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INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

The *American Music Research Center Journal* is dedicated to publishing articles of general interest about American music, particularly in subject areas relevant to its collections. We welcome submission of articles and proposals from the scholarly community, ranging from 3,000 to 10,000 words (excluding notes).

All articles should be addressed to Thomas L. Riis, College of Music, University of Colorado Boulder, 301 UCB, Boulder, CO 80309-0301. Each separate article should be submitted in two double-spaced, single-sided hard copies. All musical examples, figures, tables, photographs, etc., should be accompanied by a list of captions. Their placement in the paper should be clearly indicated.

If a manuscript is accepted for publication by the editorial committee, the author will be asked to supply a brief biographical paragraph and an electronic mail attachment with the text, sent to thomas.riis@colorado.edu. Once accepted, the preparation of final copy in electronic form will require the following: abstract of no more than 200 words; article text in MS Word with list of references (.doc). Musical examples and figures for final production should be high resolution tiff or eps images.

In general the *AMRC Journal* follows the formats and guidelines of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* and *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). For further instructions on footnotes, bibliography, discographic references, etc., please consult this volume or the research assistants.

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Paul Laird

Introduction

During the 2007–2008 academic year, the University of Kansas celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Murphy Hall, its music and theatre building. The occasion brought about fruitful collaborations between the two disciplines. In November 2007, there was a joint production of *The Music Man* (which had opened on Broadway fifty years before, in December 1957) and a corresponding symposium, “Musical Theatre in 1957.” The latter brought together scholars from throughout the country to consider in detail the year that included the birth of *West Side Story* as well as *The Music Man*. Another part of the celebration in the Department of Music and Dance was a doctoral seminar on the Broadway musical in the 1950s. This collection of four essays came out of that seminar, where graduate students in musicology, performance, and music theory approached many shows from different angles. The seminar students, as well as the scholars who visited campus for the symposium, benefited greatly from how popular musical theatre scholarship has become in the last few decades, and in this issue of the *American Music Research Center Journal* the students are proud to offer their own contributions in this growing field.

The purpose of this introductory essay is to consider the nature of that field, what it is that scholars strive to achieve in their work on musical theater, a genre that millions enjoy as entertainment without scholarly explanations. It is axiomatic that one can love musicals like *West Side Story* and *The Music Man* without deep understanding of, for example, the show’s history, its dramaturgy, the way the music helps to tell the story, or the principal influences upon the choreographer or director. Indeed, in the commercial theater, a show’s success depends upon its accessibility on a single evening. For some, scholarly explication of a show would likely ruin it, but musicals are part of popular culture, and scholars have grown increasingly attracted to what American popular culture says about our society.¹ It is instructive to note the multi-layered ways that general audience members and scholars might regard musicals, a process described briefly below in glimpses at the two most famous shows that appeared in 1957.

West Side Story opened at the Winter Garden on 26 September 1957. Its status as an American popular icon did not occur until the highly successful film appeared in 1961, but the respect accorded the creators of the Broadway musical even in the show’s first years helped raise *West Side Story*

above the status of a Broadway commercial success to an artistic plane. Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Laurents, and Stephen Sondheim created a modern take on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* told through words, music, and dance, with the three elements indivisible. The effect was a seamless, fast-paced evening of theater that required no explanation. Any interested audience member understood intuitively that the gang members were not strongly verbal, meaning that their self-expression came through the energy and physicality of dance. Tony and Maria expressed their love through song, from the exhilaration of "Tonight" to the hope for the future in "One Hand, One Heart." The violent emotional shifts that Maria and Anita feel in the scene of "A Boy Like That" and "I Have A Love," where Anita moves from despising Maria's love for Tony to trying to help the young lovers, are made more convincing by the musical journey provided by Bernstein and Sondheim. These gestures are plain and direct; no further explication is needed.

And yet, musical theater scholars persist and offer explanations. One can describe the dance movement vocabulary that Robbins used to help these non-verbal gang members communicate, such as spreading out their arms to show how they wish to own the "turf."² The songs for Tony and Maria are part of a score that is unified symphonically in a way that few Broadway musicals are. Those who explain this fact point, for example, to Bernstein's use of the "Somewhere" theme in the orchestra at the end of the balcony scene with the song "Tonight," or the tritone melodic interval on which Tony sings his lover's name in the song "Maria" being heard in the orchestra as the couple kisses in the song "One Hand, One Heart."³ Many in the audience who could not articulate these musical associations experience them at some level when they see the show or listen to the recording. Musicologists also wish to explain the nature of the final scene between Anita and Maria, when the latter's music comes to dominate Anita, showing how she manages to gain her friend's assistance, a change of mind that would not have seemed possible in the violent intensity of "A Boy Like That."⁴ Such descriptions raise one's awareness of the craft and creativity involved in producing a show like *West Side Story*.

The Music Man, which opened about three months after *West Side Story* and beat its rival out for the Tony for Best Musical the following spring, is a very different show, but it is also carefully wrought and includes the kind of dramatic and musical sophistication that interests scholars. With book, lyrics, and music all by Meredith Willson, it is unusually well integrated with consistent tone throughout. Before writing the show, Willson was famous as a radio music director and personality who relentlessly hyped his small town, Iowa background; his portrayal of River City, Iowa, (based on his hometown of Mason City) in *The Music Man* includes the charm and foibles of such places. The Broadway producers Ernie Martin and Cy Feuer, and the composer/lyricist Frank Loesser (and Willson's wife, Rini), convinced Willson to write what became *The Music Man*, and he worked on it for about six years.⁵ One can view the show as based upon older musical comedies, but with especially memorable characters and a score that grows organical-

ly out of the plot. Robert Preston became a Broadway star with his origination of Harold Hill, the con man who comes to the Iowa town and meets his match in Marian Paroo (Barbara Cook), the librarian and piano teacher. There were other distinctive characters as well and the production also boasted a top-drawer design team, helping *The Music Man* bring the decade on Broadway to a close worth celebrating.

Then those pesky scholars of music theater sink their teeth into what might seem like a pleasant, traditional show and begin their commentary. That fascinating main character of Harold Hill was more than just a perfect portrayal by a fine actor. As a salesman—and a dishonest one, at that—Hill must be silver-tongued. Willson gives Hill his verbal edge by endowing him with examples of what he called “speak-song,” rhythmic speech that is frequently unrhymed over an instrumental accompaniment.⁶ This was different than Lerner and Loewe’s solution for Rex Harrison’s performance of Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*, where Loewe wrote a melody for most of a song and Harrison both spoke and sang.⁷ Willson wrote some melodies for Hill, but for the most part he provided an interesting accompaniment for Preston to speak over. This is heard most effectively in “Ya Got Trouble” but also appears elsewhere, such as in the introduction to “Seventy-Six Trombones.” Another interesting aspect of the score is that “Seventy-Six Trombones” and “Goodnight My Someone” are based on the same melody. Willson wrote the tune and discovered that it worked as well as a 6/8 march as it did as a waltz,⁸ allowing for an interesting melodic association between the Harold and Marian. One also notes the diversity of music from the early years of the twentieth century that Willson worked into the score, and deft melodic writing. The story brings two outsiders together, and together they help establish a sense of community in a town desperately in need of one. Even if *The Music Man* is not high art and only good musical theater—obviously a debatable notion—it is a beautifully written show full of compelling ideas, characters, and music.

