<sup>636</sup>

These were generic points that were applicable to all production companies. Even at this point, the certificate could still include requirements for adherence to specific conditions prior to release. The Certificate for *Singin' in the Rain* issued 3 January 1952, included a typewritten note at the bottom that read:

P.S. This certificate is issued with the understanding that in all prints to be released of this picture, the first dance sequence involving Gene Kelly and Cyd Charisse will be shortened on the basis of the elimination discussed by Mr. Vogel of M.G.M. and Mr Van Schmus of this office on December 28, 1951. J.I.B.<sup>637</sup>

This elimination is visible in the final film at 1:18.40 with a cut that results in the loss of a few frames, a jump of approximately one to two seconds as Charisse

<sup>636</sup> Production Code Administration Certificate of Release #15511 for *Singin' in the Rain*, addressed to Mr. Dore Schary, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer from Joseph I. Breen, 3 January 1952, MPAA PCA Archives, Margaret Herrick Library, accessed January 2014, use of bold is author's own.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

winds her body and leg around Kelly's body whilst in hold (figures 4.1a and 4.1b).



**Figures 4.1a and 4.1b Cyd Charisse as the 'Vamp' and Gene Kelly as the hooper in the 'Vamp' scene (4.1a), the second image demonstrates the censor's cut of a few seconds (4.1b) in 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain***

When editing, Directors Kelly and Stanley Donen would always try to cut on a turn, to make the cut as invisible as possible, so the abruptness of this cut suggests that it was forced on them by the PCA. Years later in conversations with his third wife, Kelly described the censors as 'hawks' and stated, 'I don't know why they didn't cut the whole number. It was so sexy'.<sup>638</sup>

Local Censor Boards in international territories could request cuts to films through the PCA. On 2 March 1953 Pakistan requested two deletions from *Singin' in the Rain*: 'Reel 10 Delete shots of Cyd Charisse with Gene Kelly's hat hanging on her foot and her raising her foot higher,' [and] 'Reel 11 Eliminate shots of Gene Kelly picking Cyd Charisse up in his arms, embracing her and slowly turning her round his body in dance'.<sup>639</sup> In a parallel report request from Indonesia on 24 June 1953, the requests included eliminating the 'dance of girl

<sup>638</sup> Quotes from Kelly recorded in conversation with his wife Patricia Ward Kelly, Facebook 7 March 2017, <<https://www.facebook.com/patriciawardkelly/posts/10158444340890061>> accessed 7 March 2017.

<sup>639</sup> MPAA PCA Confidential Copy of Report, Received from the Local Censor Board, in the Territory Named, Pakistan, on the Picture Titled: *Singin' in the Rain*, 15 April 1953, MPAA PCA, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014.

in green' and the 'veil dance', thereby excising Cyd Charisse and the majority of the dream ballet from the film.<sup>640</sup>

Although the PCA found no objections to 'The Veil' dance in 'The Broadway Ballet', the Spanish censors cut the scene completely as 'they thought it was very symbolic of lovemaking', according to Gene Kelly who was incensed by the decision and wrote to the Spanish censors citing his own Catholicism, but to no avail.<sup>641</sup> Cooper expresses a similar view that the Spanish censors' appraisal was correct stating, 'the dream ballet is an abstracted interpretation of a couple's lovemaking in which heterosexual male desire is actualized, and as such, the dance violates the code.'<sup>642</sup> The ballet is thus an exemplary case of the PCA censors not engaging with choreographic meaning when evaluating perceived high-art balletic styles of dance.

Whilst there were ongoing negotiations between the PCA and producers about how the Code was employed, such as the length of a kiss, censorship decisions were always taken on the merits of individual films. At the start of the production process for *The Pirate*, Breen's letter to Mayer 26 January 1944, in response to reading the book for *The Pirate* stated that it was 'unacceptable' and 'could not be approved under the provisions of the Code that deal with the sanctity of marriage.'<sup>643</sup> In this case MGM and the PCA were in negotiation for

<sup>640</sup> MPAA PCA Confidential Copy of Report, Received from the Local Censor Board, in the Territory Named, Indonesia, on the Picture Titled: *Singin' in the Rain*, 10 August 1953, MPAA PCA, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014. Note the Company named on this report is Loew's Inc. whereas the previous report names Metro Goldwyn Mayer. These were the only international requests that I found during my research visit to the Library.

<sup>641</sup> Kelly thought that by stating he was a Catholic it might influence the decision of the Spanish censors to change their mind, as Spain was a staunchly Catholic country. Kelly interview transcript in Delamater, p.225.

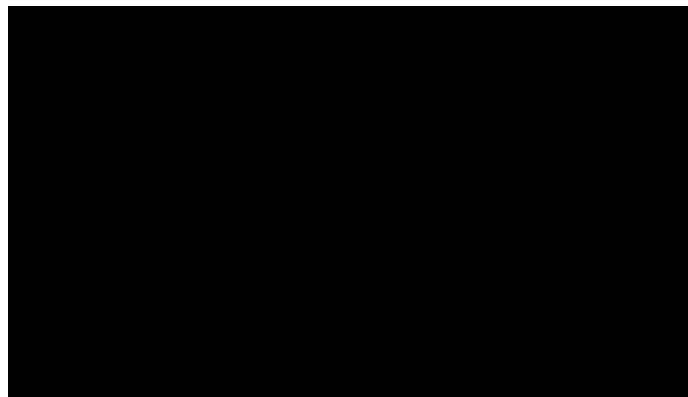
<sup>642</sup> Cooper in Bales and Eliot, eds., p.110.

<sup>643</sup> Letter from Joseph I. Breen to L.B. Mayer 26 January 1944, PCA Papers, *The Pirate*, 1948, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014.

over four years, with particular repeated references to 'still wanting revisions to minimize sex-suggestiveness.'<sup>644</sup>

### **Choreography styles and meanings**

The nature of dance as an expressive art form that tells stories and conveys human emotions through physical movement and gestures, especially love, romance and the sexual union of usually male and female partners, is choreographed precisely to evoke emotional responses from audiences. As Rickard states in relation to the dances of Astaire and Rogers in the 1930s, 'forbidden ideas could be disguised and coded into film texts in such a way that they were unlikely to be discovered by any but those who cared to look for them' (figure 4.2).<sup>645</sup>



**Figure 4.2 Rogers in a submissive backbend move dancing with Astaire in 'Smoke gets in your Eyes' in *Roberta***

Rickard further concludes that the responsibility for determining the meaning of films was thereby shifted to the individual spectator from the filmmaker through the activities of the PCA in passing a film as suitable for viewing.<sup>646</sup> This

<sup>644</sup> Letters from Joseph I. Breen to L.B. Mayer, 21 August 1946, 23 December 1946, 19 February 1947, *ibid.*

<sup>645</sup> Rickard, 'Movies in Disguise' in Lawson-Peebles, ed., p.74.

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.*

allowed filmmakers to create a hidden duality in presenting ideas that appealed to 'innocent' and 'sophisticated' sensibilities, as described by Richard Maltby (1995).<sup>647</sup> Filmmakers could and did manipulate the Code while being in a position to deny that they had inscribed particular meanings. According to Maltby, "sophisticated' viewers were able to 'read into' movies whatever meanings they were pleased to find, so long as producers could use the Production Code to deny they had put them there'.<sup>648</sup> The way in which dance is presented within dream ballet scenarios can create a deeper emotional and personal connection for the spectator and as Rickard states, 'nowhere more powerfully than in the sexual arena.'<sup>649</sup>

Classical ballet inscribes set meanings into some gestures and movements, often called mime; for example, to symbolise impending doom or death, a dancer stands with their wrists held low and crossed in front of their body; and loss of virginity is symbolised by shorn braids and feet in second position.<sup>650</sup> An example of how this use of gesture was adapted by American choreographers is present in the dream ballet 'Mack the Black' in *The Pirate* (1948). The lead female character Manuela (Judy Garland) has a sexual curiosity fantasy daydream starring the lead male character Serafin (Kelly) as her sabre-wielding, womanising and villainous fantasy pirate Macoco. Up to this point in the film Serafin has been unsuccessful in his wooing of Manuela. Immediately prior to the daydream Manuela watches Serafin dance, wooden stick in hand,

<sup>647</sup> Richard Maltby, 'The Production Code and the Hays Office' in Tina Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise* (New York: Scribner's, 1995) as quoted by Rickard in Lawson-Peebles, p.74.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid, p.74.

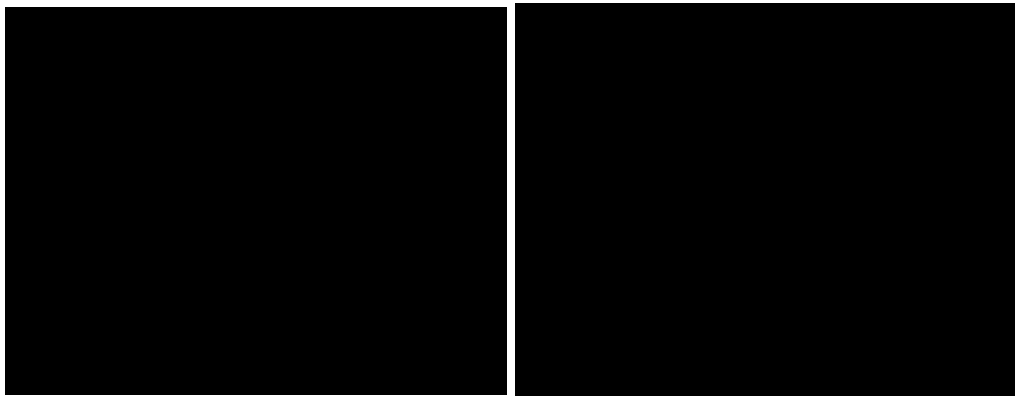
<sup>649</sup> Rickard in Lawson-Peebles, p.72.

<sup>650</sup> Walter Terry, *How to Look at Dance* (New York: William Morrow, 1982), p.179, as quoted in Hanna, p.173; 'Mime is the use of gesture to convey narrative meaning [...] where specific gestures convey precise meanings such as love, marriage, king, queen etc'; further explanation of the meaning of dance gestures, Royal Opera House, <<http://www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-platform/ballet/>> accessed 16 February 2018.



around a white donkey, sat on its hind legs, ears standing vertically.

Mesmerised by his actions, she begins to daydream. She takes the place of the donkey, wearing a white turban with two 'ears', a white bodice with puffball sleeves and long dark skirt. Kelly approaches her dressed in a tight-fitting black sleeveless vest and shorts, black bandana and black boots, revealing his muscular build and wielding a phallic sabre. He dances in front of her then lunges and cuts off each 'ear' with his sabre and kicks her over, symbolising his sexual conquest (figures 4.3a and 4.3b).



**Figures 4.3a and 4.3b Kelly as the fantasy pirate Macoco (4.3a) cutting off Manuela's (Judy Garland) ears (4.3b), a gesture symbolising his conquest of her in the 'Mack the Black' dream ballet in *The Pirate***

At the end of the ballet, Manuela, still seated watching Macoco has loose hair around her shoulders, denoting her status as a fallen woman, like the other women in the dream ballet that Macoco has sexually conquered and discarded. The whole ballet is a demonstration of Macoco/Serafin's masculinity, accentuated by Kelly's costume and the choreography. It evokes Fokine's *Polovtsian Dances* and Douglas Fairbanks Snr's swashbuckling acrobatics, and deploys Minnelli's use of colour in the mise-èn-scene and moving camerawork and cinematographer Harry Stradling's striking lighting effects.<sup>651</sup>

<sup>651</sup> Genné, pp.206-8. Kelly, Minnelli and the MGM camera department were responsible for the development of a new, patented camera to photograph at extreme low angles, Genné, p.209.

Female characters in ballet are often portrayed as binary opposites, either the virginal, ethereal bride in waiting, dressed in white, hair tied back, or the passionate dangerous vixen typically dressed in red with loose flowing dark hair. The choreography reflects each type of stereotypical female role, for example the ethereal woman dancing in a lyrical style, reaching upwards *en pointe*, whereas the vixen dances with hip-swinging movements and is more grounded to the earth.<sup>652</sup> The male figure emphasises his masculinity and is upright, strong and confident in his dancing style. According to former principal ballet dancer Igor Youskevitch, the male role reflected 'his masculine inclinations to lead, to go forward, to achieve', whereas the female dancer's 'internal motivation is to please the opposite sex.'<sup>653</sup>

Hanna outlines six symbolic devices for conveying meaning in dance. Although she developed these in relation to dance on stage, they are equally relevant for dance on screen: 'concretization, icon, stylization, metonym, metaphor and actualization'.<sup>654</sup> Concretization refers to the creation of movement that produces an outward aspect of something such as courtship; Icon in this context refers to divinity, whereby a character is possessed by a god that manifests its presence through dancing; Stylization refers to the inclusion of gestures or movements as convention; Metonym is the 'motional conceptualization of one thing representing another', for example a romantic duet; Metaphor relates to the representation of a thought or experience in place of something it resembles; and Actualization as the portrayal of roles that blur boundaries between 'real' and 'actual' life.<sup>655</sup> Meanings can be manifest or

<sup>652</sup> Hanna, p.173.

<sup>653</sup> Igor Youskevitch, 'The Male Image' in *Dance Perspectives*, 40:13-23, as quoted in Hanna, pp.169-70.

<sup>654</sup> Hanna, p.14.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid. The opening section of a *pas de deux* is called the *adagio* and is 'an ascending accumulation of energy' representing a climax and 'weighted lunges are a metaphor for

latent and can derive from a series of connecting symbols, rather than an individual symbol or gesture.<sup>656</sup>

As discussed in Chapter One Martha Graham developed a new movement vocabulary in modern dance. According to Hanna:

Graham thematically presented earthy and socially relevant Sturm und Drang [storm and stress] dynamics dealing with dominance, unbridled passion versus duty, attraction and repulsion, and submerged guilt and open eroticism to counter ballet's ethereal fantasies.<sup>657</sup>

However, the dominant patriarchy of the 1930s to 1950s ensured the reinforcement of male/female gender stereotyping in dance choreographed for the screen. The implementation of the Code was one expression of the dominant patriarchy. This is evident in all dream ballets, even those where the dream protagonist and/or the choreographer are female.

The next section will explore how dance was choreographed and filmed to create multiple levels of meaning for audiences, without overtly violating the Code. This will be explored through analysis of dream ballets with male dream protagonists in *Singin' in the Rain* (Kelly) and *The Band Wagon* (Astaire), both featuring Cyd Charisse, and the female dream protagonist (Susan Luckey as Louise) in *Carousel* (1956).

devouring appetite', Jill Johnston, *Marmalade Me* (New York: Dutton, 1971), p.200 as quoted in Hanna, p.167.

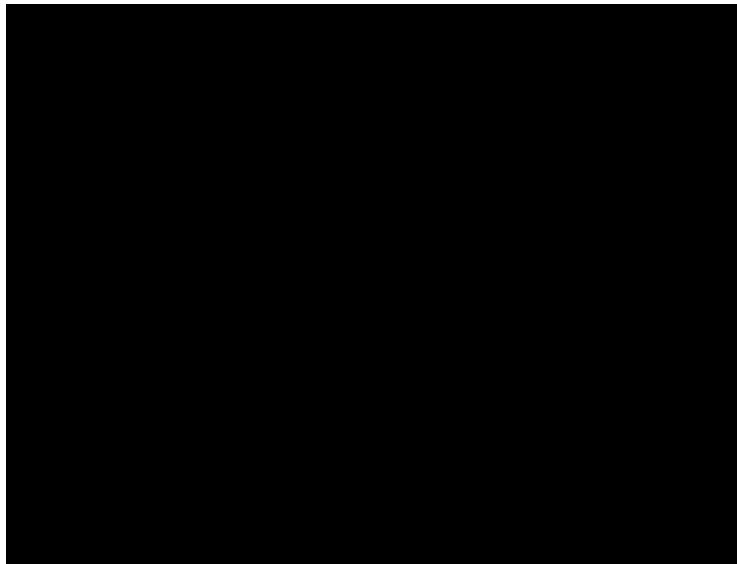
<sup>656</sup> Ibid.

<sup>657</sup> Hanna, p.134.

### **The male dream protagonist's perspective – background to 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain***

The affectionate homage to the silent era and particularly the transition to sound forms the backdrop to the love affair between silent film star Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) and cabaret singer and dancer Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds) in *Singin' in the Rain*.

Earlier in the film the 'You Were Meant for Me' sequence is set on an empty sound stage and applies dream ballet tropes in its use of mise-en-scène to create an artificial romantic setting in which Don can declare his love for Kathy (figure 4.4). Baz Lurhman in the 2002 audio commentary to the film states that Kelly 'was a master at creating a heightened world' in which to stage romantic musical numbers that naturally flowed from the narrative.<sup>658</sup>



**Figure 4.4 Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) and Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds) in the artificial setting of the film studio in the 'You Were Meant for Me' mise-en-abîme sequence in *Singin' in the Rain***

<sup>658</sup> Baz Lurhman, *Singin' in the Rain* Audio Commentary, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special, Two-Disc Special Edition DVD, (Turner Entertainment Company and Warner Home Video, 2002), 38.05.

My next section outlines the origins of the dream ballet in different versions of the original scripts.

In the film script dated 10 August 1950, written by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, there is a reference on page 68 to 'Cosmo's imagined scene' with himself as 'Piano-Playing Pioneer' that was omitted from the final script and film.<sup>659</sup> The script mentions placement of songs, though not in the same order as the final film, and there is no reference to other dance numbers. There is a different suggested ending to the film with Don and Kathy attending the premiere of 'Broadway Rhythm' with married couple Lina and Cosmo.<sup>660</sup> In a later script dated 14 October 1950 there is a description of Cosmo's imagined scene, which includes Cosmo playing a piano:

We SEE a circle of whooping Indians in war paint, doing a threatening dance around a small covered-wagon train. In the center stands Cosmo in a Daniel Boone outfit, complete with coon-skin cap, one hand on a rifle, and the other around a frightened girl.<sup>661</sup>

Comden and Green had also written another scene for Oscar Levant as Cosmo to perform a solo minuet. At this point in the film's development, Arthur Freed wanted Levant to play Kelly's sidekick, as he had done in *An American in Paris* the year before, but Comden, Green, Kelly and Donen wanted a dancer for the part and therefore Levant did not appear in the film.<sup>662</sup>

<sup>659</sup> Turner/MGM scripts S-1234 *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), 10 August 1950, p.68., Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid, p.67, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014.

<sup>661</sup> Turner/MGM scripts S-1236 *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), 14 October 1950, p.69, ibid.

<sup>662</sup> Fordin, p.354.

In a later script dated 11 April 1951, which does reference the 'Broadway Melody' number, there is no reference to Cosmo's Pioneer scene.<sup>663</sup> By this time Donald O'Connor had been cast as Cosmo so the number was dropped from the script. The final script differed substantially from these earlier versions. In the final film there is no trace of a potential relationship between Cosmo and Lina.<sup>664</sup> The decision to remove the element of Cosmo's and Lina's romance may have been based on the casting of Donald O'Connor, and/or the casting of Jean Hagen.<sup>665</sup>

In the same script, the ballet starts with Don saying:

'It's a new one – for the modern part of the picture – Broadway Melody. I've got on a high hat – (he picks up a nearby felt hat) – and cane.'

As Don begins to prance about – DISSOLVE TO:

NUMBER – BROADWAY MELODY

Don performs Broadway Melody in high hat and tails on the set. During the number we get a SHOT OR TWO of the Cameras photographing it.<sup>666</sup>

In an additional typewritten story outline dated 30 April 1951 by Comden and Green, the following dialogue introduces the modern section (transition to dream ballet):

<sup>663</sup> Turner/MGM scripts S-1240 *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), 11 April 1951, p.73, Turner/MGM Scripts, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014.

<sup>664</sup> As referenced in Chapter Two, early versions of the *An American in Paris* script showed that Oscar Levant's character Adam Cook and Nina Foch's character Milo Roberts became a romantic couple at the end of the film, which was not the case in the final film, although the intimation to the audience is that Adam may become her next protégé.

<sup>665</sup> Judy Holliday was a regular collaborator of Comden and Green in *The Revuers on Broadway* and the writing duo had originally written the part for her.

<sup>666</sup> S-1240 *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), 11 April 1951, Turner/MGM scripts, p.74, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014.

They'll make the hero a modern hooper in a Broadway show – a sandbag falls on his head – and he dreams he's back during the French Revolution! This way they can get in modern dancing numbers, and still use the costume stuff in the dream sequence.<sup>667</sup>

In the film the above dialogue is spoken in an earlier scene by Cosmo, explaining to producer R.F. Simpson (Millard Mitchell) how to convert the silent black and white film 'The Duelling Cavalier' into the musical 'The Dancing Cavalier', rather than as the transition into 'The Broadway Ballet'.

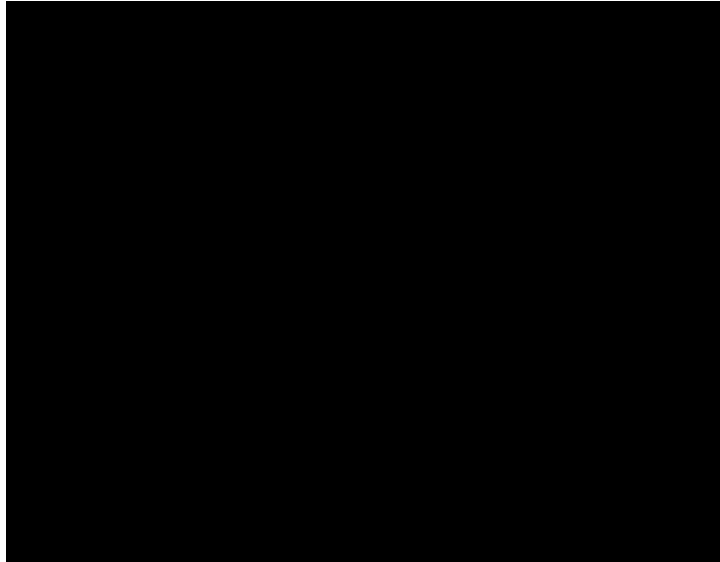
The dialogue transition into the ballet in the film is simpler, with Don explaining to Simpson the final production number to be filmed in the presence of Cosmo in a screening room. Having just watched the rushes of 'The Dancing Cavalier'.

Don says:

It's a new one, it's for the modern part of the picture, it's called Broadway Melody, the story of a young hooper who comes to New York, first we set the stage with a song, it goes like this.

As Don finishes speaking, he points to the darkened screen. The camera pans to the screen and a long shot of Kelly appears, standing in a spotlight wearing a tuxedo, straw hat and cane against a yellow background (figure 4.5). He is facing the camera as he starts to sing 'Broadway Melody'. This signals the start of the dream ballet.

<sup>667</sup> 16pp. story outline, 30 April 1951, *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), Turner/MGM scripts, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., accessed January 2014.



**Figure 4.5 Kelly performing as a Broadway star singing 'Broadway Melody' looking into the camera marking the transition into 'The Broadway Ballet' dream ballet**

In the 2002 audio commentary to the film, O'Connor confirmed that the original intention was for him to star in a version of the finale ballet with Kelly.<sup>668</sup> He explains that due to Kelly's other filming and production commitments and Universal wanting O'Connor to star in another film (with Francis the talking mule), he was not able to perform in the ballet.<sup>669</sup> The ballet was filmed after a break following the end of the production, which according to Cyd Charisse, allowed her time to lose weight and work out after having a baby the previous year.<sup>670</sup> Also Kelly and Charisse had never danced together before and Charisse had to learn Kelly's jazz dance style.

The ballet narrative was built around two of Freed and Brown's songs – 'Broadway Melody' and 'Broadway Rhythm' – both of which had featured in numerous musicals. The lyrics of the songs provided the narrative inspiration.<sup>671</sup> Musical Director Lennie Hayton arranged the two songs to create

<sup>668</sup> Donald O'Connor, *Singin' in the Rain*, Audio Commentary, 1:12.30.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid.

<sup>670</sup> Cyd Charisse, *Singin' in the Rain*, Audio Commentary, 1:15.18

<sup>671</sup> Hess and Dabholkar, pp.155-6, p.158.



a unified and seamless score, using thirty-two bars of music from the songs but adding in an extra four bars from both songs to fit Kelly's choreographic needs.<sup>672</sup> Wollen states that *DuBarry Was a Lady* (Roy Del Ruth, MGM, 1943), which starred Kelly, was also an influence on the storyline.<sup>673</sup> In *DuBarry Was a Lady* the central character, a nightclub cloakroom attendant Louis (Red Skelton) is in love with the club's singer May (Lucille Ball), but she is in love with a poor dancer Alec (Kelly). Louis unwittingly drinks a drugged drink and dreams he is the French King Louis XV in pursuit of Madame Du Barry (Lucille Ball) and battling his love rival, the Black Arrow (Kelly).<sup>674</sup>

Rudy Behlmer states that the ballet was never intended to be a big production number but due to the success of 'The 'American in Paris Ballet', the idea for the *Singin' in the Rain* ballet expanded and the original budget of \$80,000 grew to approximately \$600,000.<sup>675</sup> Behlmer's reading of the dates is incorrect as *An American in Paris* was released in the USA on 11 November 1951 and *Singin' in the Rain* had closed production on 21 November 1951. The ballet had started rehearsals on 20 August for a month with an additional two weeks shooting and production was completed in October 1951, thus preceding the release of *An American in Paris*. It is however likely that during production of *Singin' in the Rain* the studio came to believe that *An American in Paris*, and especially the ballet would prove to be a major critical and commercial success. In the event the 12 minute 57 seconds ballet used fifty-six camera set ups and cost more than 'The 'American in Paris Ballet'.<sup>676</sup> It was also going to be the

<sup>672</sup> Program II, *Singin' in the Rain* Microfiche, Core Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, L.A., quoted in Hess and Dabholkar, p.158; Hugh Fordin, pp.359-60.

<sup>673</sup> Peter Wollen, *Singin' in the Rain* (London: British Film Institute, 1992; repr. 1997), p.42.

<sup>674</sup> *DuBarry Was a Lady* (Roy Del Ruth, MGM, 1943), <[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035829/?ref=nm\\_sr\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035829/?ref=nm_sr_1)> accessed 1 April 2018.

<sup>675</sup> Rudy Behlmer, *Singin' in the Rain* Audio Commentary, 1:13:20; the final cost of the ballet was \$605,960 (total cost of the film \$2,540,800, which was \$620,996 over budget), Hess and Dabholkar, p.161.

<sup>676</sup> Hess and Dabholkar, p.161.

finale to the film, but was moved slightly earlier to allow for more plot resolution after the ballet.<sup>677</sup>

### **'The Broadway Ballet'**

'The Broadway Ballet' contains a *mise-en-abîme* structure with both sections co-starring Cyd Charisse as the 'Vamp'. It is both homage to the Broadway backstage musicals of the late 1920s and early 1930s, as well as a reference to Balanchine's romantic ballets on stage and screen.<sup>678</sup> The transition into the ballet is not into a dream, daydream or nightmare, rather a visual representation of an idea for a dance number. There is not enough room to analyse the entire ballet in detail; therefore, I will focus on analysing the daydream – 'The Veil' dance – *within* the ballet. Cosmo's earlier explanation tells us that the historical part of 'The Dancing Cavalier' rather than the modern part is the dream and this does introduce the concept of dreams to the audience for the upcoming dream ballet.

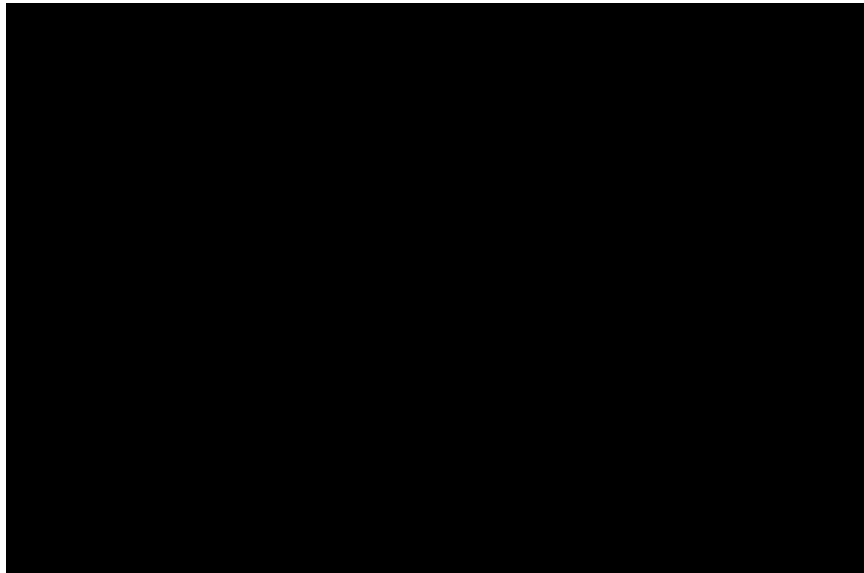
'The Broadway Ballet' follows the story of a young hooper arriving in New York's Times Square looking for a job. This self-realisation ballet follows his upward trajectory from performing jazz dance in a Speakeasy club where he first meets the 'Vamp', through Columbia Burlesque, Palace Vaudeville and finally becoming a tuxedo-clad star on Broadway in the Ziegfeld Follies.<sup>679</sup> The transition from a young hooper wearing garish clothes to a star wearing a tuxedo shows his success, coupled with his ascendance to his true dancing

<sup>677</sup> Behlmer, *Singin' in the Rain*, Audio Commentary, 1:13.20.

<sup>678</sup> Genné, p.219.

<sup>679</sup> This scene mirrors a scene, written by Comden and Green that Kelly and Donen directed for *On the Town* with the cast moving between different New York bars on a night out seeing the same song performed in different ways by chorus dancers; Kelly's tuxedo-clad star was styled on Broadway musical star Harry Richman, <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/harry-richman-57748>> accessed 1 April 2018.

identity and persona.<sup>680</sup> At a casino he is hailed as a star and there he sees the 'Vamp' again and so begins his sexual curiosity fantasy daydream – the 'Veil' dance (figure 4.6).



**Figure 4.6 Kelly standing in the foreground, back to camera in front of the roulette wheel, as the successful *Ziegfeld Follies* star sees the 'Vamp' (Charisse in white) again, standing in the doorway of the casino in 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain*, prior to the mise-en-abîme 'The Veil' dream ballet**

This ballet departs from the conventional model in two significant ways. None of the other stars in the main diegesis feature in the ballet here and nor do any of their roles have any equivalent realisations in the dream ballet. Thus it does not enact a dream scenario (day or night dream) where the lead dream dancers are the same as the characters in the primary diegesis as in *Oklahoma!*, *An American in Paris* and *Daddy Long Legs*. The trajectory of Kelly's character in the ballet does not represent Don's emotional journey in the primary diegesis. The connection is one of a very broad kind; the two characters' have similar routes to success, from hoofer to Ziegfeld star on

<sup>680</sup> Peter N. Chumo II, 'Dance, Flexibility, and the Renewal of Genre in *Singin' in the Rain*', *Cinema Journal*, Vol.36, No. 1 (Autumn, 1996), p.45.

Broadway in the ballet and from Don's stuntman to Hollywood star in the primary diegesis, and both characters are engaged in a quest for love. Part of the issue here may have to do with the casting of Reynolds and Charisse. Although Reynolds had danced in the light ballroom and soft-shoe number with Kelly in 'You Were Meant for Me' and the vigorous tap routine with Kelly and O'Connor in 'Good Morning', she had no classical or jazz dance training. Therefore, she would not have been able to duet with Kelly in his desired jazz dance style for the ballet. Reynolds as Kathy represents a different kind of dance and therefore of emotional expression. If Reynolds had been a more expert dancer, her presence would have been possible, but it would have required a different kind of dream ballet. In contrast Charisse represents a sexual figure that cannot be contained. Thus, as Don is to be partnered with Kathy successfully in the primary diegesis, the dream ballet dramatises the rejection of this kind of emphatically sexual figure, reflecting the fact that Charisse's and Reynolds' characters represent different female archetypes. The dream ballet also performs the function of solving a structural problem of marrying black and white silent film footage and new contemporary colour film footage with sound in 'The Dancing Cavalier'. In summary, 'The Broadway Ballet' expresses a specific emotional state. Rather than reflecting back on events to date with melancholy or fear, it looks forward with optimism.

As these issues depended so much on casting, it is illuminating to look in more depth at the star personae behind the main female parts here.

### **Debbie Reynolds**

Kathy Selden in *Singin' in the Rain* was Reynolds's first lead role at age eighteen when cast; Kelly was twenty years her senior, the same age difference between Kelly and Leslie Caron in *An American in Paris* the previous

year. Reynolds's few previous film roles were supporting characters, usually wholesome teenage girls in musicals where she sang, but did not dance. She came to the attention of Mayer in relation to the lead for *Singin' in the Rain* following her performances the previous year in *Three Little Words* (Richard Thorpe, MGM, 1950) starring Fred Astaire and *Two Weeks with Love* (Roy Rowland, MGM, 1950), where she gave a sprightly performance singing 'Aba Daba Honeymoon' written by Walter Donovan and Arthur Fields.<sup>681</sup> *Singin' in the Rain* was her first part as an adult woman rather than a teenager. Kelly and his assistants Carol Haney, Jeanne Coyne and tap dancer/choreographer Ernie Flatt taught Reynolds to dance during intensive rehearsals for *Singin' in the Rain*. As a gymnast she was physically fit and learned fast. In the audio commentary to the film Rudy Behlmer stated that [Reynolds] 'was not up to doing the ballet, no-one would have thought of her for that.'<sup>682</sup>

### **Jean Hagen**

Hagen studied drama at university and made her debut in radio programmes in the 1940s. Her film debut was in 1949 alongside Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracey in *Adam's Rib* (George Cukor, MGM, 1949), followed by *The Asphalt Jungle* (John Huston, MGM, 1950). She was neither a trained singer nor dancer and one of the main plot points in *Singin' in the Rain* is that Kathy Selden dubs her singing on screen. Her high-pitched shrill voice for the character of Lina Lamont was inspired by Judy Holliday's performance in *Born Yesterday* (George Cukor, Columbia Pictures, 1950) for which she won a Best Actress Oscar.

<sup>681</sup> In *Three Little Words* Debbie Reynolds played Helen Kane who dubbed for Reynolds in the song 'I Wanna be Loved by You', <[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0043044/soundtrack?ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_snd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0043044/soundtrack?ref_=tt_trv_snd)> accessed 2 April 2018.

<sup>682</sup> Behlmer, *Singin' in the Rain* Audio Commentary, 18.53.

## Cyd Charisse

Cyd Charisse's early talent for dancing was spotted by her parents who took her to Los Angeles from Texas to take dancing lessons with French-born Nico Charisse.<sup>683</sup> She was offered a position with the Ballets Russes at age fourteen and danced under two Russian names (common practice in the company), before marrying Nico Charisse, sixteen years her senior, in 1939. She also trained with Adolph Bolm, a Russian-born American ballet dancer who had trained at the Russian Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg, and ballet dancer and choreographer Bronislawa Nijinska, sister of Nijinsky.<sup>684</sup> When war broke out the couple settled in Los Angeles and she secured her first dancing part in *Something to Shout About* (Gregory Ratoff, Columbia Pictures, 1943); the film's choreographer and former Ballets Russes dancer David Lichine recommended her.<sup>685</sup> She, like Kelly, was spotted by dancer and choreographer Robert Alton, and was then signed to an MGM contract by Arthur Freed.<sup>686</sup> Charisse had appeared with Kelly in *Thousands Cheer* (George Sidney, MGM, 1943) as an uncredited dancer and had featured in *Ziegfeld Follies* and a number of other MGM musicals, either in small parts or as a dancer. She was a very experienced dancer by the time she was cast in *Singin' in the Rain* at thirty years of age and was developing a profile within the studio and with audiences. Charisse's singing was always dubbed in her films.

Kelly wanted a classically trained dancer to perform with him in the dream ballet and originally wanted his assistant Carol Haney to be his dancing

<sup>683</sup> Cyd Charisse was originally named Tula Ellice Finklea, and she was of French heritage; 'Sid' was a childhood nickname, later changed to 'Cyd' by MGM, Hess and Dabholkar, pp. 158-9; Wollen, p.42.

<sup>684</sup> Wollen, p.42; Adolph Bolm, <<http://www.adolphbolm.com/>> accessed 1 April 2018; Bronislawa Nijinska biography, <<https://www.staatsoper.de/en/biographies/detail-page/nijinska-bronislawa.html>> accessed 1 April 2018.

<sup>685</sup> Wollen, p.42.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid; Hess and Dabholkar, p.159.

partner. It was felt by the studio and in particular Freed that she was not suitable as a female lead, despite her dancing expertise, especially in jazz ballet, and she was not known to audiences. Carol Haney and Kelly's other regular assistant Jeanne Coyne trained Charisse in jazz ballet, dancing with bent knees and extended bent arms, the opposite to classical ballet. Charisse was taller than Kelly in heels, so the bent knees helped to balance out their respective heights. The slow jazz dance style in the 'The Vamp' dance choreographed by Kelly and his two collaborators, required extreme core strength and balance, skills Charisse had developed as a classical ballet dancer. This was heightened further in 'The Veil' dance in which both Kelly and Charisse had to withstand the force of three Ritter fans (equivalent of three airplane motors) used to create the wind effects, making all movements, and especially the lifts extremely difficult. This dance was particularly challenging as the movement of the veil had to match exactly to the beats of the music. Haney and Coyne rehearsed with the technicians and discovered that if they pointed the machines downward onto the ground the veil would shoot upwards, and if they pointed them at Charisse but at a lower velocity, the veil would fly back and ruffle.<sup>687</sup> There is one veil visible at any one time in each scene. However, Charisse describes the difficulty of working with 'the veils' in the film's audio commentary.<sup>688</sup> It is likely that there were two veils, made of white China silk voile, one of approximately 50 feet in length and another shorter version.<sup>689</sup>

Kelly was a lifelong fan of Louise Brooks. For her role as the Vamp, Charisse was styled as a cross between silent screen stars Pola Negri and Brooks.<sup>690</sup>

<sup>687</sup> Wollen, p.43.

<sup>688</sup> Charisse, *Singin' in the Rain*, Audio Commentary, 1:22.04.

<sup>689</sup> Hess and Dabholkar, p.164.

<sup>690</sup> Polish born Pola Negri and German born Louise Brooks both initially trained as dancers before they became actors in their respective national cinemas, prior to moving to Hollywood. They often portrayed sex sirens in the pre-Production Code silent cinema era. Images comparing Louise Brooks and Charisse with accompanying comment by Kelly's widow Patricia Ward Kelly

She wore an extreme black short 1920s bobbed wig, choker, dangly earrings, green sparkly wrist and arm bangles, a close-fitting strappy short green jewelled flapper dress with separate panels hanging from a low waistband revealing her long legs, green-hued tights and green satin heeled shoes. Throughout the dance she never smiled and created sultry but cold facial expressions and cat-like movements, while smoking a cigarette through a long holder.

For her role in 'The Veil' dance, Charisse was dressed in a white leotard with a short white chiffon overlay that revealed her arms and legs. She was barefoot with binding round her feet and had shoulder-length flowing brown hair and silver headband. This created a softer, romantic look and the choreography was a mix of ballet and modern dance in the style of a *pas de deux*. In a recorded interview with his wife Patricia Ward Kelly later in life, Kelly discussed how he cheated the censors in relation to Charisse's costume: 'she had such a beautiful body and such beautiful legs, it seemed sinful to put long Russian ballet shorts on her.'<sup>691</sup> In the same interview Kelly recounts an overt manipulation of the Code, recalling that 'when the censor girl left the stage, after measuring the exact number of inches from Cyd's buttocks to her thigh to her knee, he had Cyd change into another costume that was cut higher. "I was right to do that," he insisted, "she not only looked more sensual and sensuous, but the dancing looked better, and that was the aim."<sup>692</sup> The shortness of her costume caused some problems in photographing Charisse that required manipulation in post-production.

on her Facebook post on 28 July 2018, <<https://www.facebook.com/patriciawardkelly/posts/10160780468470061:0>> accessed 28 July 2018.

<sup>691</sup> Patricia Ward Kelly, Gene Kelly: The Legacy, Instagram, 30 January 2018, <<https://www.instagram.com/p/BelWiSQgN6M/>> accessed 3 April 2018.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid.



The sexuality of Charisse's character as the silent gangster's moll (Vamp) in *Singin' in the Rain* is in direct contrast to the two female leads in the primary diegesis; the wholesome, virginal Kathy and the vindictive, beautiful but unsexy, ditzy blonde Lina. It could be argued that Charisse is the real 'silent' star of the film, as opposed to the central issue of the hidden talking and singing voice of Kathy substituting for the silent Lina in 'The Dancing Cavalier'. Kelly often stated in interviews that he had wanted to cut the length of the ballet by three minutes but did not know where to cut, as he was keen to showcase Charisse as a star performer. This dance performance launched Charisse's film career as a leading lady, as she stated in many subsequent interviews.<sup>693</sup>

#### **'The Veil' dance dream ballet in 'The Broadway Ballet'**

The terms, and the sheer extent, of the sexual transactions that Kelly was able to express in a form that was not cut by the American censors, can be measured through the analysis of this dance.

'The Veil' dance was inspired by Isadora Duncan's scarf dances and by Loïe Fuller, famous for her 'Serpentine Dance' using sewed wands inside her silk garments to create sculptural forms through a new style of skirt dancing.<sup>694</sup>

'The Veil' dance starts when the previous scene in the casino fades into a vast open space, with the same flooring but running to infinity. Gerald Mast described the Dali-inspired space as a 'placeless void of pure emotion' and the veil is a 'physical manifestation of their emotion'.<sup>695</sup> The lights from the

<sup>693</sup> Charisse, *Singin' in the Rain*, Audio Commentary, 1:15.16.

<sup>694</sup> Loïe Fuller, was an American dancer who became famous with her 'Serpentine Dance' in the early 1890s. On stage she used multi-coloured lights and magic lantern projections to enhance the movement and performance, *Dance Teacher*, <<https://www.dance-teacher.com/loie-fuller-2392287731.html>> accessed 1 April 2018.

<sup>695</sup> Gerald Mast, *Can't Help Singing: The American Musical on Stage and Screen* (Woodstock, New York: Overlook Press, 1987), p.263, quoted in Hess and Dabholkar, p.167.

chandelier are just visible but everything else except the Star (Kelly) and the Vamp (Charisse), now dressed in white, has disappeared. The colour palette of the *mise-en-scène* uses the same pinks and purples present in the earlier 'You Were Meant for Me' number set on a sound stage. This connection reflects the fact that in these scenes the figures of Charisse and Reynolds are most comparable, dancing with Kelly and taking place in romanticised settings (both sound stages), although the end results are different.

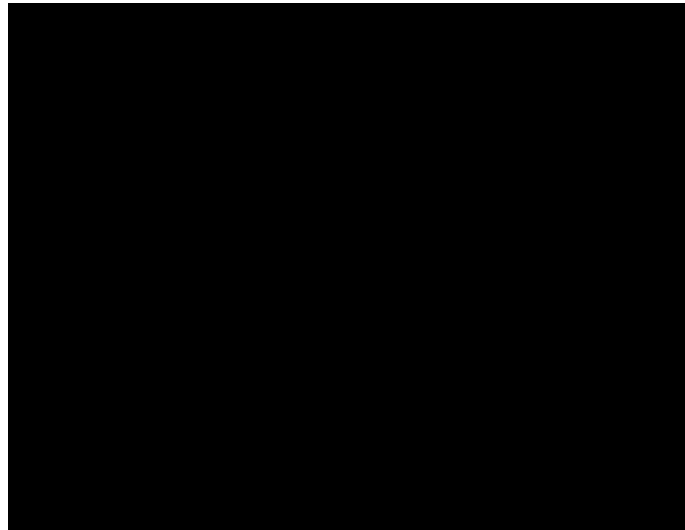
The Star now wears a short-sleeved, black shirt and trousers and the barefoot Vamp, his romantic ideal, is dressed in soft white chiffon with a long veil billowing out behind her. This evokes a classical ballet interpretation of an apollonian aesthetic of pure love and virginal quality.<sup>696</sup> On her tiptoes on *demi-pointe*, with straight legs showing off her long classical bodyline, she stands with her arms outstretched in a V shape then glides down a series of steps towards him. Throughout the dance, Charisse creates an ethereal celestial presence. She is light on her feet, mostly dancing on *demi-pointe* and often using rounded *port de bras*, classical ballet arm movements. The film cuts to a mid-range shot as she reaches out for him and he turns to her. They run together and meet on the first step. She turns away, stands *en relevé demi-pointe*, arms outstretched in a V shape with the veil billowing high behind her.<sup>697</sup> He runs away alongside the veil as it hugs his body. His actions or sexual urges seem to dictate her movements.<sup>698</sup> He stops and turns around and the veil blows away to the side. She turns, kicks her leg out straight in a *grand battement*, drops it down onto the floor, moves her arms into fifth classical ballet position, and tiptoes backwards on *demi-pointe* towards Kelly

<sup>696</sup> Cooper in Bales and Eliot, eds., p.110.

<sup>697</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>698</sup> Cooper in Bales and Eliot, eds., p.111.

with the veil flying out to her side above him.<sup>699</sup> The ‘expansive runs and *bouffées* symbolize the lovers’ mutual desire and creates a heightened sense of sexual tension before the lovers unite.’<sup>700</sup> The dance is choreographed so that both dancers are moving towards and away from the camera and at different angles to the camera to heighten the kinetic movement for the audience and to show the movement of the veil. Charisse performs some classical ballet movements, including *pirouettes*, *ports de bras* and *grands battements*, combined with elements of modern dance.<sup>701</sup> She moves up and around Kelly so that the veil catches underneath his arms. She stops at the back of the stage, turns and stands on *demi-pointe* as the veil shoots up vertically behind her in a phallic suggestion of male sexual climax (figure 4.7). In a mid-range shot, a slight wobble in Charisse’s stance is visible as she withstands the power of the Ritter fans.



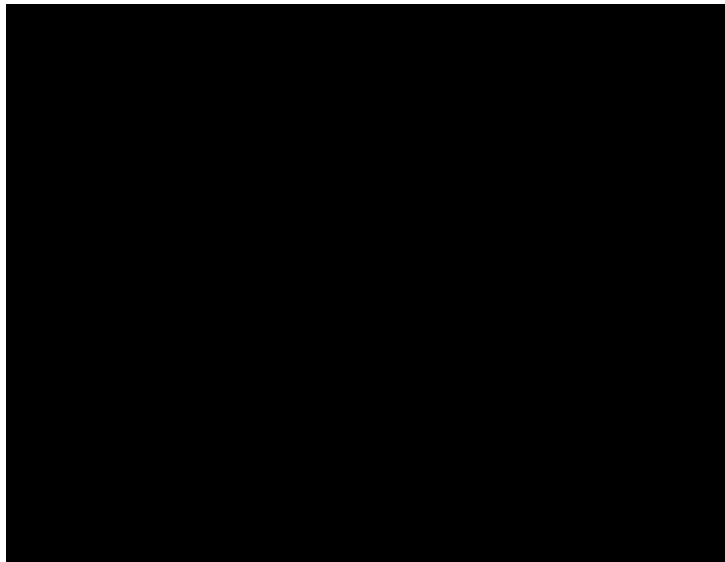
**Figure 4.7 Charisse *en relevé demi-pointe* with the veil in a phallic vertical position in ‘The Veil’ dance in ‘The Broadway Ballet’**

<sup>699</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>700</sup> Cooper in Bales and Eliot, eds., p.110; *ibid.*

<sup>701</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

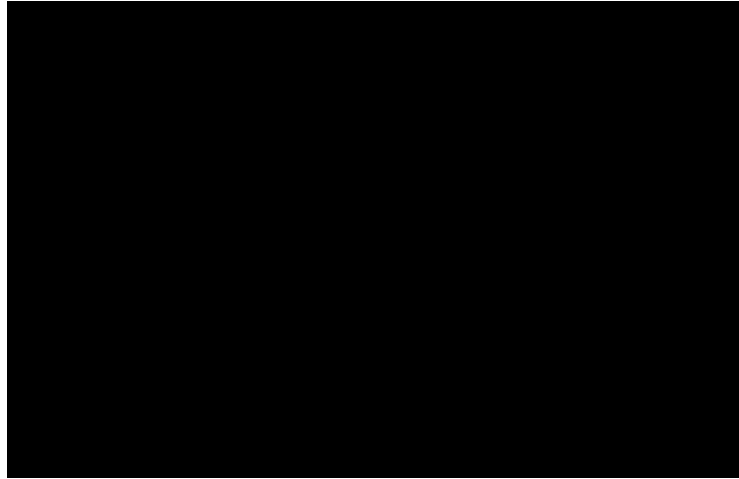
The music and dance change into a post-coital denouement as she walks slowly down the steps towards him and he lifts her one-handed. Her body leans against his with her right leg and foot extended, left leg bent at the knee and extended foot, one arm around his waist, the other extended (figure 4.8).



**Figure 4.8 Charisse as the romanticised 'Vamp' with Kelly's successful hooper turned Ziegfeld star in a sensual hold position in 'The Veil' dance in 'The Broadway Ballet'**

He turns her round twice slowly before lowering her to the ground. She rises, turns and walks around him onto the step. The veil wraps around him and he lifts her again. This time she is hugging him closely with her right leg and foot extended and resting against his shoulder with her left leg bent at the knee. He leans with a bent knee towards the ground with the veil wrapped around them both but also still billowing up above them. He then takes a few steps forward, diagonally to the camera, lowers her until her feet touch the floor, and then gently carries her until she is lying across his bent knees facing him. He stops, leans over and kisses her as the veil ruffles above them. He then lifts her to her feet: they are both still wrapped in the veil. She moves away from him walking up the stairs with the veil unwrapping itself from their bodies. A long shot with

Kelly's back to the camera reveals the two of them stood in the same positions as the start of the dance, facing each other, arms outstretched in V shapes (figure 4.9). The scene fades back into the casino.



**Figure 4.9 Kelly and Charisse at the end of 'The Veil' dance standing in the same positions as in the casino scene prior to 'The Veil' dance (figure 4.6) in 'The Broadway Ballet'**

### **The function of 'The Veil' dance in 'The Broadway Ballet'**

The first section below outlines the critical response to the integration of the dream ballet, contrasting those who believe that the dream ballet ruptures the narrative integration and those who make a case for its function within the narrative.

Genné describes 'The Veil' dance as 'the only uncomfortable moment in an otherwise fast-paced and witty American dance drama. It seems stylistically incongruent with the rest of the sequence.'<sup>702</sup> Wollen refers to later criticism by Donen that the ballet interrupted the main thrust of the film, and Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel described *Singin' in the Rain* as 'flawed by a rather pretentious ballet sequence [and therefore 'The Broadway Ballet' created] a rift in the

<sup>702</sup> Genné, p.220.

required homogeneity of the work, and this gives the effect of an unmotivated interruption.<sup>703</sup> Musicals by their nature are heterogeneous and not required to create homogeneity. As explained earlier the 'interruption' has a motivation to explore the success and romance trajectories of Don's character in the primary diegesis and to solve a diegetic structural problem in 'The Dancing Cavalier'. Wollen acknowledges that Kelly's complex aesthetic vision to create dramatic integration also pulled towards creating a contrary 'composite' work.<sup>704</sup> Therefore Kelly required a 'loose story framework' to enable a diversity of dance styles and the 'embedded dance sequences' were about dance, rather than drama and were the 'real, yet diverse, core of the film'.<sup>705</sup>

Marilyn Ewing views the 'The Broadway Ballet' sequence in *Singin' in the Rain* as: 'essentially a corrective to the film industry's sanctimonious and self-promoting images of itself' and that the production number reflects the 'fundamental dishonesty of musicals and those who produce them', which is the core theme of the film.<sup>706</sup> Ewing's statement may be viewed as an extreme criticism, both of the film and the genre. Kenneth MacKinnon (2000) states that in the fantasy sequence Kelly 'turns her [Charisse] by force of his fantasy into a cross between ballerina and angel, dancing in what appears to be a limitless abstract space,' creating a dream within a dream with multiple levels of self-reflexivity within the *mise-en-abîme* structure.<sup>707</sup>

<sup>703</sup> Casper, *Stanley Donen* and Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (London: Hutchinson, 1964) quoted in Wollen, p.59.

<sup>704</sup> Wollen, p.60.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>706</sup> Marilyn M. Ewing, 'Gotta Dance!: Structure, corruption and syphilis in *Singin' in the Rain*', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, (2006), p.16, p.22.

<sup>707</sup> Kenneth MacKinnon, "'I Keep Wishing I Were Somewhere Else": Space and Fantasies of Freedom in the Hollywood Musical' in Marshall and Stillwell eds., p.41.

Both *Singin' in the Rain* and *The Band Wagon* (which is addressed in the next section) are distinguished from other musicals with dream ballets as two films that address the activity of mainstream entertainment – film and theatre. Both films directly address the artificial constructed nature of the musical. In the 'You Were Meant for Me' sequence the setting is a sound stage, but it is also a performance space and the audience is reminded of the idea that it is a constructed space. In *The Band Wagon* there are literal spaces referenced, such as Central Park (although created on a sound stage), that form the same function of setting up the couple's romance. Both the dream ballets are framed as theatrical productions; however, their status is expressed to the audience through conventions, most notably the major changes in the mise-en-scène and the non-literal narrative and staging.

### **The 'Girl Hunt' ballet in *The Band Wagon***

Astaire was fifty-three years of age when he made this film and in a transitional phase of his professional career. The films he made with MGM and other studios throughout the 1950s marked a new direction in his dancing style. See Appendix 13 for the plot summary.

The 'Girl Hunt' ballet is an 'affectionate and tongue-in-cheek' satire of dream ballets on film as a sexual curiosity fantasy, choreographed by Michael Kidd.<sup>708</sup> Genné argues that the ballet is a satire on the kinds of ballets produced by Minnelli and Kelly, and in particular 'The American in Paris Ballet' released the previous year, with the inclusion of a ballet star (Charisse), and classical choreography that Astaire's character struggles to dance. In one scene some of the dancers are actually wearing costumes from 'The American in Paris

<sup>708</sup> Genné, p.222.

Ballet'.<sup>709</sup> The Jeffrey Cordova (Jack Buchanan) character is arguably inspired by Vincente Minnelli and Gene Kelly and he has pretensions in the direction of high art, hence the inclusion of classical ballet in the show. Cordova's chosen text as the basis for a modern musical interpretation is Goethe's *Faust* and the 'Damnation' scene ballet has echoes of Kelly's 'Mack the Black' ballet in Minnelli's *The Pirate*, with the excessive use of smoke and flames.<sup>710</sup>

The 'Girl Hunt' ballet is not a dream, daydream or nightmare. Rather it is a demonstration of Tony's (Astaire) conversion of Gabrielle (Charisse) to his popular style of jazz dance, an acceptance of his love for her and a loose parody of previous Minnelli directed dream ballets. It is also the presentation of the couple's love and compatibility for both the internal and external audience. The ballet takes place as part of what we understand to be the successful finale of the reworked Broadway show, towards the end of the film. It is therefore a dance performance staged within a show staged within the film – another mise-en-abîme structure. However, it was classed as a 'ballet' at the time of production because it served a narrative function to bring Tony and Gabrielle together as a romantic couple, and as with *The Red Shoes* dream ballet, the sequence could not have taken place on a conventional theatre stage.