The four articles in this volume include detailed looks at the most important director of musicals from the 1930s until the 1960s, an Asian’s look at *The King and I*, a singer’s analysis of four actors who spoke their way through roles in the 1950s, and an analysis of Don Walker’s orchestrations from several shows. Each of these authors brought special interest or expertise, a quality that made this a special seminar in my experience and rendered the final projects memorable.

The first article is Sylvia Stoner-Hawkins’s consideration of George Abbott’s career as a director of musicals. Stoner-Hawkins is a singer, actor, and director with experience in both opera and musical theater. In the seminar she showed interest in the practical side of Broadway history, including those on stage and behind the scenes. Abbott established himself as the leading director of musical comedies starting in the 1930s in several collaborations with Rodgers and Hart, and over the remainder of his career he directed many significant musical comedies. Stoner-Hawkins describes Abbott’s work in a way that is helpful to those who, like her, work in the musical theater.

When Rodgers and Hammerstein chose to set the story of Anna Leonowens at the court of Siam in the 1860s, they accepted the difficult task of representing a non-Western culture on the American musical stage. They evoked the exotic in the show with such touches as unusual musical choices, Jerome Robbins's ballet "The Small House of Uncle Thomas," and a lavish stage production. How Asian they managed to make the show has been a matter of some debate,⁹ and no matter how sensitive Rodgers and Hammerstein tried to be to cultural differences, they could not have produced a show that would be looked at similarly decades later. Hsun Lin, a musicology student from Taiwan, considers the character of the king in this show. She sees him as a nuanced character who makes choices necessary to his position, and she criticizes Anna for her inability to understand the king's needs.

Sharon Campbell earned a DMA in voice at the University of Kansas in 2008 and has joined the voice faculty of the University of Nebraska at Kearney. In the seminar she became fascinated by non-singing actors in famous musicals. Musical stage performers who are more dancers and/or actors than singers have existed for centuries, but the type became more problematic in the 1950s as a show's score played a larger role in storytelling than had generally been the case before. Performers had to "sing" numbers designed to tell the audience much about their characters, meaning that their renditions came under greater scrutiny. Campbell looks at Yul Brynner in *The King and I*, Rex Harrison in *My Fair Lady*, Robert Preston in *The Music Man*, and Rosalind Russell in *Wonderful Town*. She brings to her analysis extensive professional experience as a singer and teacher, allowing her to provide an unusually detailed description of how these actors "sang."

Peter Purin, a PhD student in music theory and musical theater performer, has a special fascination with Broadway orchestrators, a topic that has hardly received its due from musical theater scholars.¹⁰ One of the major problems is the lack of availability of full scores for Broadway shows. Purin chose to study Don Walker's orchestrations for varied shows from the 1950s. For example, he compares Walker's work on *The Pajama Game*, in the mold of older musical comedies, with *The Most Happy Fella*, a more operatic show. Purin listened closely to original cast recordings and bases his conclusions on analysis of those sources, although what is on the recordings might differ slightly from what audiences heard in the theatre. Since orchestrators work in teams, Purin was careful to deal only with tunes that Walker worked on, allowing for a useful description of his style as an orchestrator.

The four studies in this volume are part of the rapid growth of scholarly attention to the Broadway musical. The repertory of musicals is huge, providing a wealth of opportunities for musicologists, theorists, performer/scholars, and theater historians to explore and study. Those of us at the University of Kansas are grateful to the *American Music Research Center Journal*, its director Dr. Thomas Riis, and the journal's guest editor Dr. Graham Wood, for the opportunity to publish these fruits of our seminar.

Notes

1. One need only consider, for example, the amount of current musicological work appearing on aspects of popular music and film music found in many books and journals such as the *Journal of Popular Music Studies* and *Journal of Film Music*.

2. Stephen Sondheim reveals this detail in Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2003), 78.

3. For detailed analyses of the music from *West Side Story*, see: Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from 'Show Boat' to Sondheim* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 245–73, and Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey*, revised and expanded ed. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2002), 221.

4. Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 3–5.

5. Meredith Willson, *But He Doesn't Know the Territory* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1959). Willson addresses the suggestions from his Broadway colleagues on pp. 15–16, and spends much of the book on his six-year odyssey to bring *The Music Man* to the stage.

6. Willson, *But He Doesn't Know the Territory*, 48, 65.

7. See Sharon O'Connell Campbell, "The Actor's Voice: The Non-Singing Lead in Broadway Musicals of the 1950s."

8. Willson, *But He Doesn't Know the Territory*, 32.

9. See, for example, Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 261–68.

10. A recent, major study of Broadway orchestrators is Steven Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music: A Book of Orchestrators and Orchestrations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

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Sylvia Stoner-Hawkins

George Abbott's Contribution to Musical Comedy Through the 1950s

“Approach your work and your play with exuberant physical vigor,” insists George Abbott in his autobiography, *Mister Abbott*.¹ Perhaps this vigor reveals the secret not only to his success on Broadway but also his long life of 108 years (1887–1995). Abbott worked in many areas of theater in the capacities of actor, director, producer, co-producer, author, and co-author. In addition to these official roles in the theater, Abbott also held the title of “play-doctor” because of his ability to invigorate a sagging show, with no hesitation to cut complete parts of the script, if necessary. Although some have questioned Abbott’s artistic integrity and his tendency to lean toward safe, commercial products, his industrious and extensive career greatly influenced the shape of musical theater. Specifically, his shows in the 1930s featured a fast-paced style that tightened the integrated style of musical comedy. Not only did Abbott create important productions but he also helped foster the careers of many notable actors, directors, and choreographers.

Abbott’s early experiences in the theater helped shape his directorial perspective. As part of the English 47 workshop at Harvard, Abbott studied from 1912 to 1913 with George Pierce Baker. This workshop was the first playwriting course offered in America. Baker greatly impressed upon Abbott that farce held the same theatrical importance as drama. Many of Abbott’s classmates disagreed with Baker on his support for farce. The new attitude toward theater favored realism and method acting. Eugene O’Neill eventually dropped out of Baker’s class because he thought the professor favored a conservative approach to theater. Abbott, however, used Harvard as a training ground and was able to mount plays through the Harvard Dramatic Club. Unlike O’Neill, Abbott appreciated the structure of nineteenth-century popular theater for its clear plot lines and defined characters. Rather than creating a new direction in theater, Abbott chose to improve upon an established structure. “When I entered the theatre, I had no thoughts of reforming it,” says Abbott, whose main objective at the start of his theatrical career was to be successful on Broadway.²

Although his first attempts to have his plays produced on Broadway were largely ignored, he made his acting debut in 1913 in *The Misleading Lady* in New York. By entering Broadway as an actor, Abbott began an edu-

cation behind the footlights. He worked with the directors of the era, who functioned largely as traffic cops. The details of acting fell mostly upon the actor himself. Abbott understood the expectations of an actor: "If the performer doesn't know his job well enough to get off-stage without the help of the director, he better get out of the business."³ Abbott continued working as an actor through the 1920s. During this time, he grew as a performer and referred to his leading role in the Expressionist play *Processional* as the best acting part he ever had. Abbott's love for his role in *Processional* seems ironic, considering that he preferred traditional, non-political theater. In this show, his fellow company members included a politically charged director named John Howard Larson, and cast members Harold Clurman, Lee Strasberg, and Sanford Meisner. Clurman and Strasberg would continue to explore new ways to interpret drama and founded the Group Theater in 1931, with Meisner as a member. Abbott would not follow the path of the Group Theater, which explored naturalized theater and developed an American adaptation of method acting. When confronted by colleagues about the virtue of "arty" theater, Abbott always took up the defense of the commercial theater.