The dream ballet, introduced via a close-up of a page in a theatre programme as: 'Scene 4, "GIRL HUNT" A Murder Mystery in Jazz', includes a range of dance styles and was twelve minutes and forty-three seconds in length. It had a distinctive mise-en-scène that was different to other dance sequences and scenes in the film, with stylised sets that did not conform to realistic theatrical

<sup>709</sup> Ibid, p.223.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid; see Appendix 15 for *The Pirate* plot summary.

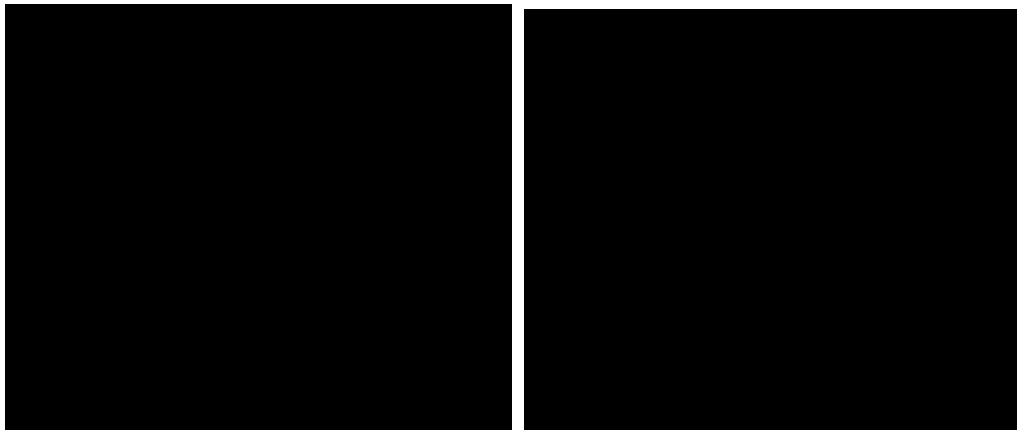


stagings and colour-coded costumes revealing the moods of different scenes within the dream ballet. The ballet is a spoof of a Mickey Spillane noir with a convoluted plot, gangsters, a stolen jewel and *femmes fatales*.<sup>711</sup> It is set in different locations in nighttime New York including a deserted street, fashion store, wig store, loft apartment, subway station and Bebop jazz club, with a deliberately conventional voiceover narration by the detective, Rod Riley. Tony plays the role, dressed in a pale coloured suit, green shirt, white tie, white trilby with black trim and black shoes; all the men in the ballet wear black suits and trilbies, with coloured accents, for example: ties and shirts (except the barman in the club scene who wears a pink shirt and tie that matches the colour of the set). Gabrielle plays two different *femmes fatales* – one in a blonde wig and one with black hair, billed as the ‘The Blond’ and ‘The Brunette’ respectively in the theatre programme. Her two characters are not as distinct as Charisse’s two characters in *Singin’ in the Rain*; the plotting of this dream ballet deliberately mixes the characters to confuse Rod and the audience, with one character in overt disguise (blonde-haired *femme fatale*) and one more recognisable to audiences (dark-haired *femme fatale*). Rod is sure that The Blond is a victim and needs protecting, using the familiar trope of the ‘innocent blonde’. He does not discover that she is the thief and killer until just before he kills her towards the end of the ballet. Whereas he believes that The Brunette is dangerous and not to be trusted, again using the trope of the dark-haired dangerous woman as seen in many *films noirs*. As The Brunette, Charisse is first seen in a floor-length black sequined gown, with a central split revealing her legs. When the detective sees her, he says:

<sup>711</sup> Harvey, p.124.

She came at me in sections, more curves than a scenic railway. She was bad, she was dangerous. I wouldn't trust her as far as I could throw her. She was selling hard and I wasn't buying.

As The Brunette Charisse dances in a jazz dance style with bended knees, outstretched arms, jerky movements and often to a fast jazz score. As The Blond, the romantic idealised woman, she dances in a softer balletic style with classical ballet movements. The Brunette role may have evoked memories for the audience of Charisse's role as the vamp the previous year in *Singin' in the Rain*. In the romantic idealised role of The Blond, Charisse is an ethereal, ghostly presence, similar to Caron's apparition in the Renoir scene in 'The American in Paris Ballet' and is even wearing a similar costume.<sup>712</sup>



**Figures 4.10a and 4.10b Charisse as 'The Brunette' (4.10a) and 'The Blond' femme fatales with Astaire (4.10b) in the 'Girl Hunt' ballet in *The Band Wagon***

When Rod comes across The Brunette for the second time, she is sat on a stool leaning back against a bar in a smoky nightclub. She takes off a dark green full wrap coat to reveal a strappy body-fitting red sequined and tasselled knee-length dress, with a front split and central panel, which reveals her legs when walking and dancing, and heeled red satin shoes (figure 4.10a). She also

<sup>712</sup> See figure 2.17 in Chapter Two for an image of Caron in the Renoir scene in 'The American in Paris Ballet' in *An American in Paris*.

wears elbow length black gloves and diamond jewels. In contrast The Blond when first seen is wearing a pale yellow striped raincoat and yellow ballet pumps. When next seen she is wearing a pale blue chiffon skirt over a leotard with skin-coloured bodice with patterning and ruffles around the neck and blue ballet pumps tied around her ankles (figure 4.10b).

Astaire's dancing throughout the 'Girl Hunt' ballet reflects his changed style in the 1950s, with a looser jazz-infused style mixed with Broadway dance, ballet and modern dance. His trademark tap style does not feature in this number. His second duet with Charisse as The Blond takes place on a subway platform as he makes his escape from the gangsters. His role in this scene is more akin to a traditional male ballet dancer partnering style enabling his female partner to perform a series of movements and balances. On the subway platform Charisse slides in on her knees and clings to the detective's left leg. He gently lifts her to her feet as she turns on *demi-pointe* and holds her position before falling to the side (figure 4.10b). He catches her before she falls to the floor as two gangsters shoot each other in a stylised dance behind them. He lifts her to her feet, facing away from him, into a full submissive backbend. The music swells and they dance slowly in hold, facing each other, oblivious to the gangster shoot out in the background. He leans forward, holding her close and kisses her and repeats the action as two more gangsters fight behind them. He slowly lifts her to her feet and she makes a full pivot turn; she then slides down his body into the splits. She rolls over on the floor and he gently lifts her back to her feet; this time she rests her body onto his as he leans backwards, her arms in fourth *arabesque* position, with both feet in extended positions, one knee bent.<sup>713</sup> She slides down his body softly again, until her bent knee reaches the

<sup>713</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

floor. She rises and slowly moves away from him, he follows, gently taking her hand and she *pirouettes* multiple times, before he turns her around whilst in hold, arms wrapped around each other. A gangster shoots another gangster who then runs towards the couple before he falls off the platform. In a flash of light The Blond runs away as the detective looks onto the tracks and his voiceover says: 'That bullet was meant for me!'.

The next scene takes place in a Bebop nightclub setting.<sup>714</sup> Choreographer Michael Kidd stated that:

I tried to keep the dancing and the type of movement down to a stylized form which reflected no joy – had a feeling of unfulfilled tension and would lead to the watchful, tense atmosphere of the fight that evolved as a result of it.<sup>715</sup>

Astaire's duet with Charisse as The Brunette in the red dress is more aggressively sexually charged as he responds to her provocative moves. This jazz dance includes forced arches, isolations, contractions, jazz glissades, lunges and turns including paddle, pique, pivot, inside and outside variations, and jazz walks. Classically trained Michael Kidd was credited as the 'stager of the dances and musical numbers' and he was greatly influenced by the jazz dance style of Jack Cole, but he worked closely with Astaire to choreograph every number, including the 'Girl Hunt' ballet.<sup>716</sup> On seeing Astaire, Charisse immediately wraps her arms around him and he takes out his gun from his inside jacket pocket. She persuades him to put it back as she seductively moves around him. He grabs her arm and the tempo of the music quickens.

<sup>714</sup> The setting is similar to the jazz club from 'The Slaughter on Tenth Avenue Ballet' in *On Your Toes* (1939).

<sup>715</sup> Michael Kidd explained his interpretation following research visiting bebop clubs in New York at the MPAA Special Screening of *The Band Wagon*, Arthur Freed *Band Wagon* symposium transcript, 12 July 1953, quoted in Decker, pp.124-5.

<sup>716</sup> Michael Kidd, *The Band Wagon* (1953), <[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045537/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm - cast](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045537/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm - cast)> accessed 20 September 2018; Genné, p.224.

They dance in parallel, slapping their straight legs and feet to the ground, making multiple turns, before dancing in hold as he drags her across the floor with her feet outstretched behind her (figure 4.11a). He then stops and lifts her right ankle above his waist in a stretched *arabesque* and pulls her into a splits position as he leans to the side whilst she wraps her arms around his neck (figure 4.11b).



**Figures 4.11a and 4.11b Astaire and Charisse as *The Brunette* dancing in a stylised be-bop dance (4.11a) and in hold (4.11b) in the ‘Girl Hunt’ ballet in *The Band Wagon***

They return to dancing in parallel before she swings the central panel of her dress like a stripper’s tassel, and he falls to the ground. The film cuts to an overhead shot as she fan kicks her leg high over him, turns and with her arms above her head thrusts her shoulders forward and back in isolations.<sup>717</sup> For the rest of the dance she slowly ‘chases’ him around the dance floor as if she is a bull incorporating contractions into her jazz walk, whilst he dances backwards moving from one knee to the other as if he is a matador escaping the bull’s advances. When she drops into a low backbend, he grabs her round the waist and the camera cuts to a close up of the couple looking towards the band – Charisse upside down.<sup>718</sup>

<sup>717</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>718</sup> This move echoes Balanchine’s choreographic device for ballet dancer Vera Zorina in his ‘Slaughter on Tenth Avenue’ ballet in *On Your Toes* (1939), signalling to the audience her view

Their dance ends when Rod's voiceover narration starts again, and he lets her go. She runs out of view and he starts a fight in the bar with gangsters that enables him to escape. The fight ends when he shoots the killer clad in a black raincoat and trilby, but when this figure falls into his arms, the killer is revealed to be his idealised blonde-haired woman wearing the stolen green jewelled ring. The ballet ends with Rod Riley walking along the same deserted street as the start of the ballet with the same start to the voiceover. He stops to light his cigarette and a black-gloved arm wearing a diamond bracelet appears from the left of the screen holding a lit match. He lights his cigarette with the match and the camera pans back to reveal The Brunette. The voiceover narration is 'she was bad, she was dangerous, and I wouldn't trust her as far as I could throw her, but she was my kind of woman'. He grabs her arm; she makes a pivot turn and they walk away together arm in arm as the music swells. The stage curtains close and a reverse shot shows the internal audience applauding as the conductor rifles through his music sheets. A reverse shot shows the curtains opening and Tony and Gabrielle walking back onstage holding hands, smiling and laughing to accept the applause.

It is significant that the film does not show any of the revised Broadway show numbers with Tony and Gabrielle starring together until the 'Girl Hunt' ballet. So, the dream ballet acts to express the shift between the audience's earlier experience of seeing the two leads on stage in a disastrous number in the off-Broadway version of the show, and the successful final show. The ballet also assures us that Gabrielle's previous choreographer boyfriend Paul (James Mitchell) is no longer a threat to Tony and Gabrielle's romance.

of oncoming danger, 'Slaughter on Tenth Avenue Ballet' in *On Your Toes* (1939), <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96z0DNZ\\_fBc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96z0DNZ_fBc)> accessed 20 September 2018. Genné also discusses Zorina's awkward jazz dance style in comparison to Charisse, Genné, p.225.

Rickard states that:

It is not the appearance of Astaire's body that suggests sexuality, but rather the transforming effect of his movements, the way he behaves in dance [...]. The asexual persona of Astaire was a perfect cover for the erotic significance of much of his dancing.<sup>719</sup>

We have seen that in both dream ballets in *Singin' in the Rain* and *The Band Wagon* the choreography by Kelly and Astaire (and their collaborators) respectively enables them to create a variety of dance styles and express emotions in more depth than in the primary diegesis. They are also able to choreograph and perform widely different variations of sexually charged dances by creating female dance characters that are not present in the primary diegesis. These are juxtaposed with soft romantic portrayals of quite different characters: idealised, non-threatening, virginal women. In each dream ballet, the female character must become submissive to the male, and this is portrayed through particular movements such as extreme backbends and horizontal leanings.

The next section will address female dream protagonists through analysis of the 'Stormy Weather' dream ballet in the eponymous film and 'Louise's Ballet' in *Carousel*.

<sup>719</sup> Rickard in Lawson-Peebles, ed. p.80.

## **Female dream protagonists**

Chapter Two includes a detailed examination of the female dreamer Laurey's dream in *Oklahoma!* choreographed by Agnes de Mille, and Chapter Three includes a detailed examination of female dreamer Julie's dreams in *Daddy Long Legs*, choreographed by Roland Petit. The dream protagonist is usually either the male or female lead in the film and their dream character is either the same character, or a stylised version of that character from the primary diegesis, as discussed in previous chapters. The two films discussed so far in this chapter are exceptions in that they portray stylised theatrical characters in the dream ballets.

Men choreographed the majority of dream ballets on stage and screen; therefore, with the exception of Agnes de Mille's and Albertina Rasch's choreography, the female dream protagonists usually expressed a male choreographer's perspective. Even when the dreamer in the ballet was a woman, it did not necessarily mean that the dreamer was the female lead in the dream, as I will explore in the following case study of *Stormy Weather*.

## ***Stormy Weather* and the historical context of all black cast musicals in Hollywood**

*Stormy Weather* is one of only three all black cast musicals made for white audiences in the early years of Hollywood's golden age of musicals, alongside *Hallelujah* (King Vidor, MGM, 1929) and *Cabin in the Sky* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1943). *Stormy Weather* and *Hallelujah!* were produced in black and white, whereas *Cabin in the Sky* was filmed in black and white and processed in Sepiatone, on the suggestion of Minnelli.<sup>720</sup> As all three were written,

<sup>720</sup> *Cabin in the Sky*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035703/trivia?ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_trv](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035703/trivia?ref_=tt_trv_trv)> accessed 10 April 2020.



produced and directed by white men at a time when the Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation in the Southern United States, it is not surprising that the storylines depict a white patriarchal and stereotypical portrayal of black culture. Both *Hallelujah* and *Cabin in the Sky* romanticise the South with stories that feature clichéd characters such as lazy, dim-witted and reckless gamblers, womanisers, gold-digging floozies, or god-fearing, subservient domestics or workers toiling in the fields, situated in folk settings that evoke historic memories of slave plantations. The original advertising for *Hallelujah* stated: 'REALISTIC! EARTHY! [...] it pictures in dialogue and heart-stirring song the reckless love and drama of the Southern Negro [...] come to the dusky cabarets [...] the revivals and the baptisms.'<sup>721</sup> In contrast *Stormy Weather* is mostly set in the urban north of America in the 1920s and early 1930s, in the era of the *Cotton Club* of Harlem. Black artists performed in musical revues at the club against backdrops such as savages in jungles and negroes in Southern plantations, for white audiences. Many of the performers in the film *Stormy Weather* had appeared at the *Cotton Club*, including the film's two leads, Lena Horne and Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson, as well as Fats Waller, Cab Calloway (who took over from Duke Ellington as the in-house bandleader), The Nicholas Brothers and Katherine Dunham, who features in the 'Stormy Weather' dream ballet. All three films include a mix of music, from traditional 'Negro Spirituals', interpretations of such songs written by white composers, and Minstrel songs, to the traditional Blues, jazz and American Broadway songs (influenced by urban blues and black music), usually written by white, Jewish composers.<sup>722</sup>

<sup>721</sup> *Stormy Weather*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0019959/taglines?ref\\_=tt\\_stry\\_tg](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0019959/taglines?ref_=tt_stry_tg)> accessed 14 March 2020.

<sup>722</sup> Minstrel shows were first performed in New York in the 1830s by white performers dressed in tattered clothes with blackened faces mimicking African slaves on Southern plantations, 'Blackface: Birth of an American Stereotype', *National Museum of African American History & Culture*, <<https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/blackface-birth-american-stereotype>> accessed 15 March 2020.

The 1921 all black Broadway show *Shuffle Along* (23 May 1921-15 July 1922, 484 performances) was regarded as a 'major instigator of the Jazz Age, of which black dance styles, including tap and the Charleston, were key symbols.'<sup>723</sup> Josephine Baker, who starred in the chorus of the 1923 touring production, adapted black folk dance forms for the stage, like Katherine Dunham, 'in the face of invidious stereotypes about the exoticized and eroticized black female dancing body.'<sup>724</sup> Such dancers were 'burdened by the colonial myth of the 'Ebony Venus' and their associated 'codes of recognition, of raced and gendered performance.'<sup>725</sup> Dunham was considered 'exotic', but because she was lighter skinned it was not to the same extent as other black dancers.<sup>726</sup>

The song *Stormy Weather*, written in 1933 by Harold Arlen with lyrics by Ted Koehler was first sung by Ethel Waters accompanied by Duke Ellington in *The Cotton Club Parade of 1933*.<sup>727</sup> What the three films have in common is the depiction of black singing and dancing personas, whose 'natural' response to rhythmic music is to dance in a vernacular style that was considered sexual and therefore deviant and risqué by white audiences.

<sup>723</sup> Hannah Durkin, 'Cinematic 'Pas de Deux': The Dialogue between Maya Deren's Experimental Filmmaking and Tally Beatty's Black Ballet Dancer in *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945)', *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 47, No.2, Special Collection: Art Across Frontiers (May, 2013), p.386, *Shuffle Along* (Book by Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles, Music by Eubie Blake, Lyrics by Noble Sissle), <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/shuffle-along-1921-9073>> accessed 22 March 2020.

<sup>724</sup> Anthea Kraut, 'Between Primitivism and Diaspora: The Dance Performances of Josephine Baker, Zora Neale Huston and Katherine Dunham', *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 3, Dance (Oct 2003), p.434.

<sup>725</sup> Caroline Joan S. Picart, *Critical Race Theory and Copyright in American Dance: Whiteness as Status*

*Property* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.10.

<sup>726</sup> *Ibid*, p.18.

<sup>727</sup> Shane Vogel, 'Performing *Stormy Weather*: Ethel Waters, Lena Horne and Katherine Dunham', *South Central Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Staging Modernism (Spring 2008), p.93.

There are differing accounts as to why mainstream studios produced all black cast films at this time. There was a genre of 'race films' produced for African American audiences featuring all black casts from approximately 1915 to the early 1950s.<sup>728</sup> In the 1920s-1940s most professional black actors and performers played limited roles on stage, in concerts or playing stereotypical domestic workers in 'mammy' or butler roles in Hollywood films.<sup>729</sup> By the 1930s the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was actively lobbying for the representation of black actors in mainstream Hollywood films and to move away from the stereotypical and racist depictions. However, *Hallelujah* was a personal project for director King Vidor, and having seen successful all black cast stage plays, he was keen to create an all black cast singing 'Negro Spirituals' on film.<sup>730</sup> *Cabin in the Sky* was Vincente Minnelli's directorial debut, and the studio felt that this material was an ideal choice because it represented a less financially and artistically risky proposition. The film was an adaptation of a successful stage production starring Ethel Waters as Petunia Jackson, the wife of a compulsive gambler, who reprised her role in the film and Katherine Dunham as Georgia Brown, the gold-digging floozy, who was replaced by Lena Horne in the film.<sup>731</sup> The staging of dances for the stage production is credited to George Balanchine, and despite Dunham working closely with Balanchine on the choreography she

<sup>728</sup> African American pioneer Oscar Micheaux produced forty-four films for his travelling Black Roadshow Cinema from 1918 onwards presenting these films specifically for black audiences, 'Black Hollywood History' *Soul of America*, <https://www.soulofamerica.com/us-cities/los-angeles/black-hollywood-history-1/> accessed 15 March 2020.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid.

<sup>730</sup> 'ALL-NEGRO CAST IN FILM.; King Vidor is Selecting Actors for "Hallelujah" in Chicago' *New York Times*, 28 September 1928, <<https://www.nytimes.com/1928/09/28/archives/allnegro-cast-in-film-king-vidor-is-selecting-actors-for-hallelujah.html>> accessed 15 March 2020.

<sup>731</sup> *Cabin in the Sky*, Music by Vernon Duke, Book by Lynn Root, Lyrics by John La Touche, based on a story 'Little Joe' by Lynn Root, (25 October 1940-8 March 1941, 156 performances), <<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/cabin-in-the-sky-1025#ProductionStaff>> accessed 15 March 2020; *Cabin in the Sky* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1943) <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035703/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035703/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1)> accessed 15 March 2020.

received no credit (figure 4.12). Many of her dancers also featured in the production.<sup>732</sup>

**Figure 4.12 Georgia Brown (Katherine Dunham) and dancers from Dunham's troupe in the premiere stage production of *Cabin in the Sky* 1943<sup>733</sup>**

*Stormy Weather* was produced as wartime recruitment propaganda for white and black audiences. The film spans over a quarter of a century from the end of World War One, with patriotic American soldiers Bill Williamson (Bill Robinson) and his feckless friend Gabe Tucker (Dooley Wilson) returning home and follows Williamson's dance career and love affair with cabaret singer Selina Rogers (Lena Horne). Bill and Gabe are depicted in an 'all-Negro unit' performing in a band in an end of the war parade. This scene reflected the trend during World War Two for depicting black men as fully-fledged soldiers fighting for democracy.<sup>734</sup> The film culminates with a revue show staged by Cab Calloway to support black US soldiers going overseas and also provides the vehicle to bring the two lovers back together after years apart.

### ***Stormy Weather***

*Stormy Weather* is only seventy-seven minutes long, yet it features twenty songs, with star performances from some of the best African American performers of the era. The original intention of the film was to function as a loose biography of Bill Robinson's life, but this was obviously abandoned during production. The revue format centred on a fictional romantic relationship between the two lead actors. By the early 1930s the 'Negro' stage musical had

<sup>732</sup> Picart, p.105.

<sup>733</sup> Katherine Dunham in *Cabin in the Sky* 1943, *Cultural Front*, <<http://www.culturalfront.org/2013/05/katherine-dunhams-intellectual-plight.html>> accessed 15 March 2020.

<sup>734</sup> Allen L. Woll, *The Hollywood Musical Goes to War* (USA: Nelson-Hall, 1983), p.128.

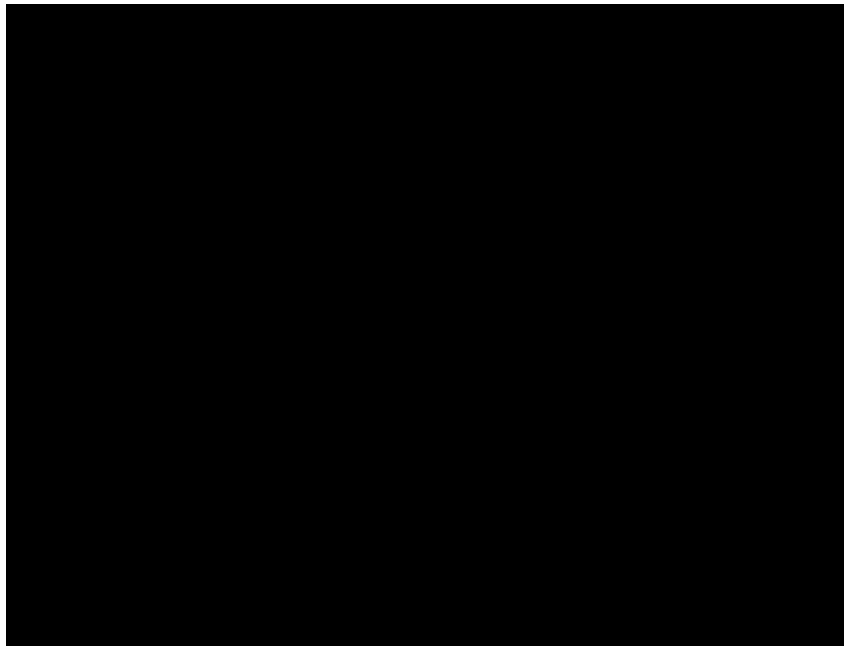
fallen out of favour as ballet and other forms of Broadway dance by choreographers including Balanchine and Agnes de Mille became increasingly popular, as discussed in Chapter One. Marshall and Stearns also attribute this change in fortunes to the 'careless presentation' and 'overexposure' of vernacular dancing and the Depression.<sup>735</sup> This mirrored the decline in popularity of film musicals in the early 1930s, as referenced in Chapter One. Therefore, *Stormy Weather* was viewed as a comeback vehicle for Robinson, as although he had been working professionally since the 1890s, he had not been 'discovered' until 1928 at the age of 50.<sup>736</sup> Early in the film, both Selina and bandleader Jim Europe (Ernest Whitman) state 'Bill Robinson' in conversation with each other but were overdubbed to say 'Bill Williamson'.<sup>737</sup> Lena Horne was apparently unhappy with the age difference; she was twenty-six years old and Robinson was sixty-five and she was disappointed that her singing was not integrated into the film, apart from the title song.<sup>738</sup> Robinson had always been presented as a non-threatening, desexualized character, especially in his films with Shirley Temple. In this film Robinson and Horne never embrace, despite their romantic involvement and the obvious age difference remains problematic (figure 4.13).

<sup>735</sup> Marshall and Stearns, p.159.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

<sup>737</sup> Jim Europe was an African American jazz bandleader, composer and impresario who led the all black 369<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry during World War One, nicknamed the 'Harlem Hellfighters' which included the Hellfighters band that performed after the war as the Jazz Military Band. Europe was stabbed to death in 1919 by a band member after an altercation, and is often credited as one of the pioneers of jazz music by introducing a syncopated beat into ragtime, <<https://www.historynet.com/jazzman-james-reese-europe-taught-white-america-how-to-swing.htm>> accessed 15 March 2020.

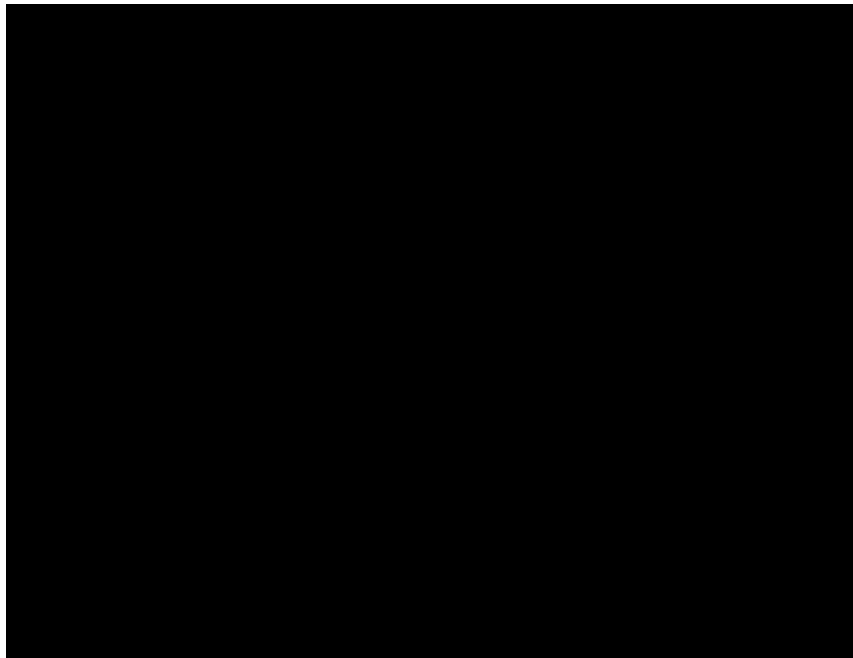
<sup>738</sup> Elaine and Robin Kent, 'Stormy Weather Film Review', 2014, *Obscure Hollywood* <<https://obscurehollywood.net/stormy-weather-1943.html>> accessed 1 September 2019.