Also in the 1920s, Abbott began to find work as both a playwright and director. After his first hit, *The Fall Guy*, Abbott embarked on a career of writing and staging fast-paced melodramas. In 1932, Abbott and his partner Philip Dunning produced a farce called *20th Century*. This production "signaled an important turn for him; his move from melodrama to farce." His 1935 staging of *Three Men on a Horse* received a "hilarious welcome" from its world premiere in Washington: "A thoroughly irresponsible farce, with plenty of belly laughs and no attempt at sophistication . . . the play moves at a rapid pace to a laughable conclusion."⁴ These comments foreshadowed subsequent reviews of future Abbott productions. Such attributes in regards to pacing and sophistication, whether spoken as praise or criticism, would characterize the "Abbott touch" in theater.

Because of the press from this farce, Richard Rodgers approached Abbott to be a co-author for the musical comedy *On Your Toes*. Prior to this production, however, Rodgers recommended that Abbott learn more about musical comedy by staging the musical *Jumbo* at the Hippodrome. The plot revolves around a bankrupt circus whose assets are seized by its creditors. The production, which included live elephants, lived up to its name as a spectacle and extravaganza. Abbott took an aggressive approach to co-directing this show with John Murray Anderson. Coming into the production inexperienced in the realm of musical theater, Abbott "behaved ruthlessly to the cast to force them to play their parts" and asserted his authority by holding the actor accountable for unnecessary improvisation.⁵ Although other stage directors at the time tolerated extra stage business from their actors, Abbott created an atmosphere of discipline. Later Harold Prince, who worked as Abbott's stage manager on several productions, would describe Abbott's approach: "He has a very logical mind; he's precise about every action on stage. . . . a door opens and closes for a reason, as part of the situation and never simply for a laugh."⁶ With such attention to

detail, Abbott attempted to establish a clear story in the musical *Jumbo*. Unfortunately his efforts were complicated by all of the circus spectacle in the production. In contrast, *On Your Toes* offered a clear story line. Since this was a dance show, Abbott purposefully emphasized the story line in order to keep the dancing integral to the plot.

Abbott's collaboration with Rodgers and Hart continued with three more shows, beginning with *The Boys from Syracuse*, based on *The Comedy of Errors* by Shakespeare. Abbott took Shakespeare's own theatrical instruction to "hold the mirror up to nature"⁷ to heart, and updated Shakespeare's text to reflect contemporary 1938 New York. Abbott focused on reaching his audience and kept their entertainment as a high priority. For example, when the seeress delivered the only line directly taken from the Shakespeare play, "The venom clamours of a jealous woman poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth," Dromio followed that line by poking his head out from the wings yelling, "Shakespeare!" This spontaneous breakdown of the fourth wall between stage and audience not only added a knowing laugh with the audience but also evoked the bawdy atmosphere of Shakespeare's own Globe Theater. It punctuated the seemingly verbose text with a joke and drew the audience back into the show. Next was the musical *Too Many Girls* (1939). Even though the book by George Marion, Jr., seemed dated, Abbott cast a young crop of actors, including Desi Arnaz and Van Johnson, which gave the show youthful vigor.

The third collaboration, as Richard Rodgers noted, "forced the entire musical-comedy theatre to wear long pants for the first time."⁸ In 1940 Rodgers approached Abbott to produce and direct a show based on John O'Hara's *Pal Joey* stories in *The New Yorker*. O'Hara's main character was a sleazy, immoral nightclub singer whose escapades entangle him in scandal and blackmail with the two leading ladies. Vivienne Segal, the original Vera, remarked that *Pal Joey* freed "Broadway musicals from their naïve, conventional, sugar-and-spice formula."⁹ The audience may not have publicly acknowledged their readiness for such a plot, but as Segal observed, "many of them accepted it in silence. They were afraid to laugh, they said to themselves, 'Oh my God, I'm not supposed to know what this is all about.' So they sort of laughed with their hands over their mouths—a silent titter."¹⁰

Largely concerned about the show's profits, Abbott worried about the negative effect of the controversial plot. When Rodgers heard that Abbott lacked faith in the show, he recommended that Abbott leave the project. Abbott then dove completely into the show and worked hard to create a consistent mood between music and action. Although *Pal Joey* received a mixed reception at its premiere, revivals proved more successful as Broadway came of age. Likewise, Abbott's work gained in maturity and was noted for an "abashed appreciation of sex and what can be done with it on a stage."¹¹

Despite Abbott's apparent willingness to extend beyond his own conventions, the cast of *Pal Joey* still attested to his total control over the staging. June Havoc, who played the original Gladys Bumps, recalled that, "Abbott tells you where to move and how to say your lines, and you don't

dare quarrel with him.”¹² In response to the trend at the time toward method acting, Abbott reacted with “I think a lot of Method is phony . . . They’re learning how to be a tree when they need to be told how to pronounce their words.”¹³ Abbott felt that any attempt to create a reality on stage was bound to be phony because the stage was, and would always be, a mirror image, not the actual picture. To create this illusion, Abbott had his actors be truthful to the situation they were playing, but not focus on internalizing the character. Abbott had little patience for the method actor because “he has worked so hard for inner feeling that he forgets to bring it out into the light where we can get a look at it.”¹⁴ He defended his emphasis on articulation and gesture rather than feeling because an action had to be understood onstage in order to define the character to the audience.

Following *Pal Joey*, Abbott continued to produce and direct musical comedy on Broadway, but he later acknowledged that his “theatrical batting average during the 1940s was not too good.”¹⁵ One exception was Abbott’s involvement with *On the Town* (1944), where his presence was a welcome addition to the youthful production team of Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein, Betty Comden, and Adolph Green. Once Abbott joined the team, he immediately assumed total control over staging and, in many instances, choreography. Nonetheless, he showed respect to the original production team, and this was demonstrated in his signature on memos to Jerome Robbins that read, “Your assistant, Abbott.”¹⁶ Likewise, Robbins held mutual respect for Abbott, a man he “idolized as a mentor.”¹⁷

Abbott streamlined the plot of *On the Town*, which resulted in multiple cuts to the show, including a musical number, two songs, and the destruction of one set. Bernstein coined Abbott’s cutting as “easy snipping,” but the young collaborators agreed to these cuts because they valued Abbott’s judgment and experience.¹⁸ Abbott’s reputation spoke highly of his skill as play-doctor. He developed a powerful persona as “an absolute authority on how a musical must unfold—what kind of number goes here, when to cue in the dream ballet, where the story stands when the first-act curtain falls, how to cut when a scene is sagging.”¹⁹

Abbott entered into the 1950s with the premiere run of *Where’s Charley?* (1948–1950). As adapter and director, Abbott collaborated with Frank Loesser to transform the farce *Charley’s Aunt* into musical comedy. Although critics reacted negatively to this show, the audience deemed it a hit. Despite its lack of plot sophistication, the show maintained a popular appeal due to its satire of the Victorian era and the dancing of Ray Bolger. This show introduced the music of Frank Loesser to Broadway.

Also in 1950, Abbott collaborated with Irving Berlin and Jerome Robbins on *Call Me Madam*, a show that Robbins called “a novelty act for Ethel Merman.”²⁰ Abbott appreciated Merman’s work ethic, especially since this was his first time directing her. “She plays up right from the start. She pulls the whole cast up.”²¹ Merman, however, knew she was still in charge. After getting angry at Paul Lukas, who played Cosmo Constantine, Merman refused to look at him onstage. Nightly, Abbott would give her a note to look

at her onstage colleague, but Merman would continue to play out to the audience.²²

Abbott not only had an eye for onstage energy but also for selecting his offstage crew members. Abbott's second wife employed twenty-year-old Harold Prince in her TV production company. Impressed by Prince's work, Abbott hired him as an assistant stage manager for *Call Me Madam*. Unfortunately, Prince left the production to serve in the Korean War, but returned to work again as stage manager with Abbott in *Wonderful Town*. Abbott became Prince's mentor and instilled in him the importance of clear leadership, artistic vision, and integrity. Prince disciplined himself to stay focused on building his career by "learning from Griffith and Abbott how to be good in this business because we had to be to do what we wanted in the theatre without interference, artistic interference."²³ It was especially important to exude confidence in his artistic decisions when Prince became a producer and would have to solicit financial backers.

In 1951, Abbott adapted Betty Smith's novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* into a musical comedy. Once again, the production offered a farcical frolic with grand style. In his review, Brooks Atkinson noted how Abbott altered the emphasis of the poverty in a Brooklyn Irish tenement to focus on sentiment and merriment. Atkinson offered no objection to this approach to the novel because the show was "vastly enjoyable. . . . There is no reason why every musical play should be an exalted work of art. . . . [Mr. Abbott is] not cultivating art in the musical version."²⁴ Atkinson continued to remark that the buffoonery was "fantastic." The production ran for a modest 267 performances.

Just prior to the opening of the show in April 1951, Abbott wrote an article for the *New York Times* to discuss "A Director's Lot." Here Abbott revealed both past influences and his current focus in directing. First Abbott points to two of his early performing experiences, under the directors David Belasco and Guthrie McClintic. These men each worked in opposing styles as directors. Belasco had a dramatic persona, prone to tantrums like smashing his watches in rehearsals, which may have influenced Abbott's own stoic mien in rehearsals. Nevertheless, Abbott recognized that Belasco "directed with an attention to detail which I had never seen before."²⁵ Guthrie McClintic approached his direction by other means, choosing instead to have his actors read the play around a table for several days into the rehearsal process. This allowed the actors to become more familiar with both the text and each other before having to cope with stage movement.

Abbott, the self-professed commander of the scene, noted a change in his own approach to direction. Unlike McClintic, he wanted his actors to get on their feet quickly in rehearsal. Abbott recalled that in his first production he planned every staging detail, down to the most minute gesture. But he soon learned that he had to throw away all of his preconceived ideas and work in the moment with the actor. "Since then I generally go to rehearsal with an absolutely open mind; indeed a blank one."²⁶ This comment does not imply that Abbott ever directed indecisively or with hesitation. He had a clear vision for each production and understood how the characters

would advance the plot to create this vision. As Prince later observed, "Once Abbott postulates the premise, he does it with complete truthfulness."²⁷

In 1952, Robert Furger approached Abbott to stage an adaptation of *My Sister Eileen* called *Wonderful Town*. Abbott felt that the source material was good, but noticed that the composer had made little progress. When the producers attempted to court Rosalind Russell to reprise her role as Ruth, Russell reportedly witnessed the production team's reaction to the score and she immediately declined. Abbott then turned to his former colleagues, Comden and Green, who recommended Bernstein. With all three of these personalities adding new life to the score, Russell returned. However, the writers Fields and Chodorov objected to the new direction of the show. Flexing his theatrical muscles, Abbott stayed firm with Bernstein, Comden, and Green, and walked out of the argument with the writers.

Abbott also inspired and encouraged Russell in her first musical theater performance. In her autobiography, Russell acknowledges her limited singing range. When she was approached to do the show, she thought, "Abbott was one of the hottest directors in the theatre. Still, he wasn't a singing teacher."²⁸ Weeks later, during the preview run of *Wonderful Town* in New Haven, Russell surprised herself and made a request to sing a phrase of George Gayne's song. She felt that her reprise of his melody would tell the audience that she had fallen in love with him. Abbott tried it and left it in saying, "It does the trick."²⁹

Abbott had doubts about the success of his next directing assignment, *Me and Juliet* (1953), but he did not want to turn down the opportunity to collaborate with Rodgers and Hammerstein. The premise of a play-within-a-play seemed fatally handicapped to Abbott. Abbott's direction received praise for its energy, but reviewers could not overlook the flaws of the show's construction. Abbott foresaw the production's failure because it conflicted with the structure he learned from director Augustus Thomas. Unlike the play-within-a-play, a farce structure creates a defined plot. Thomas explained to Abbott the basic premise of farce: "Get a man up in a tree in the first act, throw rocks at him in the second, and get him down in the third."³⁰ This classic theatrical formula of establishing conflict and resolving it establishes a clear storyline. Abbott applied Thomas's premise to both his direction and writing, and discovered that his smash hits resulted from a tightly integrated show, where each scene built upon the previous one. Ironically, Abbott's collaboration with Rodgers and Hammerstein, the pioneers of the (so-called) integrated musical, resulted in a production that offered little clarity in plot development. As Brooks Atkinson noted in the opening night review of *Me and Juliet*, "even in the happiest of circumstances the play-within-a-play poses a difficult problem in craftsmanship . . . the form is unwieldy and verbose."³¹

In the following year, Robert Griffith and Hal Prince approached Abbott with a desire to produce a musical version of Richard Bissell's book, *7½ Cents*. Prince remembers Abbott's reaction: "He got up and said, 'This is about a strike in a pajama factory,' and you could see the money leaving on

wings.”³² However, Abbott agreed to direct the show if the producers could adapt the book properly. Prince and Griffith struggled to find a musical comedy writer willing to adapt this controversial material. Presenting a musical about a union subverting a tyrannical supervisor in 1954, just as Senator McCarthy began his hearings, could have proven dangerous. Prince explains: “The notion of strikes, strike leaders, capital, and labor, and so on, all of that tossed around the stage for laughs when everyone was being pilloried by the McCarthy Committee seemed crazy.”³³ Finally, Abbott suggested writer Richard Bissell, who agreed to adapt his book. Additionally, despite Abbott’s initial hesitation, Abbott personally contributed \$26,000 to the budget of the show. As he transformed the political conflicts into the guise of musical comedy, he grew to love the show. Possibly this musical foreshadowed the eventual turn of American politics, since later that year the Senate voted finally to censure McCarthy. Although Abbott never directed his shows to make political statements, he recognized the inflammatory nature of *The Pajama Game*, and stayed true to his conviction to mount it nonetheless. One reviewer commented, “Whose side is the show on in the battle between capitol and labor? The audience’s!”³⁴