**Figure 4.13 Selina Rogers (Lena Horne) and Bill Williamson (Bill Robinson) in their first dance together in *Stormy Weather***

The film starts with Bill talking to a group of neighbourhood children on his plantation-style porch in Hollywood, recalling his past as he flicks through a copy of *Theater World Magazine* dedicated to his career, designating him as a 'credit to his race'. The congratulatory adverts from colleagues trigger memories that are represented as flashbacks. The film places black performers on the same aspirational trajectory as white performers along the Great White Way in films such as *The Great Ziegfeld* and the series of *Broadway Melody* films produced in the late 1930s (figure 4.14).<sup>739</sup>

<sup>739</sup> Woll, p.128



**Figure 4.14 Bill and Selina as successful star performers in the Ziegfeld style finale show after being reunited by Cab Calloway (playing himself)**

According to Woll (1983), *Stormy Weather* 'unintentionally parodied all of the Twentieth Century Fox musicals and, as a result, appeared almost a white musical in blackface'.<sup>740</sup> In the early stages of the film, where Bill is establishing his performance career, the musical numbers 'attempt to maintain a certain black character', and even though they are staged by black choreographer Clarence Robinson, they 'provide a racist parody of the black image in the American mind.'<sup>741</sup> Clarence Robinson was the first black choreographer employed by the *Cotton Club*.<sup>742</sup> When Bill is travelling on a riverboat and complains of his exhaustion from manual work, his feet are revived by the sound of a Minstrel band, played by The Tramp Band, and he performs a 'shuffling' tap dance on sand he has thrown onto the deck. In a later scene Selina describes singing as 'being in my blood', reinforcing the 'natural rhythm' trope. Such 'black' numbers include bare-chested male African natives beating

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

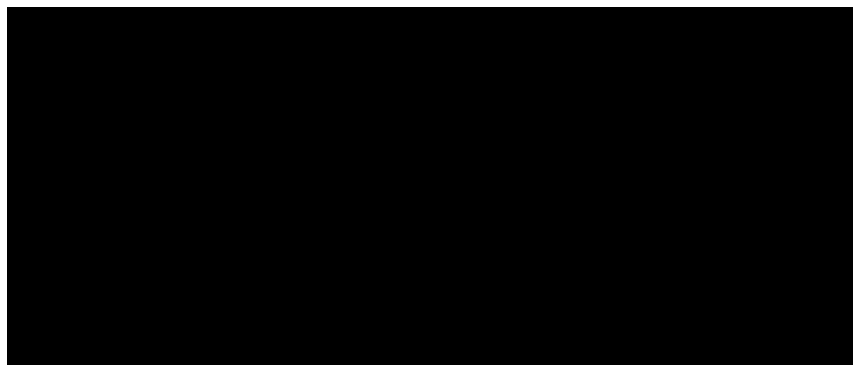
<sup>741</sup> Ibid, p.129.

<sup>742</sup> Vogel, p.104.

their tom-tom drums in a jungle setting (though it provides Robinson with the opportunity to perform his signature multi-level staircase tap routine, figure 4.15), and women dressed in zebra skins and ostrich feathers, dancing as Selina sings 'Diga Diga Do' (figure 4.16).



**Figure 4.15 Chic Bailey (Emmett 'Babe' Wallace) singing while Bill (Robinson) upstages him dancing his signature multi-level tap dance on the drums in Bailey's stage show**

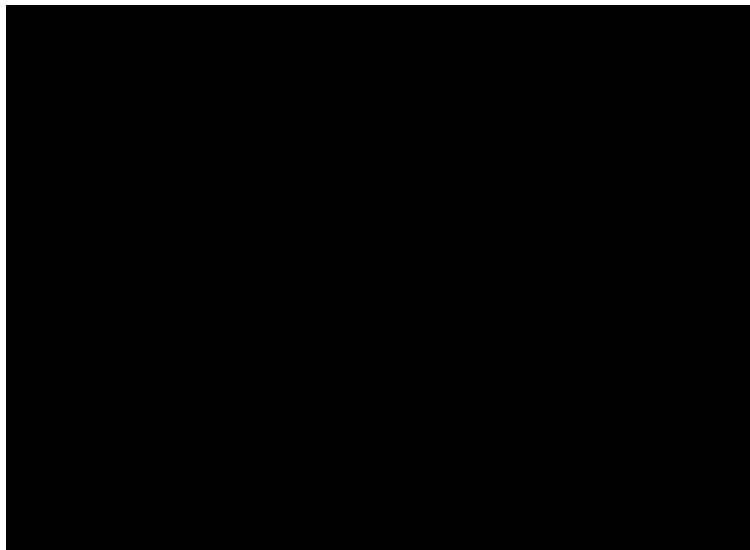


**Figure 4.16 Selina (Horne) singing 'Diga Diga Do' surrounded by dancers in Bailey's stage show**



The 'subliminal romantic desires' of Selina and Bill pairs 'black sexuality with primitivity' reinforcing racist stereotypes for mainstream white audiences.<sup>743</sup>

The female chorus dancing in the recognisable 'Cakewalk' dance based on two tunes from late nineteenth century Minstrelsy, wear hats picturing smiling 'sambo' faces (figure 4.17), and a comedy routine is performed in blackface by The Shadracks.<sup>744</sup>



**Figure 4.17 The Cakewalk dance showing the smiling 'sambo' faces on the back of the women's hats**

When Bill reaches Beale Street, the recognisable home of the Blues, he works as a waiter in a club where Fats Waller and his band are resident, accompanied by landlady and singer Ada Brown, both performing as versions of themselves. Later as Bill becomes successful in New York, mirroring the success of Selina, the venues, dance numbers, costumes and music change to a white aesthetic of glamorous, modern stage settings. However, their career

<sup>743</sup> Daphne Lamothe, *Inventing the New Negro: Narrative, Culture and Ethnography* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), p.139.

<sup>744</sup> The Cakewalk is based on Stephen Fosters' 'Camptown Races' and Kerry Mills' 'At a Georgian Camp Meeting'; The Shadracks are played by Ned Stanfield and Johnny Horace performing an 'indefinite talk' routine where they constantly interrupt each other's sentences, Knapp, *The American Musical: and the Performance of Personal Identity*, p.82

success impacts on their personal relationship when Selina refuses to move to Hollywood with Bill to settle down and have a family. She moves to Paris to continue performing.<sup>745</sup> They are reunited towards the end of the film within a cabaret stage-show setting.

Before analysing the 'Stormy Weather' dream ballet that features in the finale stage show, I will examine choreographer and dancer Katherine Dunham's dance style within the context of dance at that time.

### **Katherine Dunham, Pioneer of African American dance**

Dunham was a renowned dancer and choreographer, trained in different styles of dance who fused ballet, modern, African and Caribbean dance styles to create her own signature style.<sup>746</sup> As part of her social anthropological master's degree studies, Dunham spent time in the Caribbean in 1935-6, most notably Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique and Trinidad observing and documenting indigenous dance forms. However, she 'consciously separated ethnographic from artistic representation work'.<sup>747</sup>

Dunham was a pioneer of the black concert dance movement, although she and her company played to predominantly white audiences in the inter-war years.<sup>748</sup> Kraut suggests that at this time 'black vernacular dance served as a key site for the delineations of racial identity.'<sup>749</sup>

<sup>745</sup> Josephine Baker famously became a major success performing in Paris and Katherine Dunham also performed in Paris and across Europe to huge acclaim.

<sup>746</sup> Katherine Dunham <<http://kdcah.org/katherine-dunham-biography/>> accessed 25 November 2018.

<sup>747</sup> Vèvè Clark, 'Katherine Dunham's 'Tropical Revue'', *Black American Literature Forum*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Black Theatre issue (Winter, 1982), p.148.

<sup>748</sup> Kraut, p.434.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid.

In her 1937 New York debut in a concert titled 'Negro Dance Evening', Dunham was attempting to show the roots of dancing in America through four distinct pieces of dance performance: Africa, West Indies, America and Modern Trends.<sup>750</sup> She maintained creative control over her work including how the productions were staged, the lighting and costumes.

In her work, 'movement patterns always related to certain functions, such as social integration, sexual stimulation and release or externalization of grief'.<sup>751</sup> Reviewers of her work struggled to unite 'her reputation as a scholar and anthropologist with the sizzling star image she projected'.<sup>752</sup> In the same year that *Stormy Weather* was released, Dunham and her company premiered a dance concert titled *Tropical Revue*, a show considered to be 'one of the first productions on Broadway to treat African and Caribbean themes in an authentic environment' (figure 4.18).<sup>753</sup>

**Figure 4.18 Katherine Dunham and troupe in a publicity photograph for *Tropical Revue* 1943<sup>754</sup>**

According to Judith Kerr, Dunham's fusing of 'Afro- and Euro-American movement sources [...] affected and extended the American modern dance vocabulary'.<sup>755</sup> Kerr also states that the 'use and mobility of the pelvis was present in Dunham's work long before Martha Graham introduced pelvic mobility into the vocals of Euro-American concert dance.'<sup>756</sup> Yet Graham was dismissive of Dunham describing her as the 'High Priestess of the Pelvic

<sup>750</sup> Ibid, p.446.

<sup>751</sup> Mindy Aloff, *Dance in America*, p.261.

<sup>752</sup> Clark, p.147.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

<sup>754</sup> Katherine Dunham, *Tropical Revue*, 1943, *Live from Planet Earth* Blog <<https://www.livefromplanetearth.org/2014/03/she-who-struggles-katherine-dunham.html>>, accessed 20 March 2020.

<sup>755</sup> Judith Kerr quoted in Annette MacDonald, 'Katherine Dunham and Her Contributions to American Modern Dance', *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (Autumn, 1989), p.42.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid.

Girdle'.<sup>757</sup> Agnes de Mille was equally dismissive stating that she thought America was not ready for a Negro ballet company.<sup>758</sup> Such criticisms demonstrate racial overtones as stated by Clark in her writings on her collaborator Dunham.<sup>759</sup> Anthropologist Joyce Achenbrenner acknowledges that:

The problem faced by black artists then, was something of a double bind. If they operated within a limited artistic scope, failing to expand their ideas and skills, they were not taken seriously. Yet, if they ventured beyond the boundaries of their accepted 'place', they were criticized for 'inappropriate' expression.<sup>760</sup>

Dunham's work is often cited as an influence on the development of jazz dance and her work was in turn influenced by the cultural, intellectual and political commitments of the 'New Negro' movement of the 1920s and 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance.<sup>761</sup> However, Dunham's approach to dance differed from the 'stereotypical notions of Black women's sexuality' [and to notions that black people] 'had an innate and natural aptitude for dance and not much else.'<sup>762</sup> She believed that black dance was 'sophisticated [and] could provide a lexicon with which to articulate a modern Black subjectivity.'<sup>763</sup>

Dunham's distinctive dance choreography influenced by her anthropological studies, her interest in Cuban rhythms and East Indian chakras, foregrounded progressions (upper torso moving in continuous fluid motions through the entire spine, which can then move to any part of the body). These included the

<sup>757</sup> Picart, p.108.

<sup>758</sup> Karima A. Robinson, 'Reviewed Work(s): Kaise! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham by Vèvè Clark and Sara E. Johnson', *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 39, No.2, (Winter 2007), p.117.

<sup>759</sup> Clark, p.147.

<sup>760</sup> Joyce Aschenbrenner, quoted in Clark, p.148.

<sup>761</sup> Lamothe, p.115.

<sup>762</sup> Ibid, pp.129-30.

<sup>763</sup> Ibid, p.

'Dunham Walk', a 'rolling, majestic, signature' move, travelling isolations, staccato shoulder isolations and fast, 'percussive movement of the feet, juxtaposed with the upper torso moving at a different tempo and quality of movement'.<sup>764</sup> This 'polyrhythmic strategy of moving' was integrated with ballet and modern dance techniques and 'street-derived US social steps characteristic of African American entertainers – juba, cakewalk, ballin' the jack, strut' to create the Dunham style.<sup>765</sup> Her anthropologically inspired use of the pelvis in her choreography rooted in fertility rather than sex and eroticism was met with ambivalence and derision in the dance world, in contrast to Graham's pelvic contractions and release movements described as 'sexlessness' and androgyny in her early work.<sup>766</sup> Dunham's plantation dances in her concert performances in the late 1930s and early 1940s fused American vernacular dance, ballet and Broadway show dancing. This preceded Agnes de Mille's *Oklahoma!* yet Agnes de Mille claimed to be the first to combine such styles.<sup>767</sup>

Between 1943 to 1962 Dunham and her company performed four runs on Broadway, two cross-country touring productions in America and Canada, toured Europe three times and toured to South America, Scandinavia, the Middle East and Asia.<sup>768</sup> She choreographed and starred in, along with her dance company, a number of films and shorts between 1941 and 1958. These include the music and dance tribute to Brazil, filmed during a break from the show *Cabin in the Sky*, *Carnival of Rhythm* (Stanley Martin, Warner Brothers, 1941), *Star Spangled Rhythm* (George Marshall, Paramount Pictures, 1942),

<sup>764</sup> Picart, p.114, Lamothe, p.134.

<sup>765</sup> Picart, p.97, p.103.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid, p.113.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid, p.107.

<sup>768</sup> Clark, p.147.

*Casbah* (John Berry, Universal Studios, 1948) and *Mambo* (Robert Rossen, Ponti-De Laurentiis Cinematografica, 1954). Dunham was disappointed with the unimaginative way that her dances were filmed and that they were not integral to the narrative in most of the films in which she appeared.<sup>769</sup> She established the first major modern black dance company in the US teaching the Dunham Technique, which still continues to this day.

In the next section I will analyse the dream ballet 'Stormy Weather'. See Appendix 12 for the plot summary.

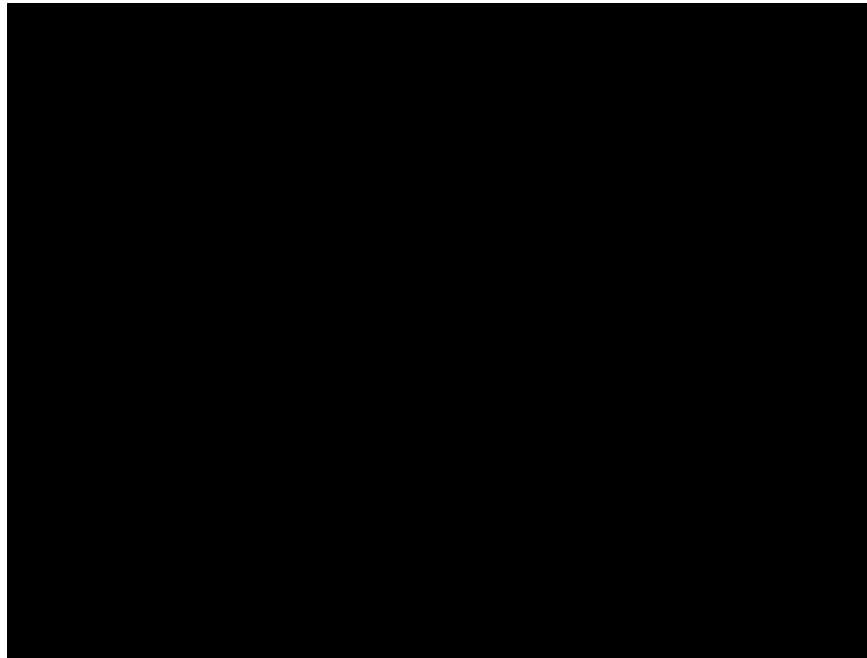
### **Prologue to the 'Stormy Weather' dream ballet**

During the fundraising cabaret performance towards the end of the film to support black soldiers going to war Selina performs the title song. Unbeknownst to her, Calloway has invited Bill to attend and he instructs him to watch the performance, telling him that he will enjoy it. As Bill walks into the cabaret lounge, he picks up a card from a table to read it, turning it to face the camera, announcing 'Special Attraction Miss Selina Rogers and Miss Katherine Dunham and her Dancers', before placing it back on the table. He takes his seat close to the stage. Selina is stood by a window in the stage set designed to suggest a living room. She is dressed in a glamorous dark figure-hugging sequined gown, the colour reflecting her dark mood and it is interestingly in colour contrast to all her other costumes in the film up to that scene. This performance of the title song symbolises her internal storm and a sensuality not seen in the film previously, articulated through the arrangement of the song that includes 'obsessive repetitions, chromatic excess, and excessive swoops downward.'<sup>770</sup> Her accentuated performance of the lyrics denotes her own

<sup>769</sup> Lamothe, p.138.

<sup>770</sup> Knapp, *The American Musical*, p.90.

feelings of sadness and she does not spot Bill in the audience until part way through the song. Selina moves away from the window onto the cabaret floor, before returning to the internal stage window (figure 4.19).



**Figure 4.19 Selina singing the title song and, in the background, some of Dunham's dance troupe sheltering from the rain under a walkway**

She looks out of the window while continuing to sing and watches a group of dancers, not seen before in the film, sheltering from the storm (figure 4.20).

'The release into the dance seems almost a necessary extension of the song, whose singer is brimming with the need to move but is apparently unable to.'<sup>771</sup>

The camera pans in on Selina and out through the window to the 'outside' focusing on a mid-range shot of Dunham and her troupe. Yet this scene and the subsequent dance sequence take the viewer, 'into a world projected by the singer's memory and imagination, marked by the layered progression, first to

<sup>771</sup> Ibid.

the scene outside, suddenly energized by dance, and then beyond (or farther inside) to a more balletic and idealized dance sequence.'<sup>772</sup>

### **The 'Stormy Weather' dream ballet**

Suddenly there is a thunderclap, Selina rushes to close the window and the camera cuts to a view of a cloudy sky which signals the transition into the fantasy dream ballet, created and performed by Katherine Dunham and her Dance Troupe.<sup>773</sup> In the mise-en-abîme dream within the dream, the balletic style of choreography, coupled with 'Africanistic isolations' uses no vernacular movements and rhythms of her usual technique.<sup>774</sup> This dream ballet is an early example of modern dance on screen, inspired by Haitian dance traditions danced to the beat of drums.

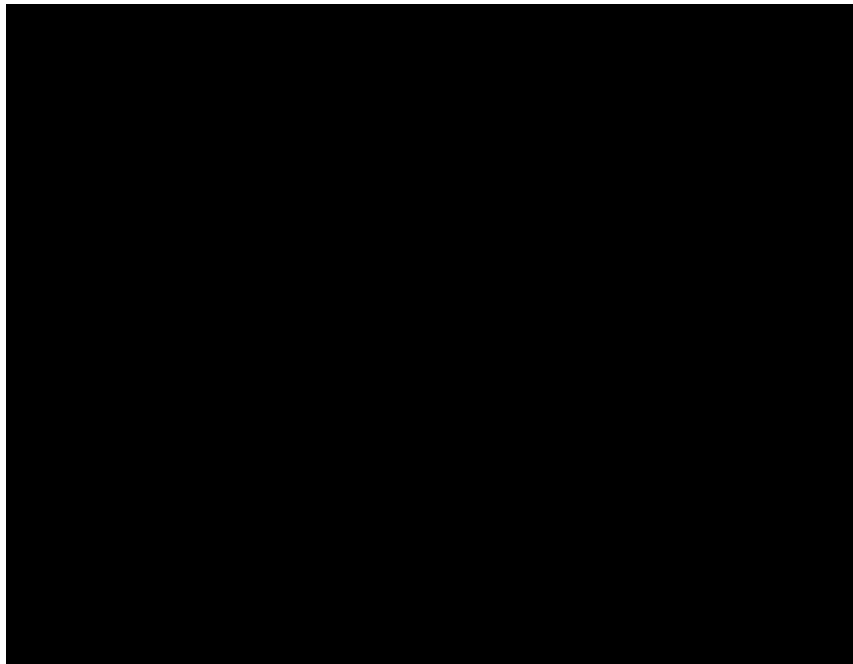
When first seen, Dunham and her troupe are sheltering under a walkway. The women are dressed to represent prostitutes wearing pencil skirts with slits, gaudily patterned tight-fitting blouses and large flowers in their hair. The men are wearing zoot suits. Dunham is smoking and wears a black and white large, check patterned, silky, off the shoulder, fitted dress with black edging and a large white flower on the front and in her hair (figure 4.20).

<sup>772</sup> Ibid.

<sup>773</sup> Katherine Dunham and her Dance Troupe performing the dream ballet in *Stormy Weather* (1943), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W23MYjH92co>> accessed 18 November 2018.

<sup>774</sup> Lamothe, p.139.





**Figure 4.20 Katherine Dunham and her Dance Troupe sheltering from the rain prior to the transition into the dream ballet**

A man slowly edges towards her; she shakes her head and he moves away towards a more receptive woman. All of the group start to sway in time to the diegetic instrumental music of *Stormy Weather*. The men and women lean into each other and start to dance as couples in a slow swaying movement. Dunham is in the centre of the shot, there is another thunderclap and a flash of lightning, she looks upwards as the camera pans up into the clouds to the sound of celestial voices. Director Andrew Stone allegedly wanted Dunham and her female dancers to remain in the stereotypical black 'Jezebel' character that is promiscuous and even predatory, for the whole dream ballet sequence but Dunham refused.<sup>775</sup> In this sequence Dunham and her dancers 'move in a mimetic style of black popular dance' which then transforms into a 'figurative section of visionary black modern dance' during the *mise-en-abîme* section.<sup>776</sup>

<sup>775</sup> Lamothe, p.139.

<sup>776</sup> Vèvè Clark, quoted in MacDonald, 'Katherine Dunham and Her Contributions to American Modern Dance', *Dance Research Journal*, p.43.

The clouds fade away while the thunder and lightning continue, revealing Dunham moving through a stylised performance space with a dark shiny floor and a central, descending zig-zag walkway. She is now dressed in a skin-tight self-coloured bodice with flowing skirt with splits, matching checked waistband and collar and a self-colour snood worn at the back of the head. All five women wear the same costumes and the five men wear skin-coloured loose fitted tunic tops with the checkerboard scarf detailing at the shoulders and trousers.

Throughout the performance the dancers perform against strong winds that causes the women's skirts to billow revealing their legs.<sup>777</sup> All of the dancers wear flat pumps so that they appear almost barefoot. In this section, Dunham first dances solo before being partnered by three men to perform a shoulder height lift. When Dunham first appears in this section, she kicks one leg straight with her arms in ballet fifth position (rounded above the head), then performs isolations, body rolls, slow turns with bent knees on a raised platform.<sup>778</sup> A male dancer approaches her, turns away and then performs a low backbend before dropping to the ground. An ensemble of five male dancers enter from one side of the stage, perform a small *jeté*, low turns, turning jumps landing on one knee and dance in unison with the solo male dancer.<sup>779</sup> Four female dancers join the group, partnering with the male dancers as the other two male dancers partner with Dunham. They all dance in unison performing fluid movements, backbends, turns, low lunges with the men assisting the women in *pirouettes* (figure 4.21).<sup>780</sup>

This dance may have been an influence on 'The Veil' dance in the *Singin' in the Rain* 'Broadway Melody' dream ballet but I have found no evidence to support that theory.

<sup>778</sup> See Dance Glossary.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid.

<sup>780</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 4.21 Dunham and her troupe performing the *Stormy Weather* dream ballet in a stylised dance space against a stormy sky**

Four of the male dancers move to partner Dunham as the rest of the troupe stay in a low lunge position. The camera pans up and over the troupe to focus in on Dunham being lifted onto the shoulders of the men whilst they turn in a closed circle. Dunham leans backwards, face upwards into a backbend, arms outstretched, at one point with her head upside down facing the camera, before she is lowered to the ground.<sup>781</sup> She dances with one male dancer and leads him from the raised platform down onto the main dance floor to join the rest of the troupe as the men spin their female partners around on the floor, by their hands. The camera cuts to two female dancers being lifted onto the shoulders of their male partners who then drop them forwards towards the floor in a classical ballet pose before lowering them onto the floor. The women move away from the main dancefloor leaving the men to perform *grands jetés* with knees bent followed by quick *tours en relevé* then slowing to rest motionless in

<sup>781</sup> This moves echoes Balanchine's choreographic device for ballet dancer Vera Zorina in his 'Slaughter on Tenth Avenue' ballet in *On Your Toes* (1939) and predates Charisse in the 'Girl Hunt' ballet, as referenced earlier in this chapter on p.307.

a bent leg position.<sup>782</sup> Dunham slowly moves in between them, arched back, leaning on a male dancer and performs slow, rolling kicks with outstretched arms.<sup>783</sup> When she moves to a seated position on her knees, all the dancers join her to perform body rolls with outstretched arms. The dancers move more slowly as the music slows, moving in and out of each other's space, performing small foot stomps, but still with arched backs, outstretched arms and slow forward kicks. There is a thunderclap and the celestial voices start to sing again as smoke signifying clouds drifts across the stage. The dancers run up the zig-zag walkway followed by Dunham slowly twisting and kicking her leg as she follows them.

The camera cuts back to Dunham looking up at the sky, sheltering under the walkway with her troupe in their character roles as prostitutes and clients. She slowly limbers away as the other dancers run off elsewhere or continue to shelter from the rain. Clouds fill the screen and the camera pans back through the window to the 'inside' as Selina, still standing by the window, continues to sing the title song. Selina and Bill are finally reunited as a romantic couple through performance later on in the cabaret show.

The complete dream ballet only lasts for three minutes twenty-six seconds, yet 'Dunham's ballet, in contrast to the other dance numbers, is entirely modern, non-narrative, and only indirectly addressed to the audience.'<sup>784</sup> The dream ballet has no 'historical specificity' and 'forces the viewers' attention to the aesthetic dimensions of the dance.'<sup>785</sup> Dunham always 'sought to evidence the

<sup>782</sup> See Dance Glossary.

<sup>783</sup> There is a similar move performed by Leslie Caron as Jane Avril and Gene Kelly as Chocolat in the *Palais d'Opéra* sequence in 'The American in Paris Ballet' as discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>784</sup> Elizabeth Chin, 'Katherine Dunham's Dance as Public Anthropology', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 112, No. 4, (December 2010), p.641.

<sup>785</sup> Lamothe, p.139.

ritual and cultural significances of black dance and the beauty of black dancers.<sup>786</sup> The white aesthetic of ballet that relates in particular to the ethereality of the female, when adapted by Dunham in this sequence creates a black modern aesthetic.

I will now turn to another female dream ballet protagonist through the analysis of 'Louise's Ballet' in the film *Carousel*.

### **'Louise's Ballet' in the original stage production of *Carousel* on Broadway**

This section will outline the background to the creation of 'Louise's Ballet' in *Carousel* on Broadway, followed by an analysis of the dream ballet in the film adaptation. For the plot summary, see Appendix 6.

On stage 'Louise's Ballet' expressed Louise's loneliness and isolation in the community and her sexual awakening, as she dreams of forming a teenage crush on the carousel barker when the carnival comes to town, following in her mother's footsteps. Unlike her mother Julie who was an adult when she met and fell in love with Billy, Louise is only fifteen and so her fantasy also makes her fearful and she realises the inappropriateness of her infatuation with a man in his twenties.