Jerome Robbins assisted Abbott in the direction of *The Pajama Game*, which resulted in an abundance of onstage movement. Robbins joined the production team to back up an aspiring choreographer named Bob Fosse. Abbott cast Fosse’s wife, Joan McCracken, in *Me and Juliet*, during which time she promoted her husband’s work to Abbott. Abbott, Prince, and Griffith were willing to hire Fosse as choreographer, but they questioned his ability because he had never choreographed a Broadway show. Abbott worked closely with Fosse to focus the use of his choreography. Abbott specified where to include dances “so that the young man could organize his schedule and work at his own pace.”³⁵ Brooks Atkinson emphasizes the “lightness and friskiness” of the show, saying “Mr. Abbott is really interested in the color, humor and revelry of a first-rate musical rumpus.”³⁶ As was Abbott’s custom, to keep the show light and full of momentum, he cut many dance numbers including an extended dance number at the top of the second act. Robbins recalled stopping Abbott from cutting Fosse’s landmark dance “Steam Heat.” “Abbott was wary of showstoppers, because they stop the show,” explained Robbins.³⁷ Abbott’s heavy-handed tendency to cut musicals has sparked much criticism. Ethan Mordden brands an Abbott show as a “stage picture . . . about movement, never about meaning.”³⁸ Abbott refuted this blanket statement about his style. “You’ll find some very slow performances with very long pauses. I just try to make things interesting. . . . I try to say something new on every page.”³⁹ Abbott concluded:

The [qualities] which I impart to a show . . . [are] taste . . . [and] artistic judgment—the decision as to just how much to do or not to do, at what point to leave one scene and get into another, and for the actor, how much to express and how much to imply.⁴⁰

The Pajama Game offered contrast in scenes between the busy world of

the pajama factory and the relationship of Sid Sorokin and Babe Williams. This contrast altered the pacing of the musical. For example, Babe's tender reprise of "Hey There" depicts her internal conflict to give in to her feelings for Sid or to stay true to the workers' union. She sings to herself, alone in her room, with very little staging. This scene is immediately followed by chaos back in the factory, with plenty of slapstick physical comedy. The contrast between the scenes promotes Babe's character development but also propels the action with an immediate return to a quicker tempo in the following scene.

Riding on the success of *The Pajama Game*, Abbott reassembled the same production team to create the musical comedy *Damn Yankees*. It was Abbott's agent who recommended he peruse the novel *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant* by Douglas Wallop. Abbott conceded that he created this show to have fun and to make a profit. The *New York Times* reviewer, Lewis Funke, observed that *Damn Yankees* "succeeds in being a sufficiently satisfactory vehicle on which to hang some highly amusing antics and utilize some splendid performers."⁴¹ Despite this light entertainment, Abbott still pulled truthful performances from his actors because he did not want his farce to sink to low comedy.

Funke also concluded in his review that the pacing occasionally fell flat and scenes actually slowed too much at times. When the show toured, the cast took their own liberties to generate quicker pacing through these gaps in the action. Abbott read subsequent reviews of this road production and, after watching it, discovered that the Devil, played by Bobby Clarke, began adding his own material and mugging to the audience. Abbott recommended to Prince that they recast Clarke and that it was a mistake to cast "a comedic personality rather than an actor."⁴² When Prince maintained that they needed Clarke for his star status to make the tour successful, Abbott tried to help make Clarke's performance believable. Abbott urged Clarke to return to the original staging because "it's much funnier to see an actor believe his farce problems rather than think he's funny."⁴³ Although Abbott used movement and gesture liberally, he still wanted to tell a story, full of human reaction and honest emotion. In regard to Abbott's direction, Prince later reflected that "the Abbott Touch has been consistently misunderstood. Dancing characters dance, doors are slammed *only* when characters out of emotion would slam them, and there is no such thing as a funny reading of a line."⁴⁴

As much as Abbott reproached some actors, he encouraged others. He admits that he wanted to "mold the young," but Abbott himself benefited from these collaborations. His methods and formulas were well established through his years of experience, but the enthusiasm of young performers stimulated Abbott's creativity. Abbott observes "we need change; we need growth, not petrification."⁴⁵ Bob Fosse fueled such creativity in Abbott during both *The Pajama Game* and *Damn Yankees*. For this reason, Abbott welcomed Fosse to his next endeavor, *New Girl in Town*. Based on the play *Anna Christie* by former classmate Eugene O'Neill, Abbott forged into new territory.

After Abbott's adaptation, barely a remnant of O'Neill's play remained. Abbott removed any trace of symbolism and focused on constructing characters adaptable to his musical comedy formula. In addition, he shifted the setting from the 1920s to the late 1800s, to allow for more of a costume spectacle. This show became a double star vehicle for dancer Gwen Verdon and singer Thelma Ritter. Fosse recommended that Verdon study acting privately with Sanford Meisner in preparation for the serious acting role of Anna Christie. Fosse saw the importance of creating a character with more depth in this highly edited musical adaptation of O'Neill. He was also aware that Abbott would not take the time to cultivate this emotional depth in rehearsals.

George Abbott is the kind of director that requires almost immediate results. He does not want to go into anything at all. He wants it, hears it, and that's the way it should be. And it's very good, it's a different kind of direction, so I thought she needed another influence so that she could give Abbott what he wanted, not quite as quickly as he wanted but able to give it and then fill it underneath. Sandy Meisner could give her that.⁴⁶

It became apparent that Fosse and Abbott held different priorities on the adaptation of the play and they butted heads on the inclusion of a dream ballet depicting life in the bordello. One cast member, the young dancer Harvey Evans, recalls one moment in the ballet when Anna (Gwen Verdon) was being carried upstairs to the bedroom by a male customer (John Aristedes). "It was as if he was taking her to bed. I mean, that was the point. And she was wearing a very brief costume, a sort of corset, and her breast would occasionally pop out."⁴⁷ This dream ballet, which Abbott and the producers labeled as pornographic, was permanently removed.