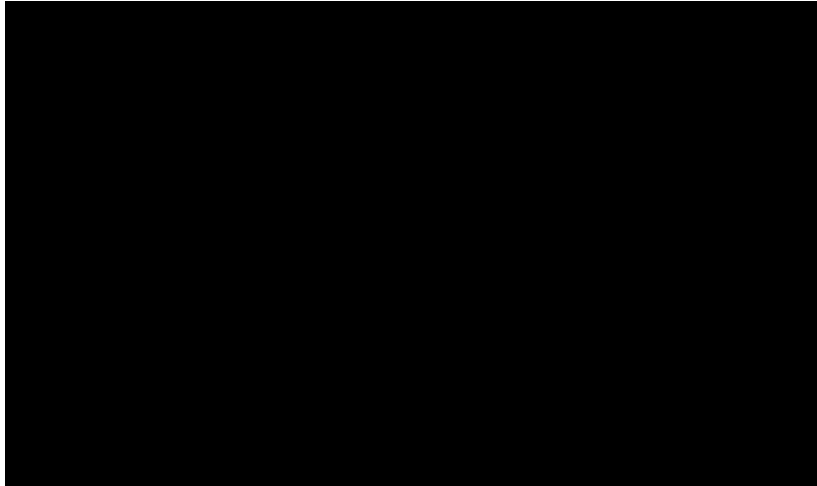
Agnes de Mille's original choreography for 'Louise's Ballet' embraced a modern dance style with classically trained Bambi Linn dancing barefoot as Louise.<sup>787</sup>

The original footage of the ballet runs for almost 13 minutes and starts with a

<sup>786</sup> MacDonald, p.387.

<sup>787</sup> The Theater Guild Presents: Dances from *Carousel*, from the 1945 stage version, photographed by West Coast Sound Studios, New York, Ballet II, Scene 4, 'Louise's ballet', 0:13:43, Paley Center for Media, L.A., accessed January 2014; video of 'Louise's Ballet' from the original *Carousel* 1945 stage version but with edited sections of the orchestral score added replacing the piano accompaniment and the last few seconds of the performance are missing, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MP7oatLydC0>> accessed 17 September 2018.

solo dance by Linn. Two young scruffy male dancers join her to perform a modern, earthy, acrobatic and somewhat masculine dance, presenting Louise as a tomboy. Unusually for a dream ballet there is some dialogue between Louise and another character portraying one of the daughters from the Snow family (played by Annabelle Lyon). She patronises Louise, who then steals the girl's bonnet and proceeds exaggeratedly to parade around wearing it. A troupe of carnival workers arrive with male and female dancers performing duets in an energetic, effusive, fast and sexy style with the women dressed provocatively in skimpy outfits and plumes, evoking the horses on a carousel. While Louise watches in awe she is approached by the lead barker, performed by former Ballets Russes dancer Robert Pagent (figure 4.22). He flirts with her and she dances a short solo in a shy, flirtatious manner in front of him. This leads to a *pas de deux* that is sexual and extremely flirtatious including *arabesques*, lifts and modern shapes such as straight arms. When one of the carnival women returns, he loses interest in Louise despite her attempts to continue flirting by twitching her left shoulder whilst sat on the floor and peeking over her shoulder at him. He shrugs, ruffles her hair, shuns her and leaves. Louise dances alone in a melancholy style until the Snow family returns; they are the same children who have taunted her earlier in the ballet. The boys will not dance with her or let her join in their group dances, and they all mock her repeatedly. In frustration Louise punches one of the girls in the face and shouts 'I hate you; I hate all of you'. The ballet ends with Louise dancing solo in distress as the other children continue to dance together, and then finally Louise is left alone.



**Figure 4.22 Louise (Bambi Linn) with the Carousel Barker (Robert Pagent) in 'Louise's Ballet' from the original stage production of *Carousel* on Broadway<sup>788</sup>**

### **The film adaptation of *Carousel***

There was no notation for any of Agnes de Mille's choreography but 'lots of notes' according to dancer Gemze de Lappe.<sup>789</sup> When *Carousel* was adapted for the screen in 1955 the producers recruited Rod Alexander to work on adapting Agnes de Mille's original choreography, including her dream ballet for the film.<sup>790</sup> Unlike most dream ballets, *Carousel's* variant introduces a new character – Louise - and it is her daydream that is portrayed on screen.

*Carousel* is set in the early 1870s and the late 1880s and was filmed in 35mm Cinemascope on location in Maine, New England. The producers had originally

<sup>788</sup> 'Louise's Ballet' in the original stage production of *Carousel*, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNn7eqNRvjc>> accessed 20 March 2020.

<sup>789</sup> Liza Gennara interview with dancer Gemze de Lappe audio recording \*MGZTC 3-2382, TOFT, NYPAL, accessed January 2014; black and white footage of 'Louise's ballet' from the original 1945 *Carousel* stage production exists in 16mm (see N.108). The footage was filmed without permission after a public performance with dancers Bambi Linn, Annabelle Lyon, Robert Pagent and *corps* recreating the dream ballet accompanied by a pianist, Bambi Linn speaking at a screening of the telecast of *Carousel* 1967 ABC TV production with Questions and Answers session at the Paley Center for Media, L.A., 18 May 2013, accessed January 2014; The Theater Guild Presents: Dances from *Carousel*, from the 1945 stage version, photographed by West Coast Sound Studios, New York, Ballet II, Scene 4, 'Louise's ballet', 0:13:43, Paley Center for Media, L.A., accessed January 2014.

<sup>790</sup> Though Agnes de Mille had worked again with Rodgers and Hammerstein on the film adaptation of *Oklahoma!* by 1956 their professional relationship was strained. Agnes de Mille had repeatedly criticised the pair in public recriminations via interviews and in her writing about the lack of appropriate credit and appropriate payment for her following the success of their collaborations, in particular *Oklahoma!*. She had to go to court to get credit for her 'purloined' work on the film of *Carousel* according to Ethan Mordden, *Rodgers and Hammerstein*, p.83.

cast Frank Sinatra as Billy Bigelow and he had already recorded the soundtrack, completed costume fittings, pre-photography and rehearsals.<sup>791</sup> Sinatra walked off the film set when the director informed him that many of the scenes would be shot twice to accommodate the two different CinemaScope cameras – 35mm and 55mm.<sup>792</sup> The casting of Sinatra suited the darker tone of the story with its focus on social class and particularly Billy's aspiration to improve his standing in society without knowing how to change his behaviour accordingly. It could be argued that MacRae's last minute substitute casting, following on from his success as the positive character Curly in *Oklahoma!* softened some of the darker edges of the role and made his character more palatable for viewing audiences. *Carousel* highlights Billy's inability to fit in outside the carousel environment and his inability to conform to the implicitly normal route to success: employment, marriage, home-making and providing for his wife and family. The nighttime setting of the carousel, which includes shots of dancing girls in skimpy costumes, Billy's implied sexual affair with Mrs Mullins' (Audrey Christie) and the virtual absence of children and families evokes an adult environment.

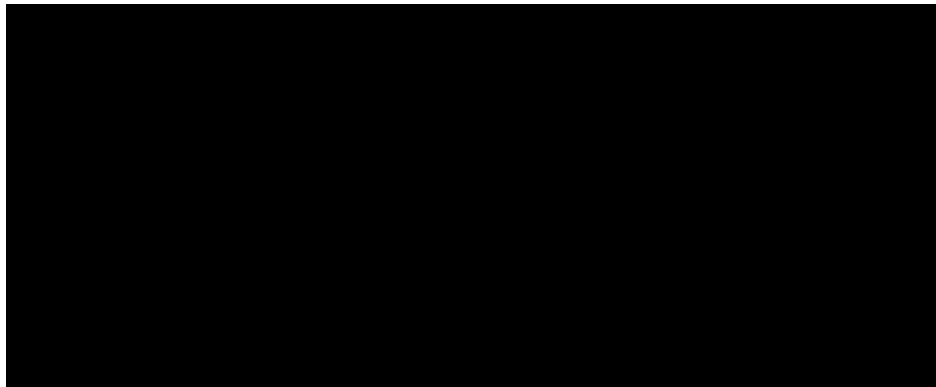
Factory girl Julie Jordan's (Shirley Jones) life with Billy is in stark contrast to her friend Carrie Pipperidge's (Barbara Ruick) marriage to the upstanding boat owner Mr. Enoch Snow (Robert Rounseville). His established middle-class life is evident through his clothes and behaviour and by Carrie giving up work to raise a large family. The contrast is further underlined by Julie's need to continue working whilst Billy is unemployed. The couple is forced to live with

<sup>791</sup> James Kaplan, *Sinatra: The Chairman* (Sphere, Great Britain, 2015), pp.59-63. Sinatra had been considered by Rodgers and Hammerstein for the part of Curly in the film version of *Oklahoma!*, Carter, p.247.

<sup>792</sup> Although Sinatra never publicly admitted why he left the film, there has been much speculation, as outlined in Kaplan, pp.61-3. 'Ironically, the producers discovered a way to shoot in CinemaScope 55 and then convert it to regular CinemaScope without filming the movie twice', *Carousel*, <[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049055/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049055/?ref_=nv_sr_1)> accessed 18 November 2018.



Julie's cousin Nettie (Claramae Turner), and Billy's petty crimes, obnoxious behaviour, his casual physical violence towards Julie and the botched crime that results in his death, are all related to their lower social class position. The desire for a better life, money and status is of course a standard Hollywood narrative, exploring the pressures of money and work against the need for, and belief in, love. The contrast is reflected in the music, as the downbeat tone and hopelessness of Julie and Billy's situation is strikingly at odds with the upbeat frantic communal musical numbers such as 'June Is Bustin' Out All Over' (figure 4.23) and 'This Was A Real Nice Clambake'.



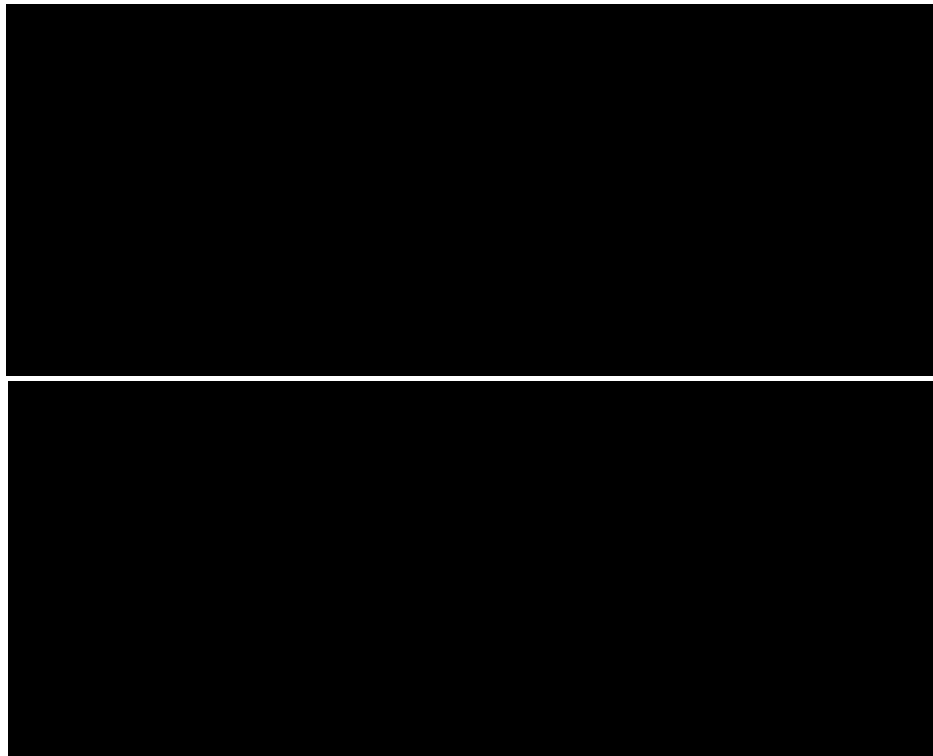
**Figure 4.23** The upbeat 'June is Bustin' Out All Over' musical scene in *Carousel*

In contrast to the relationship of Curly and Laurey in *Oklahoma!* where sex is regarded as a source of anxiety, in *Carousel* Billy and Julie's sexual union is the *only* successful part of their relationship. The majority of the narrative is told in flashback. Billy, in heaven, recounts his edited life story to the Heavenly Starkeeper (Gene Lockhart) in his bid to be allowed to return to earth for one day to help his daughter Louise who is being bullied by the neighbourhood's children. At no point is his daughter visible to either Billy or the audience prior to the dream ballet. When Billy does return, he is told that he will be visible to Louise only when he chooses to be so, and that although Julie cannot see him,

she can always feel his presence. The film ends with Billy returning to heaven with his guardian angel after watching Louise graduate alongside the neighbourhood children, with her proud mother watching the ceremony.

### **Background to ‘Louise’s Ballet’ in the film adaptation of *Carousel***

The dream ballet takes place towards the end of the film. Its setting is the same shoreline, a socially empty space, where Billy sang his soliloquy on finding out that he was going to become a father. That scene expressed a crucial topic in the film articulating his sense of the power and the threat of the social world and the same spot is therefore the appropriate setting for Louise’s daydream expressing her fears and anxieties about her future (figures 4.24a and 4.24b).



**Figures 4.24a and 4.24b Billy (Gordon MacRae) singing on the shoreline (4.24a) and Louise (Susan Luckey) dancing on the same shoreline on the wheel (4.24b) in ‘Louise’s Ballet’ in *Carousel***

Billy watches Louise running along the shoreline and he is shown seated when the dream ballet begins. However, there is no cut to him watching his daughter

throughout the ballet and therefore the audience is given no clue as to what he is thinking. The observer in the majority of dream ballets is usually the dreamer and the ballet usually includes reference to the central romantic situation in the film, but in this case the ballet presents the social situation of a figure that is in effect a new character. Despite Billy's clumsy intervention and his smacking of his daughter after watching the dream ballet, at her school graduation Louise acknowledges her potential within her community, free from the legacy of her father. There is no closing scene in heaven framing the end of the film as Billy walks away towards the sunset, and no sense of his having much agency in her world. Although he has minimally helped to put Louise onto the right path, it is largely her high school that has helped to shape her to be ready to join her community as an adult.

Rodgers and Hammerstein did not have the same level of control over the film adaption of *Carousel* as their previous film *Oklahoma!*. Phoebe and Henry Ephron rewrote the book for the film adaptation, starting the story in heaven and telling the story in flashback as well as cutting some of the songs, which was and still is standard practice in adapting stage musicals for the screen.<sup>793</sup>

As with *Oklahoma!* and the later adaptation of *South Pacific* (Joshua Logan, Twentieth Century Fox, 1958), many scenes were filmed outdoors on location, a strategy that helped to differentiate the films from the stage productions. However, dream ballets were filmed indoors on sound stages, spaces that reflected the interior thoughts of the dreamer. Unlike other Rodgers and Hammerstein dream ballets, *Carousel's* ballet starts on an actual exterior, the shoreline of a beach, before immediately moving to an indoor sound stage as

<sup>793</sup> Production Notes, Special Features, *Carousel* DVD, The Rodgers and Hammerstein Collection, Twentieth Century Fox, 1984.

the dancing begins. The mise-en-scène for the Rodgers and Hammerstein's dream ballets produced by Twentieth Century Fox were stylised empty spaces with muted colours and minimal props and settings, in contrast to the often elaborate brightly coloured mise-en-scène produced at MGM for their dream ballets as discussed in Chapter One. In 'Louise's Ballet' the use of exteriors at the start of the ballet, followed by back projections and minimal setting is attempting to portray a more realistic, less romantic or fantastical tone, in keeping with Louise's adolescent story of self-realisation. Art Director Jack Martin Smith and director King 'envisioned the pastoral New England landscape as being as much an abstract location as heaven [stressing] how much the characters' lives are tied to the earth and sea.'<sup>794</sup>

Louise is still at a very preliminary stage in her life in comparison to other female dream protagonists such as Laurey in *Oklahoma!*. Therefore, the choreography and force of this material fits the teenage Louise, who is not a young child but not yet an adult either. The Heavenly Gatekeeper and Billy have established Louise's age and so, unlike other dream ballets where the dream protagonists are adults, the content and the tone of the dance cannot be sexual in the same terms.

### **'Louise's Ballet' in the film adaptation of *Carousel***

Rod Alexander's choreography for the film adaptation has strong echoes of Agnes de Mille's original choreography mixing classical ballet with modern dance styles and character dancing.<sup>795</sup> The 9 minute 25 second film ballet

<sup>794</sup> Sennett, p.83.

<sup>795</sup> Rod Alexander was married to Bambi Linn and was her ballroom dancing partner in the 1950s, <[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0018705/bio?ref\\_=nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0018705/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm)> accessed 17 September 2018.

follows the same storyline as the original stage production, though there are more characters and locations.

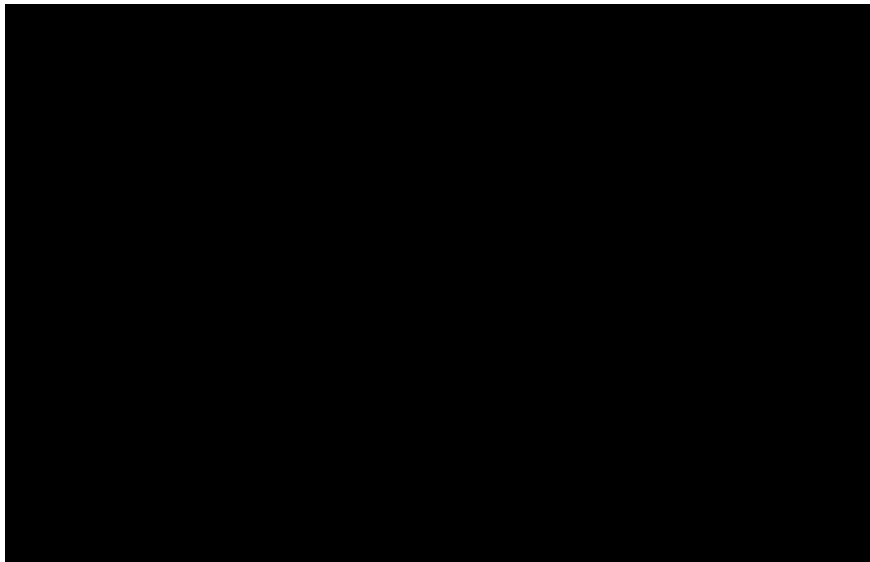
The scene begins with an overhead long shot of Louise dancing on her own outdoors, barefoot on the beach and in the shallows, watched by Billy who is still in heaven. Billy asks the Heavenly Starkeeper, 'Is that her?', and he replies, 'pretty ain't she?' to which Billy says, 'my little girl ha?'. Billy's heavenly friend (William Le Massena) then escorts him back down to earth. On his way Billy steals a star to take with him; the Heavenly Starkeeper deliberately turns his back to Billy allowing him to take it, thinking that he has not been seen. There is a cut to a mid-range shot of Louise standing on top of a discarded wooden carriage wheel with her legs and arms outstretched smiling (figure 4.24b). The carriage wheel loosely evokes her father's carousel. Louise jumps off and runs back down the beach and dances in the shallows again. As she runs the camera pans left to reveal Billy and his heavenly friend watching Louise. Billy asks if he can be seen by Louise and is told, 'only if you want her to'. As Louise runs back to the wheel the film cuts to a studio setting dressed as the beach location. The distinctive *mise-en-scène* and the transition from outdoor to studio setting conform to dream ballet conventions, signalling to the audience that Louise is daydreaming. The ballet ends with Louise throwing herself back onto the wooden wheel, but this time crying and in distress after being rejected by the carnival barker and the local children. A cut to a mid-range shot shows the crashing waves of the ocean, followed by a shot of Louise still turning on the wooden carriage wheel, now back in the exterior beach setting; this return to the earlier setting denotes the end of the ballet (figure 4.25).



**Figure 4.25 Louise crying on the wheel at the end of 'Louise's Ballet' in *Carousel***

At the centre of the ballet is a romantic *pas de deux* danced to an orchestral rendition of 'If I Loved You', the song sung by Julie and Billy when they first meet early in the film. The two dancers are Louise, played by classically trained dancer Luckey and the 'Starlight Carnival' carousel barker, played by New York City Ballet principal dancer Jacques d'Amboise.<sup>796</sup> Immediately prior to the *pas de deux* there is an extended solo performed by Jacques d'Amboise, surrounded by female carnival performers dressed in leotards and *pointe* shoes, with plumes in their hair, held aloft by male dancers moving in the style of horses on a carousel (figure 4.26).

<sup>796</sup> *Carousel* cast and crew, [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049055/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_sm#cast](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049055/fullcredits?ref_=tt_cl_sm#cast) accessed 17 September 2018; Jacques d'Amboise played the fifth brother, Ephraim in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (Stanley Donen, MGM, 1954).

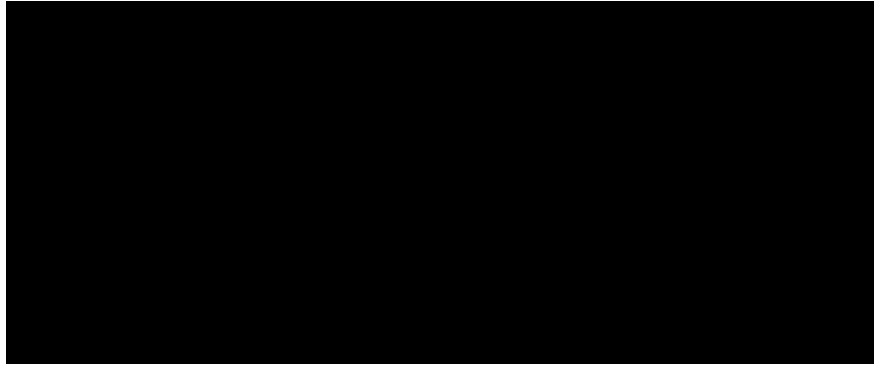


**Figure 4.26 Ballet dancer Jacques d'Amboise as the Carousel Barker dancing with his carousel performers**

Some of these movements are reminiscent of the female *corps* in the saloon scene in Laurey's dream ballet in *Oklahoma!* as described in Chapter Two. The casting of ballet dancer Jacques d'Amboise and the choreography for his solo demonstrate his athletic and masculine ballet prowess with multiple *pirouettes*, *grands jetés*, *grands échappés*, *entrechats*, *jeté en tournant*, *arabesques*, *grands ronde de jambe en l'air*, *tours* and *fouettés en tournant*.<sup>797</sup> This then extends into the *pas de deux* with multiple one and two-handed lifts, *arabesques*, *jetés* and *grands jetés*, and mirrored movements (figure 4.27). This duet represents Louise's sexual awakening as well as the fear and danger associated with the carnival barker and the carousel. Babington and Evans describe this expression of Louise's infatuation as 'searching for a mode of sexual relations which crosses the conservative-romantic (the balletic) with the individualistic-modern (freer modern dance) elements, and female passivity with female activity.'<sup>798</sup>

<sup>797</sup> See Appendix 1 Dance glossary.

<sup>798</sup> Babington and Evans, p.203.



**Figure 2.27 The carnival barker dancing a *pas de deux* with Louise in 'Louise's Ballet' in *Carousel***

The *pas de deux* ends with the carnival barker kissing Louise who immediately jumps up, wipes her lips, evidently feeling embarrassed, disgusted and ashamed. The passionate kiss and Louise's immediate reaction shows the degree to which she is still a child. The carnival barker looks at her, sees how young she is, ruffles her hair and walks away, leaving Louise to be taunted by all the local children shouting 'Shame on you' repeatedly and pointing at her. This is shown in a mid-range shot, then a reverse shot showing Louise reacting in tears. There is a cut back to a mid-range shot and in Louise's frustration she punches one of the girls, and shouts 'I hate you, I hate all of you', as she continues crying. Louise runs away into the path of the barker and his carnival workers who all shun her, before she runs and jumps back onto the turning wooden carriage wheel, but this time lying face down and in floods of tears, marking the end of the ballet (figure 4.25).

Louise enjoys communing with nature but is haunted by the bad reputation of her father. As a result, the local middle-class children, represented by the Snow family, do not allow her to join in with their activities. This ballet starts by highlighting Louise, wearing a plain lilac fitted dress with A-line knee-length skirt and matching underpants as an asexual tomboy. She dances boisterously with three local scruffy boys in a representation of physical rough and tumble



play and the free activities of the world of lower-class children. This youthful exuberance continues as Louise responds to being patronised by the eldest Snow family daughter, who is wearing a prim, pretty high buttoned dress, tights, shoes, gloves and bonnet. She is one of seven children who march in a line behind their father in age and height order. They represent the middle-class world that is both repressed yet comically fertile. Louise sticks her tongue out at the eldest daughter, then fights her off screen and reappears wearing her fancy bonnet. This petty theft loosely references her father's actions as a thief, reinforcing the local children's perceptions of her as socially tainted by her father's actions, and ambiguously of a lower social class. Despite her actions, Louise still tries to join in with the elegant, formal, country dancing of the Snow family and friends but her overly physical attempts result in her being shunned again. She throws the bonnet back at the group, symbolising her rejection of their world.

The second part of the dream implies Louise's likeness to her mother, in that she too can fall under the spell of a handsome but socially unsuitable carnival barker; although unlike her mother the attraction cannot develop due to Louise's youth. However, the majority of the ballet focuses on the weight of the loss of her father on her life, her idealised view of him, but also her complex feelings towards him. Louise has mixed feelings, wanting to rise above her current economic and emotional circumstances, and yet still be the carefree barefoot girl. She also demonstrates her propensity to resort to violence, like her father, when she is frustrated or cannot get her own way, by punching one of the Snow family daughters. The ballet demonstrates that Louise's character owes more to her father than her mother in her tomboy style, physicality and ability to be easily distracted by the glamour of the carnival (although her mother was also drawn to it). In particular Louise, like her father is drawn to its

seedy yet exciting lifestyle with its potential for sexual liberation and the opportunity to escape her mundane surroundings. However, just like her father she is frustrated by being stuck in the unchanging nature of her life, as represented by the carriage/carousel wheel: going round but not moving forwards.<sup>799</sup>

### **The aftermath of 'Louise's Ballet'**

The ballet shows Billy that he needs to help his daughter and make sure that she takes a more positive path in life and a different one to his own. After the ballet concludes Billy makes an attempt to befriend Louise and hands her the star he has brought down from heaven, but he handles it badly and ends up slapping her wrist. She runs away to fetch her mother, so Billy confirms with his heavenly friend his desire to be invisible to them both. Louise asks her mother if it is possible to be hit hard but it feel like a kiss, to which Julie replies, 'it's possible, dear, for someone to hit you...hit you hard...and it not hurt at all'. The audience understands that Julie is saying this not just for her daughter's benefit but for Billy to hear too as she can feel his presence nearby. To contemporary viewers this moment makes for uncomfortable viewing as it purports to condone domestic violence as a physical expression of love.<sup>800</sup> For a 1950s audience, Julie's explanation to Louise is expressing forgiveness for a wrong committed. With reference to *Carousel*, Theodora Ooms (2012) states that in that era 'rape and domestic violence were still treated as personal rather than social problems.'<sup>801</sup> The scene draws to a close as Louise runs back into the house. Billy starts to sing a reprise of 'If I Loved You' to Julie and though she

<sup>799</sup> Babington and Evans, p.203.

<sup>800</sup> The term 'domestic violence' first appeared in the 1970s, Patricia Alvarez Caldas, 'What's the Use of Wondering if He's Good or Bad?: *Carousel* and the Presentation of Domestic Violence in Musicals' *Investigaciones Feministas*, Vol. 3., (2012), p.28.

<sup>801</sup> Theodora Ooms, 'A Sociologist's Perspective on Domestic Violence: A Conversation with Michael Johnson, Center for Law and Social Policy, 22 February 2012, quoted in *ibid*.

cannot see him she picks up the star and holds it close to her heart. Billy asks his heavenly friend again whether Julie can see him, and he confirms that Julie can always feel Billy's presence.

Billy was given a chance to help Louise to understand what she needs to do to fit in and live her own life, and not to be defined by his shadow. The ballet helps both Billy and Louise to understand that she must conform to a sense of community, rather than individuality, and not to let his past dictate her future. This relates to an explicit element of the American Folk Musical that reinforces the American heritage and myth through a central focus on community, home and family.<sup>802</sup> However *Carousel* is also relatable to 1950s melodramas as well as other musicals through its downbeat tone and negativity.

There are no positive patriarchal father figures in the film: Billy and his friend Jigger (Cameron Mitchell) are criminals, Mr. Snow is portrayed as a snob with a large family and is treated as a largely comedic figure, and the successful man that Billy attempts to rob is a negatively treated, repressive figure of self-assurance based on financial dominance. The town's Doctor Selden (played by the same actor as the Heavenly Starkeeper) is self-deprecating about his level of influence over the schoolchildren.

The film concludes with the school graduation. Doctor Selden is giving a speech about how to live life to its potential. Billy kneels down and, unseen by anyone onscreen except by his heavenly friend, whispers in his daughter's ear 'Believe him', encouraging her to listen to this wisdom. Louise suddenly takes note of the words spoken by Doctor Seldon: 'don't be held back by their failures

<sup>802</sup> Altman, *The American Film Musical*, p.273.

[parents]. Makes no difference what they did or didn't do, you just stand on your own two feet.' The doctor continues stating, 'try not to be scared of people not liking you, you try liking them.' The scene ends with a rousing reprise of 'You'll Never Walk Alone' started by the doctor. All the school graduates join in singing and finally Louise (the only blonde in the group) joins in. She puts her arm around the girl sat next to her who then smiles back in a gesture of social cohesion. The rest of the community join in the singing including Julie, as Billy whispers in her ear, 'I loved you', something he struggled to say in his mortal life, reinforcing the film's central rhetoric that love transcends everything, even death. Billy then turns away and walks back towards heaven with his heavenly friend, in the satisfaction that he has done all that he can to reset his family on a more positive path. In the last few minutes of the film, the orchestral reprise reminds the audience of the downbeat story, and unlike many Hollywood musicals, the ending is ambiguous rather than joyful.

Dream ballets often thematise or summarise elements of the primary diegesis, but exceptionally 'Louise's Ballet' drives the narrative action of the film. Without it the subsequent ending would be incomprehensible. As Louise has not been seen in any previous scenes she cannot be mapped onto any other characters, and though there are echoes of both of her parents in her behaviour, she has different issues to address that are personal to her. The ballet encodes sexual material that relates to the film, especially the carousel setting, but presents different meanings using dance to explore Louise's teenage perceptions of sexual fantasy that could not be addressed so explicitly any other way. The ballet ends with Louise on her own as she had started the ballet, but in despair rather than with a new resolution. Significantly the ballet has not provided any solutions to her problems. However, the dream ballet helps Louise to realise that she no longer wants to be seen as the local ragamuffin girl, neither does

she want to join the kind of middle class as exemplified by the Snow family, and nor is she ready to join the world of the carousel.

## **Conclusion**

Cooper suggests that the inconsistencies shown by the PCA in relation to which choreography passed or violated the code was 'an indication that Joseph Breen and his staff tended to view dance as a decorative element of film, underestimating its power to stimulate an audience on some level: emotional, intellectual, kinesthetic, or moral.'<sup>803</sup> Another explanation suggested by Cooper is that the PCA operated through 'culturally (and implicitly racially) biased aesthetic criteria' which is evident in the significance of the scenic setting of a dance as outlined in the 'Special Resolution on Costumes.'<sup>804</sup> A further reason for such inconsistencies is the basic lack of understanding of choreographic meaning at the PCA. None of the censors had expertise in dance theory or choreography and therefore their judgment was focused on the 'most blatant and superficial transgressions' of the code.<sup>805</sup> The value of the new American style of dance combining classical ballet, jazz and modern dance was that it was able to conceal sexual motivations in its choreography in comparison to other dance forms that were deemed immoral, especially those perceived as African or African-American concert dancing.<sup>806</sup> 'The narrowly conceived characterization of 'good' or 'decent dance' by the PCA privileged balletic-based choreography, in particular the dream ballet and dance as narrative forms, over theatrical and vernacular dance forms stemming from non-Western dance traditions'.<sup>807</sup> Therefore Cooper argues that this prioritisation relegates

<sup>803</sup> Cooper in Bales and Eliot, eds., p.99.

<sup>804</sup> Ibid.

<sup>805</sup> Ibid.

<sup>806</sup> As exemplified in the dances presented at nightclubs in Harlem by African-American dancers in the 1920s-1940s, John O. Perpener III, *African-American Concert Dance: Renaissance and Beyond* (Chicago: Illinois Press, 2001).

<sup>807</sup> Ibid, p.119.

the non-Western dance traditions to a 'lesser aesthetic and moral standing' and thereby highlights the racial and aesthetic bias at the PCA.<sup>808</sup>

Rickard states that Hollywood's use of repression, 'or rather the emotional energy that it generates' invites 'a greater imaginative involvement on the part of the spectator.'<sup>809</sup> The 'ambiguous and overdetermined' sequences and mise-en-scène create 'a dynamic environment in which a number of interpretations are possible.'<sup>810</sup> This quality of the relationship between Hollywood and the audience 'became more subtle under censorship, drawing upon an even greater degree of imaginative and emotional involvement from the individual spectator.'<sup>811</sup>

Therefore, the dream ballets provide the vehicle to express the dream protagonist's repressed sexual emotions, which are present in a very different way than in the primary diegesis, and explore those emotions in comparison to their romantic ideals. The expression of sexual desire through choreography did not overtly violate the codes of the PCA but 'the PCA helped further develop the double life of overt denial and covert signification which allowed spectators to repudiate and enjoy certain pleasures simultaneously.'<sup>812</sup>

As explained within this chapter the representation of sex and romance in dream ballets is coded through choreography, music and mise-en-scène, creating a safe space to express sexual feelings that then must be repressed in the primary diegesis. In dream ballets, women often have more agency than in

<sup>808</sup> Ibid.

<sup>809</sup> Rickard in Lawson-Peebles, ed., p.87.

<sup>810</sup> Ibid.

<sup>811</sup> Ibid.

<sup>812</sup> Ibid, p.75.

the primary diegesis, whether they are the internal dreamer or not, possessing the power to stir romantic and sexual feelings in the male romantic lead. Although it is clear that women must succumb to their traditional feminine roles at the conclusion of each of the films. Male dreamers are sometimes tempted by *femmes fatales* and attempt to convert them into romantic partners expressing their patriarchal desire to conquer and protect. These female characters are presented as a way to show the male dreamers that their successful union must be with a 'virtuous' woman, whereas female dreamers are provided with the chance to test out their sexual curiosity with overtly sexual, physically dominant male characters. However, if a female dreamer chooses such a man the immediate negative ramifications become explicit within the dream, thereby showing the dreamer that her destiny is romantic union through marriage.

# Conclusion

## Research questions

The following research questions were posed in the Introduction to this thesis.

What is meant by an 'American' style of dance choreography and presentation within dream ballets? How was this 'American' style created to specifically express feelings, memories, wishes, sexual desires, fears, loss and ambition in a way that could not be fully articulated in shorter non-dream ballet dance sequences? How did first and second-generation American artists and European émigrés in the early twentieth century influence and originate new styles of dance that represented particular tropes of American culture, creating this 'American' style of dance, that was manifest in dream ballets: on Broadway, in classical ballet, modern dance and in Hollywood? Was cultural appropriation & grafting of dance moves significant in the development of 'American' dance? How much did gender impact on choreographic intention? Does the narrative style of dance in dream ballets negatively affect the integrated nature of the musicals within my corpus through unnecessary diegetic transitions, creating a third state, or did these dream ballets create a new level of meaning? Did the PCA see but choose to ignore the transgressions or were the dream ballets so coded that the transgressions were not visible, or did producers negotiate these challenges through employing particular styles of choreography? How has academic discourse furthered the understanding of dream ballets' function within musicals? Is there a way to group dream ballets according to the studio, director, star or another option, and if so, what are the theoretical concepts that run across such groupings?



This thesis has illuminated answers to the research questions through in-depth analysis of the historical origins of the dream ballet, looking back to the use of dreams in classical ballet, literature and silent films. I have analysed the development of the dream ballet from character-led fantasy on Broadway through to its avant-garde experimentation and creative apotheosis in Hollywood, to its eventual demise on stage and screen. By exploring the historical and contemporary context, this study has opened up the wider cultural influences that explain the dream ballets' popularity on Broadway and in Hollywood from the 1930s to 1950s. Access to archive material enhanced my understanding of dream ballets on Broadway and in Hollywood enabling me to explore the movement from initial concept and artistic development, through the production process including navigating the PCA restrictions for films, and to their eventual critical and commercial reception. Archive research has also revealed the specific challenges of creating new musicals and adapting stage musicals and their dream ballets for the screen. This combined approach has identified the significance of early American modernism on the careers of the pioneers and practitioners of dream ballets and their distinctive 'American' styles. What this study has proved is that there is not a singular 'American' style of dance, but different dance styles that are distinctively 'American'. By reviewing the cycle of dream ballets over the twenty-one-year period of my corpus, I have been able to categorise dream ballets and challenge existing academic discourse concerning their role and function. I have proposed that dream ballets fulfill one of the following four functions: as problem-posing dreams, emotional reprise, romantic or sexual curiosity fantasy, or self-realisation dreams.

My study has highlighted the view that dream ballet protagonists grant us access to questions regarding romantic courtship, repressed sexual emotions

and the consequences of actions, loneliness and isolation, social class and personal ambition. My analysis has explored meanings and affects made available through the reading of texts within my corpus, allowing for the interpretation of what the viewer perceives, in the textual analytic practice described by Richard Dyer.<sup>813</sup>

## **Chapter one**

Chapter one explored the interconnected relationship between Broadway, modern dance, folk culture and Hollywood in the development of the dream ballet on stage and film. Through taking a chronological approach I was able to identify the move towards integrated storytelling - with through-line narratives, accompanied by new American music scores and fully rounded characters on Broadway - which was a pivotal moment for the development of 'American' dance. This significant change allowed ambitious dance arrangers to assert themselves as choreographers and to experiment with fusing established and recognisable dance movements with classical and contemporary styles to create bespoke character-based routines. This has informed my understanding that the dream ballet framework permitted choreographers the opportunity to develop first-person narrative dance routines that expressed the visual manifestations of a character's internal feelings, using popular tropes for audiences to understand.

The impact of *Oklahoma!* on the integrated stage musical is widely acknowledged. My archive research has confirmed that although the dream ballet in *Oklahoma!* was not the first, it did kick-start a trend on Broadway,

<sup>813</sup> Richard Dyer, 'The Persistence of Textual Analysis', *Kracauer Lectures in Film and Media Theory* (Winter 2015/16), <<http://www.kracauer-lectures.de/en/winter-2015-2016/richard-dyer/>>, accessed 12 July 2019.

followed by Hollywood, for the inclusion of dream ballets in musicals to enhance the status of the material, and by so doing to support the creation of longer, more expressive dance routines.

This study reaffirms the significance and influence of female choreographers on the development of new styles of American dance primarily on stage in the early decades of the twentieth century, and their wider influence on future stage and film choreographers. All these female choreographers staged work for strong female characters and/or characters that foregrounded the female American dancing persona. For my examples, I take Agnes de Mille's pioneering frontier women, made visible in *Oklahoma!* discussed in Chapter Two, and in its sexual curiosity fantasy dream ballet; the class-based, small-town culture evoked in 'Louise's Ballet' in *Carousel* discussed in Chapter Four; and Albertina Rasch's ambitious, talented Broadway hopeful in the self-realisation 'Lucky Star Ballet' in the *Broadway Melody of 1936*.<sup>814</sup>

Throughout the study I identify a set of tropes that were used in dream ballets. In this chapter we see the familiar trope of the young naïve aspiring Broadway star and the 'Cinderella Myth' as the central premise of the 'Lucky Star Ballet' in the backstage musical *Broadway Melody of 1936*. The narrative function of the upward trajectory from working class hopeful to successful star on Broadway, overcoming challenges along the way echoed the widely dispersed ideal of the 'American Dream' - if you work hard enough, you can succeed - at a time when America's political and cultural world influence was increasing. The juxtaposition between highbrow arts, for example ballet, and popular arts such as Broadway dance and tap, was also a regular trope in film musicals and is

<sup>814</sup> As referenced in Chapter Four, Rod Alexander choreographed the dream ballet in *Carousel* based on Agnes de Mille's original choreography for the stage production.

especially evident in a number of the dream ballets featured within my corpus including *Broadway Melody of 1936*.

This chapter explored the ways in which the work of Albertina Rasch, Katherine Dunham and Agnes de Mille's work in film and on dream ballets in particular was limited. Specifically, it highlights the paradox that their influence on dance and the work of future choreographers was often overshadowed by the success of the subsequent influx of male dancer choreographers on Broadway, in concert performances and in Hollywood. In contrast these male choreographers were looking to develop choreography that reflected the American male persona. There is no denying George Balanchine's long-standing impact on the establishment of the recognisable American classical ballet style. However, this chapter reaffirms Albertina Rasch (not Balanchine who is so often credited), as the pioneer of narrative storytelling dream ballets on stage and screen, and as the first choreographer to develop an early American classical ballet style infused with jazz dance. I have been surprised to discover that the work of Rasch, an artist who was so active on Broadway and in Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s, has received little scholarly attention.

## **Chapter two**

Chapter two explored in detail how an 'American' style of dance was evoked in two very different dream ballets from a male and a female perspective: the 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' ballet in *Oklahoma!* choreographed by Agnes de Mille and performed by Bambi Linn and 'The American in Paris Ballet' choreographed and performed by Gene Kelly.

My research confirms that although the original idea for the dream ballet in *Oklahoma!* was credited to Oscar Hammerstein II, it was Agnes de Mille who developed the concept of an anxiety dream to explore complex emotions, particularly the representation of idealised romance versus repressed sexual curiosity through dance. Fusing a mix of established dance styles including classical ballet, folk, country, modern and jazz, Agnes de Mille created a distinctive 'Americana' style with specific gestures and movements to reflect individual character traits. This approach was applied throughout all the dance scenes within the film, although it was only in the dream ballet that all these dance styles were visible together, along with the Can-Can, Polka and the Waltz dances that were considered sexually risqué at the time of their original presentation. The dedicated dream dancing space identified through audio and visual cues for the audience depicted a stylised interpretation of the Oklahoma landscape within the dream ballet framework. This was coupled with the substitution of dancers in the male and female lead roles allowing Agnes de Mille to create a linear narrative and devise choreography that explored multiple layers of meaning. This dream ballet reinforces the significance of the connection with the land in the rural American mid-West, the willful and pioneering spirit of the young modern American woman and the importance of community in the non-urban 'other' space, that all contribute towards the representation of a rural American ideal. The holistic approach to the mise-en-scène, particularly the changing colour palette, music, sound and visual effects serve to heighten the emotions of the characters evoking different moods as well as signalling impending danger to the viewer. It is the dream ballet that demonstrates to Laurey that her sympathy for Jud is misplaced and this is subsequently played out in the primary diegesis.

In contrast Gene Kelly's 'The American in Paris Ballet' serves as an emotional reprise at the point in the film when his character Jerry has lost all hope as he watches his love, Lise leave him out of a sense of duty towards another man. From its inception the creative team's vision for the dream ballet was ambitious, aiming to surpass the scale, length and critical and commercial success of *The Red Shoes* and its titular dream ballet. 'The American in Paris Ballet' explores the juxtaposition between modern American and traditional French culture through choreography and mise-en-scène creating a holistic cine-ballet. Kelly's brash, masculine, American working-class everyman contrasts with Leslie Caron's shy, feminine, French, naïve, yet cultured young woman. In the dream ballet, Kelly uses the different styles of predominantly French impressionist painters to evoke different moods allowing for a variety of choreographic styles including classical ballet through to tap, folk, modern and jazz. Unlike Agnes de Mille, Kelly does not use specific gestures and movements related to individual character traits. He embraces a contemporary interpretation of traditional choreographic styles, coupled with modern and jazz dance styles to serve the contemporary setting of the narrative and his desire to create his own style of American dance.

Chapter two also explored the cultural appropriation and misrepresentation of Asian dance and culture through the presentation of an American interpretation of an Eastern culture in 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' dream ballet in *The King and I*. As stated in chapter two, it is widely recognised that dance is an evolving art form whereby dancers and choreographers consciously and subconsciously appropriate moves, gestures and phrases from other artists in the creation and interpretation of new work. What was standard practice in Hollywood and on Broadway at the time of my corpus was the lack of acknowledgement and accreditation of original dance practitioners and their

work if they were non-white. The growing popularity of a contemporary white American culture domestically and overseas after World War Two reinforced this dominant practice, which was manifest in films of that era, and in fact is only now starting to change. In *The King and I* choreographer Jerome Robbins, despite extensive archival research and working with Asian dance experts, was not concerned with being wholly authentic. His artistic interpretation of various Asian cultures and dance styles was enhanced with American cultural references and Christian religious ideology to create an exotic 'other' for an audience unlikely to understand Siamese culture and its authentic representation.

### **Chapter three**

In chapter three I examined the inherent tensions between filmmakers' desire to achieve narrative integration in the relationship between dream ballets and the primary diegesis, in comparison to the creation of spectacle and thus apparent unnecessary diegetic transitions. The chapter traced the narrative integration of dance numbers in musicals back to the Astaire-Rogers films of the 1930s through to their apotheosis in the Arthur Freed produced MGM musicals of the 1950s. Using examples of dream ballets from *Daddy Long Legs* and *On the Town* this chapter explored the role and function of these dream ballets and the differences between their contribution to the primary diegesis. My analysis confirmed that the inclusion of a linear narrative in dream ballets, even if there are non-linear shifts in dancing locations within the dream space is a consistent trope in all dream ballets. This strategy establishes an easily recognisable logic for audiences, in comparison to dreams that have non-linear narratives. The use of dancing personas, even if the male and female leads are not dancing characters in the primary diegesis, audio and/or visual cues and an alternative dance space within the dream ballet alerted the audience to the

change in tone and mood. The often-exaggerated scale of the stylised dancing space, including the use of vibrant colours and the surreal created a non-threatening space to explore deeply felt emotions not always visible in the primary diegesis. The two problem-posing dream ballets in *Daddy Long Legs* demonstrate Leslie Caron's orphan Julie battling with her inner feelings to achieve a sense of belonging and love through her playful, romantic infatuation with her mystery benefactor in the first daydream, to her more overtly physical desire to secure the love of Astaire's wealthy, older man in the second daydream. Through careful coding in the choreography, the second dream ballet functions to disguise the issues of class and age differences between the two leads in order to allow for the romantic union in the primary diegesis.

Kelly's 'A Day in New York' dream ballet in *On The Town* employs a different register of emotions through a visual manifestation of feelings of intensity and utopia in the use of jazz dance choreography. This emotional reprise dream and the sexual curiosity *mise-en-abîme* dream allowed Kelly as choreographer to express love, lust and loss, that he would later repeat in the form of emotional reprise spectacle in 'The American in Paris Ballet' two years later. Unlike in *Oklahoma!* the substitution of dancers for four of the leads was not signalled via audio and visual cues to the audience, creating confusion and a noticeable rupture to the integrated narrative.

The chapter confirmed that the concept of narrative integration and spectacle can co-exist within the dream ballet framework, as long as the dream ballet delivers a narrative function. Taking Jerome Delamater's holistic approach to narrative integration, successful integration occurs through the presence of narrative storytelling in choreography married with the *mise-en-scène* and an



innovative way of filming dance, as exemplified by Kelly and Minnelli at MGM, and particularly in their dream ballets.

This chapter also explored the artistic interpretation of popular psychological tropes in dream ballets that audiences could easily understand and that added an extra register to the reading of the dream ballet and the film. The linear narrative of dream ballets and the often surrealistic stylisation of the mise-en-scène in many cases, often inspired by responding to the burgeoning interest in psychology, render the use of psychoanalytic theory applied to the analysis of dream ballets largely redundant. This chapter argued that dream ballets do not function as dreams to be decoded by diegetic characters or audiences. Rather, they use popular psychological tropes to support the entertainment register of the films in which they appear.

#### **Chapter four**

Chapter four detailed the context of the Production Code Administration and the regulations specifically pertaining to dance, including costume, settings and the use of props. The strict regulations forbade any representation of or implicit suggestion of sex on screen, yet the lack of understanding of dance at the PCA allowed for regular transgressions, particularly within the dream ballet framework. This background revealed how choreographers regularly attempted to subvert the PCA regulations thus allowing the spectator to determine meanings, creating a hidden duality in the texts. This is evident in the 'Mack the Black' dream ballet in *The Pirate* choreographed by Robert Alton and Gene Kelly. Kelly's manifestation as the pirate in Garland's sexual curiosity fantasy dream is seen brandishing phallic swords in a skimpy costume against a backdrop of shooting flames and conquered women, yet this was apparently

not perceived by the PCA to represent her sexual fantasy in unacceptable terms.

It is likely that the PCA's inherent cultural and racial bias privileged certain dance styles, especially white American styles and ballet choreography that were viewed as having higher moral value, in comparison to non-Western dance, and in particular Black American dance that was viewed as less moral. In the case of Dunham and other black artists, 'their work was frequently read through a primitivist critical lens, which upheld a binary separation between black and white bodies and performance cultures.'<sup>815</sup> This references Dyer's critical argument citing 'whiteness' as associated with 'power, heterosexuality, virtue, cleanliness, godliness, wealth, ethereality (if female) and universality'; and how, 'whiteness' creates a 'cultural façade of structural racism' whereby deviations from this universal code can be assessed.<sup>816</sup> Therefore, such cultural and racial bias was not at play when a white star performer incorporated Black American or non-Western dance styles into their performances or portrayed a Black performer, such as Kelly performing as 'Du Chocolat' in 'The American in Paris Ballet'. This separation highlights how 'race, gender and class are interrelated, rather than isolated factors, in the negotiation of agency and identity.'<sup>817</sup> However, through Dunham's modern choreography and performance in *Stormy Weather*, she makes 'a statement about articulate black bodies that refutes the idea that they are only fit to perform in entertaining registers.'<sup>818</sup>

<sup>815</sup> Durkin, p.387.

<sup>816</sup> Dyer quoted in Picart, p.24; Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2007), pp.xvii-xviii.

<sup>817</sup> Picart, p.4

<sup>818</sup> Chin, p.641.

In this chapter I outlined the use of gestures and movements already in use in dance on stage, particularly in classical ballet and how they were applied in dream ballets to determine meanings relating to romance and sex. The choreographers cited in this thesis had all studied ballet at some point in their careers, as well as other dance forms and were therefore well versed in the use of symbols, movements, phrases and gestures to denote multiple meanings. The dream ballets created the space to express forbidden or repressed representations of lust and sex predominantly through the contemporary jazz dance style and often with female characters not present in the primary diegesis. This was evident in the 'Vamp' character in 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain* and The Brunette *femme fatale* character in the 'Girl Hunt' ballet in *The Band Wagon*, both played by Cyd Charisse.

This chapter highlighted the difference between male and female representation within dream ballets, even when those were choreographed by men. Whatever agency the female lead has in the dream ballet, in the primary diegesis she must conform to societal norms at the time of production; whether through romantic union with a suitable partner as represented by Laurey in *Oklahoma!*, behaviour change to fit with accepted community values as represented by Louise in *Carousel*, or being reliant on the help of a man to progress professionally, as represented by Irene Foster in *The Broadway Melody of 1936*. The male dreamer can explore his sexual fantasies with sexually provocative idealised female characters only present in the dream ballets, but this is only allowed within that context and he must conform to romantic union with a virtuous woman in the primary diegesis, as represented in *Singin' in the Rain* and *The Band Wagon*. Sexual expression manifest through coded choreography in the dream ballets could only exist if it was then

repressed in the primary diegesis through reinforcing accepted norms of heterosexual behaviour at the time of production.

'Louise's Ballet' in *Carousel* is unusual in that it marks the entrance to the film of an important character not seen previously in the primary diegesis. The darker tone of the film dealing with issues relating to class, community, single parenthood, violence and crime is reflected in the darker tone of the dream ballet. The loneliness and isolation that Louise feels is expressed through her desire to belong and the modern dance inspired choreography: she dances barefoot, explores her childlike innocence, connection to the land, tomboyish nature and naïve crush on the dazzling carousel barker. The mix of modern dance and classical ballet juxtaposes Louise's youth and exuberance with the masculine energy of the carousel barker that reinforces Louise's position as a teenager not yet ready for romantic or sexual fulfillment. It is her subsequent burgeoning self-respect and self-belief engendered by the love of family and community that changes Louise's outlook, as explored by the dream ballet, at the end of the film.

### **The persistence of the dream ballet**

As referenced in chapter one, the trend for the inclusion of dream ballets in musicals waned on Broadway as well as in Hollywood during the late 1950s. The demise of the Production Code Administration and the change to more informal dance styles in the 1960s represented a dramatic change in moral attitudes and how they were manifest in popular culture. Therefore, there was no longer a need to represent sexual repression, duality of meaning and subtlety through the dream ballet format.

However, dream ballets have continued post 1956, although only sporadically in film and television. These are usually either as contemporary homage to the golden age of musicals such as the ‘Hospital Hallucination’ and ‘Bye Bye Life’ dream ballets in *All That Jazz*; or as adaptations of stage musicals, such as the ‘Love, Look Away!’ dream ballet in *Flower Drum Song*; or within revivals such as *The King and I*; or as comic parodies such as ‘The Veil’ dance from *Singin’ in the Rain*’s ‘The Broadway Ballet’ spoofed in an episode of *The Simpsons* (figure 5.2) and in the sexually provocative yet comical ‘The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy’ dream ballet in *The Hudsucker Proxy* (Joel Coen, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, Silver Pictures, 1994).<sup>819</sup>

**Figure 5.1 ‘Mr Burns Dance with a Liberal’ in episode ‘Opposites-a-Frack’, season 26, *The Simpsons* parodying ‘The Veil’ dance in ‘The Broadway Ballet’ in *Singin’ in the Rain*<sup>820</sup>**

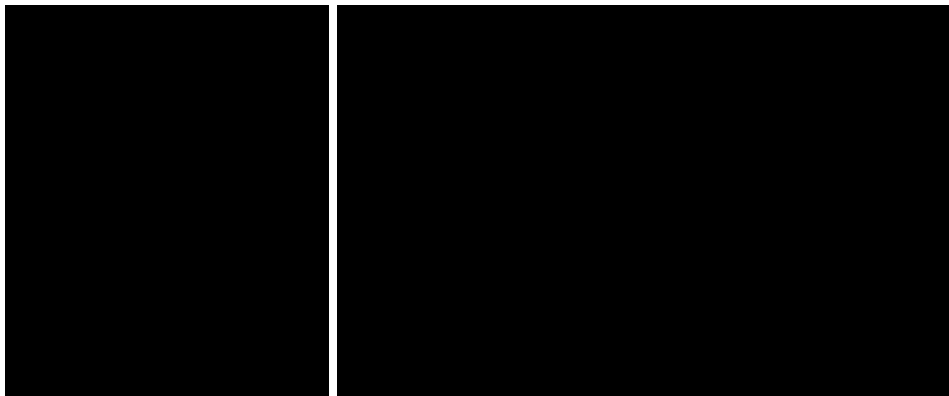
The dream ballet is still a recognisable device for film, theatre and television audiences as a visual representation of the lead character’s internal feelings and continues to be used in original dramas and musicals. Director Spike Lee, a self-professed fan of musicals, used the dream ballet format in his black and white film *She’s Gotta Have It*.<sup>821</sup> His lead character Nola, with a click of her heels evoking Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, is transported to a Technicolor park setting where she watches herself perform a dance routine. The romantic fantasy ballet ‘Happy Birthday Nola’ is juxtaposed with the song’s lyrics denoting an underlying threat of sexual jealousy.