Prince referred to *New Girl in Town* as a "real dumbbell musical."⁴⁸ Turning this serious subject into musical comedy frivolity seemed an unlikely and unsuccessful combination. However, *New Girl in Town* ran for 431 performances and won the Tony Award for Best Musical in 1958. Likewise, Verdon and Ritter shared the Tony for Best Actress in a Musical. The Abbott formula had worked again, despite obvious artistic flaws in the production. Entertainment values overshadowed artistic virtue. Even Brooks Atkinson admitted in the review of *The Pajama Game* that "Art and show business make bad partners."⁴⁹

The end of the 1950s included two more musicals for Abbott. First, Abbott directed an adaptation of "The Princess and the Pea," called *Once Upon a Mattress*, that featured Carol Burnett in her Broadway debut. Second, Griffith and Prince asked Abbott to co-author and direct a musical based on Fiorello LaGuardia, former mayor of New York, called *Fiorello!* They had initially hired Jerome Weidman to write the book, but when troubles arose they sought Abbott's assistance. With its premiere in 1959, *Fiorello!* received reviews glowing with New York pride. Abbott had headed another hit musical, which received numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize in 1960. Once again, Brooks Atkinson paid him tribute:

Ultimately, somebody has to translate all these elements into a performance that flows without effort. This is what Mr. Abbott has done under his hat as stage director. According to the Broadway calendar of vital statistics, Mr. Abbott is 72. "Fiorello!" has the youngest spirit of any musical in town.⁵⁰

Closing out the 1950s with *Fiorello!*, Abbott never retired. He continued to work as a writer and director until his death in 1995.

In retrospect, many have questioned the effects of Abbott's influence on musical theater. Was Abbott a benefit to the advancement of the musical theater genre or, as Ethan Mordden suggests, "a destructive figure in the musical's history"?⁵¹ Whether his influence was tragic or beneficial, Abbott possessed total self-confidence. He always trusted his instincts and was especially sensitive to pacing. Personally, Abbott claimed to have little patience and to grow bored easily. Therefore, he instinctively wanted to move things along on stage as well. As one producer observed, "Mr. Abbott may not know art, but he sure as hell knows what a lot of people like."⁵² Mordden contends that Abbott's ego limited his growth. "He never felt like an amateur because he kept doing the same show. No matter how different the shows were getting."⁵³ In contrast, Hal Prince regularly observed Abbott's confidence, and Prince recognized that this confidence enabled Abbott to accept criticism and learn from it. "Abbott listens to people. I learned from him that you should, in fact, listen to everybody."⁵⁴ This was illustrated in Abbott's initial refusal to direct *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* because he felt that it seemed sophomoric and slow-moving. Prince asked Abbott to reread the script and reconsider, which Abbott did. He subsequently agreed to direct the show. Prince explains that "Abbott alone, in my experience, possesses the self-confidence to alter his opinion totally without getting involved with 'losing face.'"⁵⁵

Abbott's shows may have steered musical theater away from its potential emotional power. Because he emphasized entertainment values, Abbott tended to cut sections away from a book or music that could challenge the Broadway audience, thereby avoiding the controversial and the untried. However, both *The Pajama Game* and *New Girl in Town* exemplify Abbott's willingness to stretch his ideas in new directions. Unfortunately, in the review for *The Pajama Game*, Atkinson indicated that the show reflected a return to formula despite past endeavors to recreate the musical. "There was an illustrious interlude from 1943, when 'Oklahoma!' appeared, to 1953, when 'Wonderful Town' was produced, when the musical stage flirted with art."⁵⁶ As director of *Wonderful Town*, Abbott "flirted with art," but never had an intimate relationship with it.

From 1960 until his death in 1995, Abbott remained an integral figure of the Broadway artistic community. He continued to direct, but also offered artistic consultations on other shows. Hal Prince regularly showed each of his productions to Abbott for a critique prior to its Broadway opening. It would be a private showing with Abbott as the sole member of the audience. Prince recalled, "When he told us *West Side Story* was good and not to

do anything to it, we were relieved.”⁵⁷ Later, Prince arranged separate performances of *Cabaret* for both Stephen Sondheim and Abbott prior to its opening in 1966.

They are the two I most like to hear from at that stage. They never waste your time with the obvious; they figure you see it and you'll get around to it in good time. But they also edit out anything impractical, because your scenery won't accommodate it, or your cast can't handle it, or you haven't the time for it.⁵⁸

Whether labeled as art or entertainment, the shows touched by George Abbott generally succeeded brilliantly. Although his influence spanned many decades, his work in musical comedy during the 1950s brought productions to a new level of energy and tightness. His skill as an engineer of the genre aided many of the musicals of the decade, whether as a member of the production team or as an invited guest with recommendations. Clearly the Broadway community benefited from Abbott's discerning eye and theatrical instincts. These talents, combined with a strong work ethic and discipline, developed Abbott's artistry. His contribution to Broadway is nothing short of remarkable. In his autobiography, he sums up his attitude toward theater with a quote from Thomas Jefferson: “Go on deserving applause and you will meet with it.”⁵⁹

Notes

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35. Martin Gottfried, *All His Jazz: The Life and Death of Bob Fosse*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 77.
36. Brooks Atkinson, "Theatre in Review: 'Pajama Game'," *New York Times*, 14 May 1954, 20.
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41. Lewis Funke, "Theatre: The Devil Tempts a Slugger," *New York Times*, 6 May 1955, 17.
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43. Hirsch, *Harold Prince*, 24.
44. Prince, *Contradictions*, 23.
45. Abbott, *Mister Abbott*, 270, 262.
46. Gottfried, *All His Jazz*, 105.
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48. Hirsch, *Harold Prince*, 33.
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50. Brooks Atkinson, "Said with Music," *New York Times*, 29 November 1959, XI.
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“Am I King or Am I Not King?” Conflict, Gender, and Reconciliation in *The King and I*

Two years after the premiere of the *South Pacific* (1949), a musical set on an exotic island, with leading roles including two Americans, a Frenchman, and a girl from Bali H'ai who does not sing, Richard Rodgers (1902–1979) and Oscar Hammerstein II (1895–1960) decided to collaborate on another exotic musical, *The King and I*. This time, the leading female character, Anna Leonowens, was a native British woman, and the other leading roles were all “foreigners.” It was Gertrude Lawrence (1898–1952) who first had the idea to put the novel *Anna and the King of Siam* (1944) on stage. Rodgers and Hammerstein agreed to transform it into a musical with Lawrence in the lead female role. *The King and I* opened on 29 March 1951 at the St. James Theater, the same theater where *Oklahoma!* had premiered eight years earlier. Theatergoers lined up for tickets twelve days before the opening and the line was so long that NBC had two reporters on the scene.¹

Although some critics called it an American opera because of its integration of music with the plot and with more of the story and action expressed in song, its basic skeleton still fits the form of a musical.² The original run lasted three years, from 1951 to 1954, totaling 1,246 performances, and won five Tony Awards in 1952, including those for best musical, best actress in a musical, and best featured actor in a musical. Not only did the original production have a long run, but revivals also did well at the box office and won Tony Awards.³ Its film version, which starred Yul Brynner (1915–1985) reprising his stage role as King Mongkut of Siam and Deborah Kerr (1921–2007) as Anna Leonowens, was released on 28 June 1956, and won five Oscars and two Golden Globes. In 1985, the year in which Yul Brynner died, he was given a special Tony Award honoring his 4,525 performances in *The King and I*.

Based on Margaret Landon's best-selling novel *Anna and the King of Siam*, which was adapted into a non-musical hit film two years later (1946), *The King and I* tells the story of Anna Leonowens, a widowed British school-teacher, who went to Siam (now Thailand) with her son, Louis, in the 1860s to instruct King Mongkut's wives and children. In the novel, King Mongkut of Siam is a man eager for new knowledge, but who cannot put his pride

aside. He tries to make Siam a more “scientific” kingdom and prevent Siam from being occupied by other countries, and therefore he employs Anna in his palace to teach these scientific concepts and knowledge. Besides referring to Landon’s novel, Rodgers and Hammerstein also were influenced by Mrs. Leonowens’ autobiography.⁴ The real King Mongkut (Rama IV, reigned 1851–1868) tried to westernize Siam in order to prevent it from being colonized by a Western country. After seeing China, which lost the first Opium War (1839–1842), being forced to open ports, he did his best to avoid this kind of situation in Siam. His efforts established a good basis for his son, Prince Chulalongkorn (Rama V, reigned 1868–1910), to transform Siam into a modern, industrialized country.⁵

In Landon’s novel, King Mongkut was not the leading character and appeared only occasionally. She emphasized recreating the Bangkok of the 1860s, including the customs, festivals, religion, and people. Her book is “less a novel than a chronicle.”⁶ Still, theater requires a dramatic story and for the 1946 movie, the writers expanded the role of the King in order to make him a character who could match the independent and energetic Anna. However, the poster of the musical still said “based on the novel, *Anna and the King of Siam*, by Margaret Landon.”⁷ Rodgers and Hammerstein not only adopted the movie script as part of their book, but also adopted the linguistic idiosyncrasies that the screenwriters developed for the King.⁸ The King speaks English in the wrong tense, emphasizes “scientific” things and frequently repeats words three times, as in the 1946 film.⁹ Although the real King Mongkut did not speak like that, this device transformed the King into a vivid character and caught the imagination of theatergoers. Rodgers used music along with the dialogue’s grammatical faux pas and other amusing foibles to present a serious King with a streak of stubbornness. In the solo song “A Puzzlement,” Rodgers wrote recitative-like music for the King, with a monotony that is characterized by many repeated notes, equal rhythms, and a narrow register (see Example 1).¹⁰



Example 1. “A Puzzlement,” from *The King and I*, act 1, scene 3, mm. 28–36.

After watching the 1946 movie, Gertrude Lawrence contacted Rodgers and Hammerstein about adapting *Anna and the King of Siam* into a musical as a vehicle for her. It was the only stage show that they started writing for the unique talent of a specific star.¹¹ It reversed the process they used for their first four musicals when they had a story first, and then tried to find suitable actors.¹² Although Lawrence had a thin voice, minimal range and often sang flat, she was enchanting and had a marvelous stage presence. The size of her name on the poster made it clear that she was the leading lady. In order to find a King who could hold the stage with her, Rodgers and Hammerstein approached many actors, including Rex Harrison (1908–1990),

who played the King in the 1946 movie but had never sung in a musical before, Alfred Drake (1914–1992), and Noël Coward (1899–1973). When Mary Martin (1913–1990) introduced Yul Brynner to them, they knew they had found their King for Anna.¹³ In Rodgers’s own autobiography, he reminisced, “He looked savage, he sounded savage, and there was no denying that he projected a feeling of controlled ferocity. When he read for us, we again were impressed by his authority and conviction. Oscar and I looked at each other and nodded.”¹⁴ At first, the King was a supporting role and *The King and I* was a vehicle for Anna, but after Lawrence passed away, Brynner’s unique glamour made *The King and I* his starring vehicle until his death.¹⁵

A typical scheme for exotic stories in operas or musicals presents an exotic woman falling in love with a Western man: in the opera *Madama Butterfly*, for example, Cio-Cio-San deeply loves Pinkerton and waits enthusiastically for his return from America, or, in *South Pacific*, Liat insists that she can marry only Cable. These traditional stories tell of an exotic romance with an Eastern female whose heart belongs to a Western male. But *The King and I* is completely different: here the genders in the cultural division are reversed, with Anna representing the West and the King the East. The power dynamics are therefore also reversed: the King has power, but Anna—a woman—possesses knowledge that renders his power all but impotent, and that makes his death that much more tragic.¹⁶

According to Rodgers and Hammerstein’s own words, they had a horror of writing musicals similar in background or story content to any they had previously written. They said, “We believe that writers who repeat themselves will eventually bore themselves.”¹⁷ But if we compare *The King and I* to their earlier musicals, there are some striking similarities: we find that there is a ballet, as in *Oklahoma!* (1943); the location is Asian, as in *South Pacific* (1949); there is a soliloquy, “A Puzzlement,” as in *Carousel* (1945);¹⁸ song is the servant of the play (following Rodgers and Hammerstein’s principles);¹⁹ and there are two couples, as in almost every other musical. What, then, are the differences? The most important difference is the nature of the relationship between the two couples: instead of the hoped for joining of both couples, Anna and the King can never become lovers, and the secret, forbidden, and ultimately doomed love of the second couple, Tuptim and Lun Tha, fractures the hope of any potential reconciliation between Anna and the King. The story is one of “need”; the King needs Anna’s advice, and Anna needs to be needed by the King. They are actually similar to one another; they are both independent, they love challenges, they can face the unfamiliar head on, and they are brave. But although they need each other deeply, they never admit it, and it is this conflict that essentially drives the whole musical. Anna wants the love of a loyal husband, but the King has many wives to ensure enough progeny for the future of his kingdom. Anna could never stomach being one of the King’s wives, like just another bowl of rice, and the King could never be completely faithful to her. They are attracted to each other, but they can never say it, and therefore at no time in the entire show do we ever hear Anna or the King express affection for each other. Rather than being a show primarily about love, “this show is about

the battle between faith and knowledge, religion and science, as personified by the King and Anna. And neither one wins completely.”²⁰

Anna wants to westernize everything in Siam immediately. She firmly insists that the King must obey his promise to give her a house and she refuses to follow the time-honored rules in the palace. She hardly listens to anyone’s advice in the court, including the King’s right-hand man, Kralahome. When Kralahome warns what might happen as a result of changing everything too quickly, she treats him as a stubborn, conservative minister. She is unwilling to follow the way the Siamese people have traditionally shown their respect to their king. She is shocked and cannot believe that a wife is a present, an object, even more, a slave. She reveals her anti-slavery sentiments by giving Tuptim the book she asked for, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, translated as *The Small House of Uncle Thomas*. She replaces the old map featuring an enlarged Siam with a new, accurate one and shows the princes and princesses how small Siam really is. She teaches the royal children to sing “Home, Sweet Home” to remind the King of his promise. She helps Tuptim secretly meet her lover, Lun Tha. She helps the King devise a clever welcome party for the British ambassador’s visit. The King is fascinated by her different attitude toward him compared to that of his wives. If it were not for the conflicts, Anna would be just another woman. Indeed, it is precisely *because* she seems unafraid of him, always questioning his traditional thoughts, and being more scientific than other women, that the King starts to treasure her advice and to need her respect.