<sup>819</sup> ‘Mr Burns Dance with a Liberal’, *The Simpsons*, Season 26, Episode ‘Opposites-a-Frack’, (Matthew Nastuk, Mike B. Anderson, Gracie Films, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Television, 2014), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fEUIw2jXbY>> accessed 9 July 2019; ‘The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy’ in *The Hudsucker Proxy*, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4obKqVa\\_J68](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4obKqVa_J68)> accessed 5 August 2019.

<sup>820</sup> ‘Mr Burns Dance with a Liberal’, *The Simpsons*, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fEUIw2jXbY>> accessed 9 July 2019.

<sup>821</sup> ‘Happy Birthday Nola’ in *She’s Gotta Have It* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=023MgHYUPj4>> accessed 5 August 2019.

The 'Gutterballs' dream ballet in *The Big Lebowski* (Joel Coen, Polygram Filmed Entertainment, 1998) pays homage to Busby Berkeley's 1930s musicals, especially *42nd Street*, with the patterned arrangement of female dancers in matching costumes filmed from low and overhead angles (figures 5.1a and 5.1b). In the 'Gutterballs' dream ballet there is more overt sexual innuendo as Jeff Bridges' character, 'The Dude' travels underneath the outstretched legs of the female dancers along a bowling alley towards the bowling pins.<sup>822</sup> The dream ballet also includes elements of surrealism with Julianne Moore's character dressed as a Viking, a fleeting reference to Saddam Hussein, a stairway and a bowling shoe cupboard both reaching skyward and 'The Dude' being chased by men in head to toe red lycra with oversized scissors.



**Figures 5.2a and 5.2b 'Gutterballs' dream ballet in *The Big Lebowski* (5.1a) with an affectionate but subversive homage to a famous Busby Berkeley choreographed scene from *42nd Street* (5.1b)**

Damien Chazelle's musical *La La Land* includes an emotional reprise dream ballet prior to the final scene in the film as homage to Hollywood dream ballets. However, the dream ballet features an alternative start and ending to the lead couple's romance in the primary diegesis. The daydream is imagined from the

<sup>822</sup> 'Gutterballs' in *The Big Lebowski* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHAGbD3dlhE>> accessed 5 August 2019.

point of view of the now married Mia (Emma Stone) seeing her former boyfriend Sebastian (Ryan Gosling) playing piano in his jazz club. Two minutes into the eight-minute dream ballet, the *mise-en-scène* changes to saturated colours and sketched landmarks in its stylised settings of Paris, evoking the 1950s MGM dream ballets with visual references to *An American in Paris* and its titular dream ballet, and 'The Broadway Ballet' in *Singin' in the Rain*. There is also a scene within the dream ballet of Mia and Sebastian ballroom dancing in a monochrome setting, referencing the Astaire and Rogers' 1930s RKO musicals. Chazelle explained his reason for including a dream ballet in the film:

It's incredible to think that the dream ballet was actually a thing in Hollywood, mainstream Hollywood movies, [...] this incredible moment in movie history where the pinnacle of like, commercial business-minded Hollywood factory system, Hollywood movie-making coincided with the most avant-garde experimental approach to cinema you can possibly imagine.<sup>823</sup>

### **Avenues for further research**

This thesis is not intended as a comprehensive study of all dream ballets on film. It has tracked the historical trajectory from its Broadway origins to its decline in the late 1950s with analysis of representative samples of the four different types of dream ballets that I have identified and that were prevalent within the period of my corpus. I am aware from my research study visits to American film, theatre and dance archives that there are further primary sources that could contribute to a more comprehensive survey of film and theatre dream ballets from their inception to the present day. Such archival research could also potentially reveal hidden dance influences and material

<sup>823</sup> Damien Chazelle interview, 'La La Land: Incepting the Dream Ballet Finale', *Take Me to the Cinema* 5 February 2018, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEZ9u53rgCs>> accessed 14 July 2019.

relating to artists that have received little academic interest, such as Albertina Rasch. This archival research could also bring to the fore more hidden dance originators including African American tap pioneers, particularly now there is more availability of footage which ultimately makes cultural appropriation more visible. Further archive research in the Production Code Administration records would also enhance understanding of the challenges inherent in choreographing narrative dance storytelling for the screen.

### **Contribution to Scholarly Research**

Although all of the films in this study are musicals, grouping them together into one full-length study has brought together films that are usually dispersed through star studies, dance studies or film studio based studies, or are discussed within broader genre studies, and this has allowed for a more detailed and coherent examination of the films.

This in-depth analysis of the dream ballet from the 1930s-1950s has revealed a greater understanding of their role, function and purpose through new interpretations within a broader historiographical context of American dance on stage and screen. By revealing the interconnected relationship between Broadway and Hollywood in the development and production of dream ballets, it has also foregrounded the female choreographic voice in their inception, and their subsequent significant choreographic legacy that continues to influence later generations of male and female dancers, choreographers and directors.

This cross-disciplinary approach using textual analysis and dance theory supported by archival research offers an alternative discourse from the psychoanalytical theory approach to the analysis of dream ballets. The transference of psychological codes and tropes into popular culture continues



to influence artists to this day. It is the artistic interpretation of such codes and tropes that became manifest in popular culture that then featured in dream ballets. The use of fantasy settings and limitless spaces in such dream ballets allowed the stories to break free from conventions, and explore Freudian influenced surrealism. What I have learnt through this study was the extent to which choreographers became adept at creating a duality of performance that on the surface level met the requirements of the PCA, but at a deeper level allowed audiences to read hidden codes as sexual expression.

This study makes visible the choreographic and technological innovation, character development and emotional underpinning of dream ballets that contribute to their fulfilling viewing experience. I have categorised dream ballets into four groupings: problem-posing, emotional reprise, romantic or sexual curiosity fantasy and self-realisation. This new dream ballet typology challenges the established academic discourse that relies on interpretations of psychoanalytic theory, arguing that the functions of dream ballets are limited to wish-fulfillment or problem-solving and can be grouped in the following four categories: a dreamer's romantic desires, an attempt to work out problems expressed in the narrative, the trialling of romantic partners, or a form of psychic cleansing process. My detailed analysis confirms that dream ballets can only express, not fulfill, the dreamer's personal or professional desires and cannot solve problems posed in the dream narrative or primary diegesis.

By focusing on dance-led dream ballets, I have been able to draw attention to how male and female pioneering choreographers adapted multiple styles of traditional and contemporary dance to create an 'American' style of dance. The deliberate mix of different choreographic styles moving away from the rigidity of form in classical dance, and taking inspiration from European, social, folk,

vernacular and ethnic dance, determined the hybridity of American dance. This 'American' style was manifest through differing masculine and feminine American dancing personas that were shaped and interpreted by numerous dancers and choreographers over decades across the twentieth century. This study reaffirms that it was jazz dance, now widely credited as an indigenous American dance form that emerged in symbiosis with American composers. These dances, choreographed specifically to this new canon of American music, reinforced the American credentials of both dance and music.

The current somewhat reductive analysis of Hollywood musicals and dream ballets by some contemporary film journalists and commentators based on gendered readings, lacks understanding of dance historiography and the historical context at the time of production. However, the growing influence of dance in mainstream culture, particularly on television, in music videos and on film, has led to a knowledge of dance forms amongst laypeople. Therefore, the timing is right for the re-evaluation of the dream ballet within the context of innovation, creative American choreography and their continuing influence on dance practitioners and artists across popular culture genres.

This study has rescued the dream ballet from its dismissal as either mere vanity project for major musical stars, and/or that the dream ballet creates unnecessary ruptures or digressions from the primary narrative. I have conducted detailed analysis of more than fifteen dream ballets through textual analysis, archive research and dance analysis, supported by an understanding of the historical context and relationship between Broadway, the development of American classical and contemporary dance and Hollywood during the period of my corpus. This analysis clearly demonstrates the cultural and artistic value and significance of the dream ballet to the Hollywood Musicals genre.

This study also makes a compelling case for the dream ballets' contribution to Classical Hollywood filmmaking through their technological innovations and integrated narrative storytelling. This study also highlights how the dream ballet is integral to the development of contemporary American dance practice through the twentieth century, and its continuing legacy and influence on subsequent artists, dance practitioners and filmmakers. I have therefore successfully made the case for dream ballets as a subject worthy of serious study.

# Appendix 1

## Dance Glossary

Definitions derived from multiple sources.<sup>824</sup>

**Classical ballet** – the fundamental basics of classical ballet start with the five positions of the feet, turn out of the knees and feet with straight knees.<sup>825</sup> All ballet steps begin and end in one of the five positions. The ballet dancer must stand with an erect body in a straight line, whether standing still or in motion. Once a ballet dancer's heel leaves the floor, the toe must be pointed so as to not break the straight line of the leg.<sup>826</sup>

**Jazz dance** – basic positions differ to classical ballet as there is no turn-out of the feet and no pointing of toes, knees and arms are often bent, but they are adapted from classical ballet technique. There are four basic jazz dance feet positions and five jazz arm positions. Many of the positions are versions of classical ballet positions and therefore share the same name, e.g. *plié*.<sup>827</sup>

**Allongé** – stretched.

**Arabesque** – the body is supported on one leg, with the other extended directly behind the body with a straight knee. The standing leg can be straight or in a *plié* but the back leg is always straight.

**Arabesque croisée** – movement that requires the dancer to stand on left leg, right leg extended straight back in the air at 90 degrees, inclined torso forward, back well-arched, shoulders held down, right shoulder forward, inclining head to the right. The left arm is extended beyond the body, right arm extended forward, palms held downward.

**Attitude** – similar to *arabesque* but the knee of the raised leg is bent and at a 90-degree angle to the body, *en avant* in front, or *derriere* back.

<sup>824</sup> *Ballet Hub* <<https://ballethub.com/>> accessed 9 November 2017; Gail Grant, *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet* (USA: Dover Publications, 1967, 3<sup>rd</sup> Revised edn., 1982); Kirstein, *The Classic Ballet: Basic Technique and Terminology*; Giordano, *Jazz Dance Class: Beginning thru Advanced*; James Robey, Beginning Jazz Dance Web Resource, 2016, <<https://uk.humankinetics.com/blogs/excerpts/traditional-jazz-steps>> accessed 6 August 2019.

<sup>825</sup> *The Art of Ballet*, New York City Ballet handout, David H. Koch Theater, Lincoln Center, New York, January 2014.

<sup>826</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>827</sup> *Basic Jazz Steps* <[https://dance.lovetoknow.com/Basic\\_Jazz\\_Dance\\_Steps](https://dance.lovetoknow.com/Basic_Jazz_Dance_Steps)> accessed 9 November 2017.

**Attitude croisée devant** – raised leg is bent with knee pressed outward, foot raised high, arms *en attitude* with the high arm on the same side as the supporting leg, head slightly inclined to the lower arm.

**Back fetal position** – lying down on one's back with knees tucked in to the chest, holding knees with hands.

**Backbend** – standing with legs in second position (if jazz position) bending backwards from the waist.

**Balancé** – move while alternating balance between the feet.

**Ball change** – transferring weight onto the ball of the foot then a step onto the other foot.

**Battement** – straight leg kick.

**Battement en relevé** – straight leg kick on *demi-pointe* or *pointe*.

**Battement fondu développé relevé en attitude** – slow bending of the supporting leg with the working foot pointing in front of the supporting ankle, simultaneously unfolding and extending to point on the floor or in the air as supporting leg straightens, with supporting leg on tip toe and working leg at 90 degrees in front bent at the knee, toes pointing inward.

**Body roll** – rolling movement starting at the knees and continuing through the thighs, pelvis, ribcage, head and arms.

**Can-Can** – translates as 'tittle-tattle' or 'scandal' and was originally performed by courtesans in the mid nineteenth century before becoming popular in music halls. The dancers wore frilly underwear and black stockings and certain moves were considered provocative such as bending forward and raising the skirt over the head.

**Charleston** – series of up and down movements by bending and straightening the knees and kicking heels forwards and backwards.

**Châiné** – fast turn executed on *demi-pointe* or *pointe*.

**Chassé** – gallop or slide.

**Contraction** – centre of torso retreats.

**Cooch, Kooch, Hoochy-Koochy or Hoochie Coochie** – quasi-Oriental style of dance performed by women (and female impersonators) with suggestive shaking of the body and gyrating, often in travelling sideshows that became popular in America from the 1890s. Iterations of the dance developed as belly

dancing: the *danse du ventre* (stomach dance) and it also became the basis of the striptease.<sup>828</sup>

**Corps de ballet** – group of dancers who dance together in a ballet performance.

**Crazy legs** – bouncing gently on the forced arches of both feet, knees bent, pulling knees in together to touch then out to the side and repeating.

**Demi-plié** – small bent knee position with both legs

**Demi-pointe** – standing on tip toes.

**Échappé** – emanating from a small *demi-plié*, with a spring onto toes in point, small horizontal *jetés* in the air whilst changing feet when returning to fifth position each time and landing in a *demi-plié* each time.

**Effacé devant** – standing on straight supporting left leg, straight right leg pointing toe on floor diagonally to the right with turn out. Torso and hips angled towards the audience, left shoulder front, body slightly inclined backwards, head turned to the left. Left arm raised above head; right arm extended to the left side.

**Entrechat** – small vertical jump from third, fourth or fifth position switching position of the feet front to back in a *petite batterie* (small beating) in mid air.

**En pointe** – translates as ‘on point’, meaning standing on the tips of the toes in pointe shoes.

**Fan kick** – a kick in which the working leg makes a sweeping arc in front of the body.

**Flick-kick** – a kick executed by lifting a bent knee, extending the leg sharply and bending again on the way down.

**Forced arch** – on the ball of the foot with heel off the floor and knees bent.

**Fouetté en face en l’air** – rising onto *demi-pointe*, quick pivot turn on the supporting leg with the working leg ending in *arabesque*.

**Fouetté en tournant** - series of turns on the supporting leg, whipping the working leg in a quarter circle while turning.

**Glissade** – gliding movement in *demi-plié* in fifth position.

**Grand battement** – throw the working leg straight into the air with a pointed foot and bringing it down usually into fifth position.

<sup>828</sup> Peter Jenson Brown, *Early Sports and Pop Culture History Blog*, 4 July 2016, <<https://esnpc.blogspot.co.uk/2016/07/the-kouta-kouta-and-coochie-coochie.html>> accessed 1 January 2018; Ethan Mordden, *Ziegfeld: The Man Who Invented Show Business* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2008), pp18-19.

**Grand battement en tournant** - throw the working leg straight into the air with a pointed foot and bringing it down usually into fifth position whilst turning.

**Grand battement jeté balancé** – *grand battement* executed with a continuous swinging balance forward and backward.

**Grand jeté en avant** - forward jump, one straight leg in front of the other with pointed toes.

**Hip lift** – lift of the hip in any direction.

**Hitch-kick** – kicking one leg in the air while it is up there, jumping off the other one to join it to the first and landing on the first leg.

**Hitch-slide** – short slide in any direction.

**Hoofing** – informal style of tap dancing popular in vaudeville.

**Inside turn** – a forwards turn towards the standing leg.

**Isolation** – loosened knees, extended arms out to the sides, holding chest and legs as still as possible, swing hips side to side.

**Jazz glissade** – drag step.

**Jazz layout** – straight kick high up in the air, simultaneously doing an extreme back bend, head arched back, and arms outstretched.

**Jazz walk** – individual expression of the music, often a turned-out walk using shoulder opposition.

**Jeté** – jump, *grand jeté* is a big jump.

**Jeté en tournant** – turning jump.

**Klezmer** – or Yiddish folk dance associated with celebration dances, especially weddings, rooted in religious traditions.

**Knee Hinge** – Lifted heels, flexed knees, body in a straight line from knees to top of head, locked pelvis. Can be done in *demi-plié*, *grande plié* or with knees touching the floor.

**Lunge** – position in either second or fourth position where only one knee is bent and the other is straight.

**Outside turn** – backwards turn turning away from the standing leg.

**Paddle turn** – several small pivot turns that takes 360 degrees.

**Pas de bourrée** – moving from side to side with a change of feet, pointed toes and bent legs, with a short lift off the floor whilst moving side to side, can also be executed without a change of feet.

**Pas de chat** – light spring into the air from a *plié*, legs remain bent at the knees with descent to the floor into fourth or fifth position.

**Pas de deux** – translates as ‘step for two’, a romantic duet between the male and female characters, usually the lead characters.

**Pique turn** – inside turn that begins with a step onto half toe with an already straight leg.

**Pirouette** – spin on one foot with the other raised foot touching the knee of the supporting leg.

**Pivot turn** – half-turn on two legs with weight transfer from one leg to the other with stationary feet and a swivel.

**Plié** – bend with knees bent, back straight.

**Port de bras** – movement of arms.

**Relevé en pointe** – rising upwards to stand fully *en pointe*.

**Rond de jambe** – circular movement of the leg.

**Rond de jambe en l'air** – circular movement of the leg in mid air.

**Sailors Hornpipe Dance** – performed with arms crossed in front, elbows at a right angle to the body, bent legs and kicking alternate legs to the front.

**Scissor Step** – small leap onto one foot while extending the opposite leg to the side with the heel touching the floor, followed by a ball change leading with the extended leg, then repeating on the other side.

**Shimmy** – mainly an exhibition dance known as the 'black torso-shaking dance', and sources of the Charleston are evident in the 'black-bottom dance', though the hip and pelvic thrusts were removed by white performers.

**Soft-shoe** – relaxed style of tap dance wearing shoes with soft soles.

**Sous sus** – springing into *demi-pointe* or *pointe* with the back foot close behind the front foot in fifth position with stretched legs.

**Soutenu en tournant** – turn in fifth position *en pointe* and ending with the opposite foot in front.

**Sugar** – starting in jazz second position, change weight to ball of the left foot, pivot to the right on ball of left foot until left toe is pointed to the right. At the same time, step on ball of right foot with toe pointed to the right, then reverse.

**Tour** – turn.

**Tour à la seconde** – turn in second position.

**Tour en attitude** – turn with working leg bent at 90-degree angle to the body.

**Tour en l'air** – turn in mid air.

**Turn out** – rotating legs and feet outwards with knees pointing over toes.



## Appendix 2

### **Primary research, archives and collections**

This study is dependent on another layer of material from primary research undertaken in film, theatre, television and dance archives in Los Angeles and New York, USA in January 2014 and previously in July 2008.

The primary research covers the following categories:

- Production histories of film musicals including dream ballets, where materials were available, including scripts, letters, memos, dialogue cutting continuity reports, casting information, rehearsal and production timetables, budgets and costs
- Information on choreography and choreographers including television, radio and print interviews at time of production and in retrospect, dream ballet story outlines, video footage of dream ballets on stage and reenacted
- MPAA Production Code Administration materials relating to specific films
- Press cuttings for films, audience preview reports and box office takings detailing critical and commercial reception at the time of initial release

As outlined in the Introduction, restricted access to the MGM Arthur Freed archive at the University of Southern California (USC), Cinematic Arts Library in 2014 has resulted in reduced availability of materials for some films with dream ballets within my corpus. However, through my Masters archive research trip to USC to access the Arthur Freed Collection I do have materials that cover some of the films with dream ballets that featured Gene Kelly. Unfortunately, in 2014 I was not able to include archive visits to Rodgers and Hammerstein related archives but was able to access choreographers Agnes de Mille and Jerome Robbins papers at the New York Performing Arts Library which covered the three Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals featured in this study.

- Special Collections, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles (2008 & 2014)

- Vincente Minnelli papers – *The Pirate, An American in Paris*
- Joseph Mankiewicz papers – *The Pirate*
- Turner MGM Scripts – *The Pirate, Words and Music, An American in Paris, Singin' in the Rain*
- Janet Leigh papers – *Words and Music*
- Technicolor Collection – *An American in Paris* and *Singin' in the Rain*
- Jack Atlas papers – *The Pirate*
- MPAA Production Code Administration files – *The Pirate, Words and Music, Singin' in the Rain*
- MGM Wardrobe Department Records – *Singin' in the Rain*
- William Tuttle papers – *An American in Paris, Singin' in the Rain*
- Tom Miller papers – *Singin' in the Rain*
- Ronald L. Davis Oral History Collection, Gene Kelly files
- Cinematic Arts Library, University of Southern California (2008)
  - Arthur Freed Collection – *On the Town, An American in Paris, Singin' in the Rain* including Film Production Schedules, Cost of films and box office returns, Film Audience Preview Reports
- Paley Center for Media, Los Angeles & New York (2008 & 2014)
  - Television and radio interviews with Martha Graham, Agnes de Mille, Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, George Balanchine, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, Bob Fosse, Stephen Sondheim
  - Televised dance performances by Martha Graham, Agnes de Mille, Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire
  - Original footage of the dream ballet in *Carousel* from the original 1945 theatre production
  - Television recreation of the original stage version of the dream ballet in *Oklahoma!* with commentary by Agnes de Mille
- Jerome Robbins, Dance Division, New York Performing Arts Library (2014)
  - The Jerome Robbins Professional Papers
  - The Jerome Robbins Personal Papers
  - Agnes de Mille papers

- Theatre On Film and Tape Archive, New York Performing Arts Library (2014)
  - Television interviews with Agnes de Mille
  - Audio interview with Jerome Robbins
  - Television interview with original 1943 *Oklahoma!* cast for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary
  - Television interview with American Ballet Theater current and former members who had worked with Agnes de Mille
- Film Study Center, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2008)
  - Newspaper clippings from *On the Town*, *An American in Paris*, *Singin' in the Rain*
  - Vincente Minnelli files and Gene Kelly files
- MOMA Museum Archives, New York (2008)
  - The Cinema of Gene Kelly 1962 Retrospective folder

### **Discussions, screenings and theatre performances**

*On the Town*, English National Opera, London Coliseum, 24 May 2005.

Debbie Reynolds Q&A with screening of *Singin' in the Rain*, British Film Institute, 14 December 2011.

Leslie Caron Q&A with screening of *An American in Paris*, British Film Institute, 2 November 2011.

Christopher Frayling introductory talk and *Oklahoma!* Todd AO widescreen screening, *Widescreen Weekender*, National Science + Media Museum, Bradford, 15 October 2015.

*The Red Shoes* (Matthew Bourne, New Adventures, 2016, 2019-2020), <<https://new-adventures.net/the-red-shoes>> accessed 14 July 2019, The Lowry, Salford, 3 December 2016.

*An American in Paris* (Book by Craig Lucas, Director and Choreographer Christopher Wheeldon, Music by George and Ira Gershwin, 2014-2018), Dominion Theatre, London, 20 October 2017

BBC Prom 35: John Wilson conducts *Oklahoma!*, Royal Albert Hall, BBC4, 11 August 2017.

*Gene Kelly: The Legacy*, Glasgow, Royal Concert Hall, 23 November 2017.

*Gene Kelly: A Life in Music*, Usher Hall, Edinburgh, 13 April 2018.

*The King and I* (Lincoln Center Production, 2019), Manchester Opera House, 27 April 2019.

## Appendix 3

### ***An American in Paris* plot summary**

The story follows American G.I. Jerry Mulligan (Gene Kelly) who decides to stay in Paris following World War Two to pursue his career as an artist. He lives in an artist's garret opposite struggling pianist Adam Cook (Oscar Levant) above a coffee shop. Milo Roberts (Nina Foch) approaches Jerry when he is trying to sell his work in Montmartre and offers to be his sponsor. However, Jerry falls in love with Lise Bouvier (Leslie Caron) on first sight whilst out with Milo. Jerry pursues Lise, but unbeknown to him she is betrothed to her guardian French singer Henri Baurel (George Guetary), who protected her during the war. Baurel is also a friend of Adam's. Jerry and Lise fall in love but Henri is offered prestigious work in America and proposes to Lise who feels obliged to accept. At the Beaux Arts Ball (Black and White Ball), Henri, without knowing that Jerry and Lise are in love, announces that he and Lise are to be married that evening on their way to America. Jerry walks onto the balcony of the *Moulin de la Galette* overlooking Paris. He bends down to pick up a poster for the party and starts to sketch a drawing in charcoal of the *Place de la Concorde*, recognisable by the obelisk in the centre, whilst leaning on the balcony ledge. Lise joins Jerry on the balcony. Jerry is despondent and sad and tells Lise that Paris holds nothing for him without her and as he talks, he rips the sketch in two and lets it fall to the ground. The couple embraces before Lise pulls back and runs away from him. The wind whips round moving the piece of paper so that it joins the other half of the drawing. Jerry looks down at the drawing before turning around to look out over the balcony. Jerry believes that he has lost Lise forever and he daydreams about his time in Paris and his love of Lise in the dream ballet 'An American in Paris'. However, Henri has overheard Jerry and Lise talking and after leaving for the airport, and seeing Lise's unhappiness he decides to bring Lise back to the ball so that she and Jerry can be reunited.

## Appendix 4

### ***Broadway Melody of 1936* plot summary**

The story of wannabe Broadway star Irene Foster (Eleanor Powell) from Albany, New York who makes the trip to Manhattan in search of her theatrical dream. She seeks out Bob Gordon (Robert Taylor), hoping that he will recognise her as his childhood friend and give her an opportunity in his upcoming show 'Broadway Rhythm', funded by wealthy widow and aspiring star Lillian Brent (June Knight). Local gossip columnist Bert Keeler (Jack Benny) aided by his sidekick Snoop (Sid Silvers), and under pressure from his editor, prints a series of spurious pieces exposing Gordon and Brent's romantic relationship and his reliance on her financial backing in return for her starring role. When Gordon fails to recognise Foster, his secretary Kitty Corbett (Una Merkel) takes pity on her and encourages her to return. When Gordon and Foster do meet again, he refuses to let her audition and hires Foster's new friends, vaudevillian and Broadway performers Ted and Sally Burke (Buddy and Vilma Ebsen) instead. Despite their obvious romantic feelings for each other, as expressed in an unexpected kiss in the stalls of the theatre during a rehearsal, Gordon insists that Foster must return home. Foster imagines her life as a Broadway star in the 'Lucky Star' dream ballet. Gordon sees Foster off at the railway station, but she sneaks away with Corbett. Through a convoluted plot, involving Corbett's help and Snoop in drag as an invented French stage star Arlette, Gordon contracts Foster (in disguise as LaBelle Arlette) in the lead role in his show. When Keeler discovers the news that Gordon has signed Arlette, he summons Arlette (Foster) to his office and threatens to expose her and therefore Gordon, as it was Keeler who invented the character of LaBelle Arlette to trick Gordon. Foster hatches a plan with Keeler, Snoop and Corbett to reveal her identity to Gordon and to ensure she retains her starring role. Foster and Gordon reunite in a kiss in the dressing room of a floor show where Foster has performed as herself, watched by the show's cast and crew.

## Appendix 5

### **Carefree plot summary**

Stephen Arden (Ralph Bellamy) is having trouble persuading his girlfriend radio singer Amanda Cooper (Ginger Rogers) to marry him. He complains to his friend and psychiatrist Dr. Tony Flagg (Fred Astaire) and asks for his help to convince Cooper to accept his proposal of marriage. Flagg reluctantly agrees to help, and Cooper reluctantly agrees to an analysis session. Prior to the session, and unbeknownst to Flagg, Cooper overhears his early medical summary of her which is patronizing and dismissive. When she refuses to be analysed, it sparks Flagg's interest. They bump into each other at the country club and after some misgivings, start to warm to each other. Cooper agrees to eat some dream inducing foods to provide stimulus for future analysis sessions. In the 'I Used to be Color Blind' dream, Cooper dances with Flagg in a romantic pastoral setting and the dream culminates in a kiss, instigated by Cooper. On waking Cooper realises that she is in love with her analyst. She starts to pursue Flagg turning up at his work, golf club and following him everywhere he goes. Flagg uses hypnosis to convince Cooper to hate him and love Arden, but his subconscious tells him that he is in fact in love with Cooper too. At Cooper and Arden's engagement party, Flagg hypnotises Cooper during a dance to reverse his previous hypnotic suggestion. However, Arden intercepts Cooper before the hypnosis takes effect. On their wedding day, Flagg sneaks into Cooper's room to remove the hypnotic suggestion but is discovered by Arden who inadvertently punches Cooper in the eye. The final scene shows Flagg and a smiling, black-eyed Cooper dressed in a wedding gown, walking down the aisle together.

## Appendix 6

### ***Carousel* plot summary**

The opening scene of the film takes place in heaven with Billy (Gordon MacRea) starting to recount his life story on earth to the Heavenly StarKeeper (Gene Lockhart). The rest of the film takes place on earth (except for one scene that precedes the dream ballet). Pretty, young millworker Julie Jordan (Shirley Jones) and her friend Carrie Pipperidge (Barbara Ruick) visit the carousel within the funfair, evidently a place of sexually charged entertainment. Billy, the good-looking carnival barker, is employed by Mrs Mullins (Audrey Christie) to use his charms to entice young women to pay for a spin on the carousel. Carrie aspires to become a bourgeois wife with a secure, successful and comfortable life. Julie is smitten from the first time she looks at Billy and though he is at first reluctant to respond, their mutual attraction is evident. After Julie and Billy marry, he struggles to adjust to his new role as a husband and homemaker apparently making little attempt to secure honest paid work. He takes out his frustration physically on Julie – we are told that he strikes her, but we do not see this on the screen - yet her love for him never falters. In a desperate bid to provide for his wife and unborn child, he attempts a robbery with his criminal friend Jigger Craigin (Cameron Mitchell); but when the plan goes wrong and Billy tries to escape, he falls on his knife and dies. Fifteen years later, when the Heavenly Starkeeper tells Billy that his daughter Louise is struggling to fit in within her community, Billy makes a request to return for one day only to help her. He watches his daughter Louise in the dream ballet 'Louise's Ballet' that follows her attempts to fit in with the children in her community. Billy then asks to become visible to his daughter and attempts to connect with her but fails. At Louise's graduation Billy whispers into his daughter's ear to listen to the local Doctor's (Gene Lockhart) speech, before whispering into Julie's ear that he loves her. The film ends with Billy and his heavenly friend walking away in the sunset back to heaven.



## Appendix 7

### ***Daddy Long Legs plot summary***

Millionaire businessman Jarvis Pendleton III (Fred Astaire) is a bachelor with a love of jazz and drumming. On a business trip to France, his car breaks down outside an orphanage. On walking in to seek help, he spots a young girl Julie Andre (Leslie Caron) teaching a class of younger children. He enquires after her and discovers that she is eighteen and soon to leave the orphanage but is told that her prospects are not good unless she can marry. Pendleton, conscious of the age difference, agrees to secretly sponsor Julie to attend the same college in New England as his niece Linda (Terry Moore), on condition that his identity is not revealed to Julie. One of the orphans had seen a shadow of Pendleton on a wall and nicknamed him 'Daddy Long Legs'. Julie writes to 'Daddy Long Legs' via Pendleton's secretary Alicia Pritchard (Thelma Ritter) and his assistant Griggs (Fred Clarke), but Pendleton never reads the letters. Three years later and due to pressure from Pritchard and Griggs, Pendleton sits down to read the letters and so begins the first dream ballet – 'The Guardian Angel', whereby Julie imagines three different versions of her Daddy Long Legs – Texan oil millionaire, Playboy and her Guardian Angel. After reading the letters Pendleton visits Julie at her college dance but he does not reveal that he is her sponsor. The two fall in love and racked with guilt and inappropriateness, Pendleton decides to go travelling. Julie is distraught and after rifling through press cuttings of his travels, she dreams of trying to find him in the 'Paris, Hong Kong, Rio' ballet, in three different personas – prima ballerina, nightclub dancer and a circus Pierrot. Pritchard and Griggs conspire to bring the couple back together and arrange for the two to meet again. The pair is reunited as a romantic couple.

## Appendix 8

### ***Lili* plot summary**

*Lili* tells the story of a teenage orphaned French woman Lili Daurier (Leslie Caron), who finds herself lost in a strange town as she travels on her own after her father dies. She is befriended by a circus troupe and starts out working as a waitress. She becomes infatuated with Marc the Magnificent (Jean-Pierre Aumont), the magician who first comes to her rescue, but he has other romantic interests including his assistant Rosalie (Zsa Zsa Gabor) and only sees Lili as a young girl. In the first dream ballet, 'The Dance of Adoration' Lili competes with Rosalie for Marc's affections. At the start of this dream ballet Lili is a waitress, wearing a skimpy uniform, trying to grab Marc's attention, but as he starts to respond to her romantically, he is distracted by the arrival of Rosalie dressed in a red and gold sequined figure-hugging dress. Lili removes her coat and suddenly she is dressed the same as Rosalie, portraying the two women as equally sensual and sexually confident women. Marc becomes attracted to Lili but cannot decide between the two women and the dream ends with Marc making Rosalie disappear and Lili smiling. This dream is not played out in the primary narrative and a heartbroken Lili turns to singing to four puppets in the puppet show, pouring out her troubles. Following a rapturous reception from a crowd of onlookers, she is offered a new act in the circus. She forms a bond with the puppets and the gruff, antisocial puppeteer Paul Berthalet (Mel Ferrer) and their act becomes a success. However, both Lili and Paul are confused about their feelings for each other and Lili runs away from the circus. It is the second dream ballet, 'The Dance of the Living Puppets' that helps Lili to realise that it is not the puppets that she loves but the puppeteer Paul, and she runs back to the circus and into his arms.

## Appendix 9

### ***Oklahoma!* plot summary**

*Oklahoma!*'s dual focus narrative centres on a love story between Laurey (Shirley Jones), an orphan living with her Aunt Eller (Charlotte Greenwood) on a farmstead, and Curly, a cowboy arriving in Oklahoma at a crucial point in its history as it is about to join the American Union and become the 46<sup>th</sup> State in 1907. The course of true love is almost thwarted by the brooding presence of Jud (Rod Steiger), a farmhand on Aunt Eller's farmstead who is in love with Laurey. Curly taunts Jud as the outsider that no one likes or respects with the idea that he would be more popular if he killed himself. Laurey and Curly flirt with each other but through a sense of duty, and partly to taunt Curly, Laurey accepts Jud's invite to attend the Box Social. Curly then invites Gertie Cummings (Barbara Lawrence) to the Box Social to make Laurey jealous. Laurey's friend Ado Annie cannot decide between two men – Will Parker (Gene Nelson) and the peddler Ali Hakim (Eddie Albert). The peddler sells Laurey a bottle of the Elixir of Egypt as a way to solve all problems. Laurey falls asleep and the dream ballet 'Laurey Makes up her Mind' then takes place. On waking Laurey is noticeably afraid of Jud. On the journey to the Box Social Jud is inappropriate with Laurey and she takes control of the reins of the horse and carriage, forcing Jud to the ground. At the box social Curly bids for Laurey's food basket, but Jud appears and increases the bidding. Curly is forced to sell everything he owns, including his guns and his horse – his livelihood, to secure the top bid for Laurey's food basket. Curly and Laurey declare their love for each other and decide to get married. On their wedding day, during a traditional ritual Jud attempts to set Curly and Laurey on fire as they stand on a haystack. When they escape Curly fights with Jud and a gun goes off killing Jud. An impromptu court is set up to try Curly and the community persuades the sheriff to give a verdict of self-defence, thereby allowing the newlyweds to leave for their honeymoon.

## Appendix 10

### ***On the Town* plot summary**

Three US sailors are granted 24-hour shore leave in New York and fall in love with three women. Gabey (Gene Kelly), the most confident of the three sailors is the first to meet his beloved 'Miss Turnstiles' - trainee ballet dancer and singer Ivy Smith (Vera-Ellen), after seeing her poster on a New York subway train and bumping into her on the station platform; but as soon as he does, she disappears into the streets of New York. Gabey enlists the help of his sailor friends to scour the city. Along the way Chip (Frank Sinatra) attracts the attention of taxi driver Brunhilde (Hildy) Esterhazy (Betty Garrett), and in a museum Ozzie (Jules Munshin) falls for anthropologist Claire Huddesen (Ann Miller) as she studies a statue of a prehistoric man that looks remarkably like Ozzie. The friends work together to try to find Miss Turnstiles, covering many of the famous sights of New York, before splitting up leaving Gabey alone to continue his search. He finds Ivy practising classical ballet at the barre with her teacher Mme Dilyovska (Florence Bates) at the Symphonic Hall. Gabey's initial brash advances are rejected, but Ivy soon falls in love with him when she discovers they are from the same small town Meadowville, Indiana. Despite all six friends spending the evening together, Ivy disappears at 11.30pm. Hildy calls her roommate Lucy Shmeeler (Alice Pearce) to join the group. After Gabey walks Lucy home, he daydreams about his day in New York and Ivy Smith in the dream ballet 'A Day in New York.' The five friends try to outrun and outwit the police in a car chase to Coney Island. They are accused of stealing the taxicab driven by Hildy and destroying a dinosaur in the museum. Gabey eventually finds Ivy dancing in a Cooch club. The police discover the sailors dancing in female disguise and the three men are arrested by Shore Patrol and taken back to the ship, waved on by their girlfriends. The final scene includes a repeat of the opening scene as three different sailors run off the ship to start their 24-hour shore leave.

## Appendix 11

### ***Singin' in the Rain* plot summary**

Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) is a silent film star who flees his opening night to escape his over-enthusiastic fans and lands in the car of Kathy Seldon (Debbie Reynolds). They meet again at the after-screening party when Kathy pops out of a cake and dances with a troupe of chorus girls in front of Don and his co-star Lina Lamont (Jean Hagen). Lina believes that she and Don are a couple. Don is immediately smitten by Kathy. At the party producer R. F. Simpson (Millard Mitchell) shows a demonstration reel to the assembled company of the new technology to create talking pictures. For weeks following the party Don searches for Kathy, but unbeknownst to him Lina has had Kathy fired from her job. Soon after Simpson interrupts filming on set to declare that all production is to be postponed until sound equipment is installed. Don and Lina's new period film 'The Duelling Cavalier' is to be adapted as a talking picture. At an audience preview screening it is evident to everyone except Lina that their new talking picture is a flop. Later that evening Cosmo, Don's friend (Donald O'Connor) suggests that Kathy dubs for Lina's unsuitably shrill voice and that 'The Duelling Cavalier' becomes 'The Dancing Cavalier'. Kathy reluctantly agrees and during the film's production process Don and Kathy fall in love. 'The Broadway Ballet' dream ballet takes place towards the end of 'The Dancing Cavalier' production process after Cosmo has explained to Don and Simpson the idea of mixing existing footage with new modern footage. Even before the revised film is released, it is deemed a great success by the studio and Lina announces that she has changed Kathy's contract so that she will dub all her future films. At the film premiere Don, Cosmo and Simpson expose Lina miming to Kathy, who is singing 'live' from behind the stage curtain. As Kathy runs away in tears, Don asks the audience to stop her and reveals that she is the real star. The final *mise-en-abîme* epilogue shows Don and Kathy on a hillside looking at a film poster for their new film 'Singin' in the Rain' by Monumental Pictures.

## Appendix 12

### ***Stormy Weather* plot summary**

The film is very loosely based on the real-life career of Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson who plays Bill Williamson, a successful dancer reminiscing about his life. At the start of the film, Bill thinks back to the time when he had just returned home from World War One. At a soldiers' ball Bill meets a popular singer Selina Rogers (Lena Horne), who is the sister of a friend who died in the war. He promises that he will return to her once he has become a successful dancer, but whilst he is building his career, Selina too is enjoying career success. Their paths cross occasionally at theatres and nightclubs through the years marking their on-again-off-again romance. Bill has to compete for Selina's attention with her manager Chick Bailey (Emmett 'Babe' Wallace) but when they do meet again Selina refuses to settle down with Bill. When they do eventually marry, Selina leaves Bill to work in Paris and becomes a star. Years later Cab Calloway takes Bill to a party where Selina is performing, and they are reunited. The film concludes with a large-scale all-star show for the soldiers of World War Two. Within the show, watched by Bill, Selina performs the title song 'Stormy Weather'. During the performance she looks out of the window and sees a group of dancers caught in the rain. The scene fades into a dream ballet performed by Katherine Dunham and her Dance Troupe. The backstage musical with an all black cast takes the form of a revue loosely connected by Bill and Selina's love story, with over twenty musical numbers performed by some of the best African American performers at the time including Ethel Waters, Ada Brown, Dooley Wilson, Cab Calloway and his Cotton Club Orchestra, Fats Waller and the Nicholas Brothers.

## Appendix 13

### ***The Band Wagon* plot summary**

The backstage musical *The Band Wagon* follows the story of Tony Hunter (Fred Astaire), a famous film star in musicals who is now considered old-fashioned in comparison to a new generation of stars. His Broadway friends Lester Marton (Oscar Levant) and his wife Lily (Nanette Fabray) entice him to star in their small new Broadway show. The Martons have already appointed Jeffrey Cordova (Jack Buchanan), a celebrated British director, producer and performer, and hires ballerina Gabrielle Gerard (Cyd Charisse) as the female lead. It is her first attempt to move from classical ballet into musicals and it is Tony's attempt to revive his flagging career. Gabrielle arrives with her choreographer boyfriend Paul (James Mitchell) who resents her spending time with Tony. Cordova's aspirations for a show with 'meaning and stature' highlight the pretensions of highbrow culture in his production of *Faust* which is a light parody of director Minnelli's own back catalogue of work. The clash of styles and personalities dooms this version of the show to a catastrophic failure in its off-Broadway opening. The couple steal away from a rehearsal to one evening to spend time together to build their professional relationship, but in so doing, acknowledge their potential romantic relationship through a moonlight dance together in Central Park. Tony takes charge of the show and strips out the lofty highbrow art and introduces contemporary musical numbers performed to modern American music in a revue style musical show. The revised show can only become a success when Tony and Gabrielle's dancing styles are united as exemplified in the finale dream ballet 'The Girl Hunt' ballet (or rather when Gabrielle conforms to Tony's dancing style). This sequence also cements Gabrielle and Tony as a romantic couple, her boyfriend now rejected in favour of her co-star and celebrated through a successful opening night, as presented by the rapturous applause of the diegetic audience.

## Appendix 14

### ***The King and I* plot summary**

Widow Anna Leonowens (Deborah Kerr) travels to Bangkok, Siam with her son Louis Leonowens (Rex Thompson) to become governess and tutor to King Mongkut's (Yul Brynner) many royal children. On arrival, the King reneges on his written promise to Anna that she would live in her own house outside the royal palace. She threatens to leave and so begins a battle of wits and cultures between Anna's British colonial attitudes and the King's long-standing traditions. Anna soon wins over the royal children including Prince Chulalongkorn (Patrick Adiarte) and gains an ally in Lady Thiang (Terry Saunders), the King's wife and leader of his concubine. Anna develops a friendship with Burmese slave Tuptim (Rita Moreno). Against her wishes Tuptim joins the concubine, but she is in love with fellow Burmese Lun Tha (Carlos Rivas). Anna coaches the children and the King in British culture prior to a British diplomatic delegation to Siam. Anna and the King share a dance that reveals to the audience their mutual respect, admiration and love. At the dinner for the delegation, the royal household presents 'The Small House of Uncle Thomas' ballet, narrated by Tuptim telling the story of slave girl Eliza's attempts to escape King Simon Legree. Tuptim's narration mirrors her own situation and towards the end of the ballet, she breaks out of character to plead for her own liberty. At the curtain call, Tuptim does not appear as she has fled in disguise with Lun Tha. Unfortunately, both are captured, Lun Tha is killed and Tuptim is dragged before the King for a whipping. Anna intervenes and the King relents, heartbroken that a foreign woman has challenged his power in front of his court. The King takes to his bed with a weak heart. Anna decides to leave Siam, but just before she and her son embark the ship, Lady Thiang begs her to see the King. She rushes to his bedside and as Prince Chulalongkorn decries that on becoming the King he will abandon the tradition of bowing and kneeling in positions that are lower than the King, the King dies.



## Appendix 15

### ***The Pirate plot summary***

Manuela (Judy Garland) lives in a Caribbean port and is engaged to the local rich merchant and town mayor Don Pedro Vargas (Walter Slezak), but she fantasizes about the legendary pirate Macoco – ‘Mack the Black of the Caribbean Seas’. Vargas is a rotund, older man and it is Manuela’s Aunt Inez (Gladys Cooper) who arranges the engagement in a bid to secure his fortune for her family. The leader of a group of travelling players, Serafin (Gene Kelly) falls in love with Manuela and tries to impress her but without success. During a performance Serafin hypnotizes Manuela who unwittingly reveals her fantasy about Macoco. Serafin discovers that Vargas is actually the legendary pirate Macoco and attempts to blackmail him in exchange for Manuela, but with no luck. In retaliation and to divert attention away from himself Vargas tells the town that Serafin is in fact Macoco. Manuela fantasises about Serafin as Macoco in the ‘Mack the Black’ dream ballet. In the ballet the pirate reveals his mastery of swordsmanship, fighting, climbing rigging, and sexually conquers every woman he meets including Manuela. Serafin pretending to be Macoco offers the town an ultimatum to give up Manuela to him or he will burn down the town. Manuela pretends to grudgingly sacrifice herself for the town whilst excited to be running away with Macoco. However, she is appalled to discover that Serafin is not Macoco and merely an actor. Mayor Vargas arranges with the Viceroy (George Zucco) for Serafin to be executed in front of all the townspeople and Manuela. Serafin is granted one last performance and he hypnotizes Mayor Vargas to reveal his true identity as Macoco. The film ends with Manuela joining Serafin’s travelling group of players (including the Nicholas Brothers with whom Kelly performed a speciality dance earlier in the film), performing the number ‘Be a Clown’ together.

## Appendix 16

### ***The Red Shoes* plot summary**

Based on the Hans Christian Anderson story of the same name, *The Red Shoes* tells the story of a young ballet dancer Victoria Page (Moira Shearer), torn between her love for dance and romantic love for her husband, composer Julian Craster (Marius Goring). Victoria joins the Ballet Lermontov headed by Boris Lermontov (Anton Walbrook), a man obsessed with dance and ensuring that Victoria reaches her potential as a prima ballerina, but in order to do so, she must devote herself to dance and nothing else. However, it is Lermontov who unwittingly brings Victoria and Julian together for 'The ballet of the Red Shoes' that makes her a star and for which Julian has composed the music. The dream ballet is a visual manifestation of Victoria's inner struggle between her love for dance and her love for Julian. In 'The ballet of the Red Shoes', the prima ballerina played by Victoria is given a pair of red ballet shoes by a shoemaker (played by the character Ljubov - Leonard Massine), but the shoes have magical powers and she cannot take them off resulting in her death. Victoria and Julian fall in love and get married. Victoria leaves the ballet company to support her husband's career as a composer in opera after his falling out with Lermontov. Victoria still feels the lure of ballet and Lermontov instigates a chance meeting and persuades her to rejoin the ballet company. On her opening night in Monte Carlo for her return to 'The ballet of the Red Shoes', it is also the opening night of Julian's opera in London. Victoria hears on the radio that Julian has disappeared, and he appears at her dressing room door, furious that she has returned to Ballet Lermontov and demanding her return to London. The start of the show is delayed as Lermontov tries to persuade Victoria that she only needs dance and not Julian, and Julian tries to persuade Victoria to leave the ballet. As Victoria runs out of the dressing room, the red ballet shoes force her to run out of a window and she falls over a balcony in front of a passing steam train. She dies in Julian's arms but not before she has instructed him to remove the red shoes.

## Appendix 17

### ***Yolanda and the Thief* plot summary**

Johnny Parkson Riggs (Fred Astaire) is a con man that travels with his accomplice Victor Budlow Trout (Frank Morgan) to a mythical Latin American country called Patria. On the train the two discuss ways to make money. On arrival while sitting outside a walled garden, Johnny overhears a young, rich convent-educated heiress Yolanda (Lucille Bremer) praying to her guardian angel for help to sort out her complicated business affairs. Riggs convinces Yolanda that he is her guardian angel and manages to steal her money. However, before he flees the country he has a dream – the ‘Will You Marry Me?’ dream ballet – an emotional fight between his dishonesty and desire for money battling against his recognition of his love for Yolanda. In the surrealistic dream ballet, Johnny wakes up, gets dressed and goes outside to have a cigarette. This is the same scene that the audience has already seen, however when he asks a passing gent for a light, suddenly the gent has multiple arms all holding lit matches. Johnny quickly moves away and comes across a group of women washing linen in a stream. Johnny dances with and around the women and gets entangled in their bed sheets. He leaves them to follow an undulating path in Daliesque surreal settings. Surrounded by rock formations, Johnny watches a stylised horserace before meeting Yolanda, draped in gold coins. When Johnny wakes up, he decides to return the money and leaves a note for Yolanda confessing his actions and his feelings. He and his accomplice attempt to leave Patria but to no avail as the real guardian angel Mr Candle (Leon Ames) contrives to ensure that Johnny renounces his criminal ways and succumbs to Yolanda’s love. At Yolanda and Johnny’s wedding her real guardian angel shows her and Johnny a picture of the two of them five years into the future with children. When Johnny turns to question the guardian angel, he has vanished leaving Johnny to accept his life of mutual love and domesticity with his bride.

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## Filmography

*This is not intended as a comprehensive list of all films and television programmes that feature dream ballets.*

\* Denotes dream ballet inclusion

*42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (Lloyd Bacon, Warner Brothers, 1933).

*500 Days of Summer* (Marc Webb, Fox Searchlight Pictures, Watermark & Dune Entertainment III, 2009).

*Age Before Beauty*, Series 1, Episode 2, (Paul Walker, Mainstreet Pictures, BBC1, 7 August 2018) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bfkj1x>> accessed 8 August 2018.\*

*All that Jazz* (Bob Fosse, Columbia Pictures Corporation & Twentieth Century Fox 1979).\*

*An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1951).\*

*Anchors Aweigh* (Joe Pasternak, MGM, 1945).\*

*Anything Goes* (Robert Lewis, Paramount Pictures, 1956).\*

*Babes in Arms* (Busby Berkeley, MGM, 1939).

*Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1954).

*Broadway Melody of 1936* (Roy Del Ruth, MGM, 1935).\*

*Broadway Melody of 1938* (Roy Del Ruth, MGM, 1938).

*Broadway Melody of 1940* (Norman Taurog, MGM, 1940).

*Cabin in the Sky* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1943).

*Carefree* (Mark Sandrich, RKO Pictures, 1938).\*

*Carousel* (Henry King, Twentieth Century Fox, 1956).\*

*Cover Girl* (Charles Vidor, Columbia Pictures, 1944).

*Daddy Long Legs* (Jean Negulesco, Twentieth Century Fox, 1955).\*

*Dames* (Ray Enright, Busby Berkeley, Warner Brothers, 1934).

*Du Barry Was a Lady* (Roy Del Ruth, MGM, 1943).

*Family Guy, Road to Rupert*, Season 5, Episode 9, (Dan Povenmire, James Purdum, Peter Shin, Fuzzy Door Productions, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Television,

2007) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1vfxbVuo3k>>, accessed 8 July 2019.\*

*Fiddler on the Roof* (Norman Jewison, The Mirisch Production Company, Cartier Productions, 1971).

*Flower Drum Song* (Henry Koster, Universal International, 1961).\*

*Flying Down to Rio* (Mark Sandrich, RKO, 1933).

*Follow the Fleet* (Mark Sandrich, RKO, 1936).

*Fosse/Verdon* (Thomas Kail, Steven Levenson, FX Television, 2019).\*

*Give a Girl a Break* (Don Weis, MGM, 1953).\*

*Gold Diggers of 1933* (Mervyn LeRoy Warner Brothers, 1933).

*Gold Diggers of 1935* (Busby Berkeley, First National Pictures, 1935).

*Goldwyn Follies* (George Marshall, Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1938).

*Hans Christian Anderson* (Charles Vidor, Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1952).\*

*I Love Melvin* (Don Weis, MGM, 1953).\*

*Invitation to the Dance* (Gene Kelly, MGM, 1956).

*La La Land* (Damien Chazelle, Summit Entertainment, Black Label Media, TIK Films, Imposter Pictures, Gilbert Films & Marc Platt Productions, 2016).\*

*La Belle et La Bête* (Jean Cocteau, DisCina, Les Films André Paulvé, 1946).

*Lady in the Dark* (Mitchell Leison, Paramount Pictures, 1944).

*Legion*, Episode 1, 'David Dream Dance', (FX Television, 2017) <<https://vimeo.com/203409964>>, accessed 8 July 2019.\*

*Lili* (Charles Walters, MGM, 1953).\*

*Meet Me in St Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1944).

*Oklahoma!* (Fred Zinneman, Twentieth Century Fox, 1955).\*

*On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (Vincente Minnelli, Paramount Pictures, 1970).

*On the Town* (Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen, MGM, 1949).\*

*On Your Toes* (Ray Enright, Warner Brothers, 1939).

*Roberta* (William A. Seiten, RKO, 1935).

*School Daze* (Spike Lee, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks, 1988).

*Secrets of a Soul. A Psychoanalytic Film* (Georg Wilhelm Pabst, Neumann-Filmproduktion, 1926).

*Shall We Dance* (Mark Sandrich, RKO, 1937).

*She's Gotta Have It* (Spike Lee, 40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks, 1986).\*

*Silk Stockings* (Rouben Mamoulian, MGM, 1957).

*Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen, MGM, 1952).\*

*Snow White and the Three Stooges* (Walter Lang, Twentieth Century Fox, 1961).\*

*Sound of Musicals with Neil Brand*, BBC4, January 2017.

*Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, Selznick International Pictures, 1945).

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*Swing Time* (Mark Sandrich, RKO, 1936).

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*That's Dancing!* (Jack Haley Jr., MGM, 1985).\*

*The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T* (Roy Rowland, Columbia Pictures, 1953).

*The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1953).\*

*The Big Lebowski* (Joel Coen, Polygram Filmed Entertainment, 1998).\*

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*The Hudsucker Proxy* (Joel Coen, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, Silver Pictures, 1994).\*

*The Kid* (Charles Chaplin, Charles Chaplin Productions, 1921).

*The King and I* (Walter Lang, Twentieth Century Fox, 1956).\*

*The Pirate* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1948).\*

*The Red Shoes* (Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger, Archer Productions, 1948).\*

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<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fEUIw2jXbY>>, accessed 9 July 2019.\*

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*Yolanda and the Thief* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1945).\*

*Ziegfeld Follies* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1945).\*

*West Side Story* (Jerome Robbins, Robert Wise, United Artists, 1961).

*What a Way to Go!* (J. Lee Thompson, Twentieth Century Fox, 1964).

*Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, MGM, 1939).

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