But Anna never considers what the King might lose through accepting her advice. He might, for example, lose the belief of his people or the respect of his wives; she just wants to transform him into a Western-style king. She does not understand that the King occupies a precarious midway position between tradition and reformation, and that people are always afraid of change. The King is clearly willing to learn and is enthusiastic about these new ideas. But he also has to think about his children, his wives, and his people. He respects Anna’s opinions, accepts her viewpoints, needs her advice, but is finally destroyed, fearful of losing her respect.

Besides the compelling attraction and need between Anna and the King, another important issue that drives them apart is the issue of slavery. The 1860s was the period when President Lincoln (1809–1865) strove for emancipation of slaves and the novel that Anna gives to Tuptim, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), highlights the cruelty of slavery. Anna and the King both think that slavery is wrong, but their viewpoints differ because the King still regards Anna as a servant. When he angrily says “I do not know anything but that you are my servant,”²¹ Anna is appalled and wants to leave Siam right away.

Two intermediate scenes highlight both their conflict and their needs. The first occurs in act 1 between scenes 4 and 5, and is a conversation between Prince Chulalongkorn and Anna’s son, Louis. The two boys apologize to one another, which their parents would never do, because they nearly fought during the English class earlier in the day. In the previous scene, Anna is angry and decides to leave Siam because the King regards her as a

servant and does not keep his promise to give her the house mentioned in their contract. In the intermediate scene, these two young boys discuss the situation they have just seen minutes earlier:

PRINCE CHULALONGKORN: I am not sure my father will allow your mother to go.

LOUIS: I am not sure whether my mother will allow your father not to allow her to go.

PRINCE: Why does not your mother admit that she was wrong?

LOUIS: I don't believe that Mother thinks she was wrong.²²

The conversation between these two youngsters shows the attitudes that Anna and the King have. They both think they are right and never try to re-evaluate a situation. Anna can barely understand why the King regards her as a servant; neither can the King realize that Anna sees herself as an employee, not a servant. Thus in the next scene, Prince Chulalongkorn and Louis sing the reprise of “A Puzzlement” together:

PRINCE: There are times I almost think/ They are not sure of what they absolutely know.

LOUIS: I believe they are confused/ About conclusions they concluded long ago.

PRINCE: If my father and your mother are not sure of what they absolutely know,/ Can you tell me why they fight?

LOUIS: They fight to prove that what they do not know is so!²³

The other intermediate scene is between scenes 5 and 6, when the King's head wife, Lady Thiang, speaks with Kralahome. After Lady Thiang has persuaded Anna that the King needed her advice by singing “Something Wonderful,” she meets Kralahome:

KRALAHOME: Did you succeed? Will she go to him?

THIANG: She will go. She knows he needs her. Tell him.

KRALAHOME: I will tell him she is anxious to come. I will tell him it is she who needs him.

THIANG: That also will be true.²⁴

After struggling with these conflicts, Anna and the King do come together to prepare for the banquet and also approach a reconciliation with each other, albeit briefly in “Shall We Dance” (act 2, scene 4).

After seeing Anna dance a waltz with Edward (act 2, scene 1), the King wants to know why Anna favors monogamy, the last thing he is going to learn. The King shows his gratitude to Anna by giving her a ring. Then Kralahome enters and reports that the secret police are here. When the King goes out, Kralahome subtly tries to warn Anna: “this is a strange world in which men and women can be very blind about things nearest to them.”²⁵ As usual, Anna does not understand what he means.

After the King's return, Kralahome leaves, waiting for the reports about Tuptim. Anna and the King start to talk about Tuptim. Anna shows sympathy for her because she cannot be with the man she loves, while the King thinks there is no greater honor for a young girl than to be in the palace and marry the King. Although Anna does not know what Tuptim's plan is, she tries to find excuses for her, so that if she were caught, the King might not punish her. She tries to figure out the reason why the King wants a girl like Tuptim when he already has so many wives. How can the King ask his wives to be loyal to him when he is disloyal to them? The King uses an old Siamese rhyme to explain his opinion:

A girl must be like a blossom
With honey for just one man.
A man must live like honey bee
And gather all he can.²⁶

The King thinks it is natural to have so many wives, and a man who is faithful and true only to one wife is sick, just as a teapot can never serve only one cup. This pan-Asian viewpoint originates from before the nineteenth century and holds that men treated women as objects that could be sent as presents or part of their property.²⁷ A weak country might send a princess as a gift for the emperor of a strong empire. Usually, these princesses would be treated as wives, not slaves, but an emperor could have hundreds of wives! In ancient China, for instance, it was considered the greatest honor for a woman to become one of the wives of a king. In the rural villages, people might sell their daughter if they were really poor and needed money. It is thus understandable for the King to think of women as objects that he owns. Anna disagrees. She explains to the King that when a man truly loves a woman, they are like a king and queen to each other. She describes how exciting it can be when a young girl attends a ball and has her first dance. And then, she introduces "Shall We Dance" to the King in the form of a polka.

Scott Miller states that: "'Shall We Dance' is the play's obligatory moment, that moment toward which everything before it leads, and from which everything after it comes."²⁸ For the first and last time, the King and Anna hold each other's hands and dance together. When Anna starts to show the King how to dance, it becomes a metaphor for monogamy.²⁹ She is not only teaching him how to be monogamous but the King also reminds her that she once relied on her husband, a man, and that she still seeks and needs one. The polka is also a more rugged and masculine dance than the elegant waltz.³⁰ This particular dance represents not only monogamy but also masculine attraction—especially when the King wants to hold Anna the way he saw her and Sir Edward dancing the night before. The King is keen to learn things exactly, and therefore becomes more dominant toward Anna. She treats the King as her employer, a foreigner, a King who needs re-educating, and a King who always needs her wise advice; but now, she realizes that as well as being a King, he is also a man. He wants to be her new

romance and sings with her. He expresses himself directly, puts his hand on her waist, and naturally takes over the leadership of the dance.

The King’s transformation from passive learner to dominant leader is also reflected musically as the scene progresses. “Song of the King,” the first song in act 2, scene 4 has a melody similar to that of “A Puzzlement,” repetitive cells based on a small collection of pitches with a repeated rhythm (see Example 2a). When Anna responds and questions the King, she imitates him with a slightly more varied melodic line (see Example 2b). Later in the

(a) King:

A wo man is a fe male who is hu-man, de - signed for pleas ing man, the hu man male.

(b) Anna:

Ex - plain to me why man-y men are faith - ful, and true to one wife on ly.

Example 2. “Song of the King,” (a) mm. 1–4; (b) mm. 12–15 in act 2, scene 4.

scene, Anna introduces “Shall We Dance.” At first, the King sits and watches her dancing, which embarrasses Anna. Then the King joins Anna and learns how to dance (see Example 3a). Finally, the King not only dances with Anna but also sings with her (see Example 3b). It is the most melodic that the King ever gets and it is the last time he sings in the show.

As the song develops in this way, the story comes tantalizingly close to a fairy-tale ending where Anna and the King will live happily ever after. But this is not to be. Their temporary dreamlike relationship is broken by Kralahome’s entrance and the news that the secret police have found Tuptim and they know that Lun Tha was her lover.

(a)

ANNA: (*sings*) Shall we dance? KING: one, two, three, and... On a bright cloud of mu-sic shall we fly? KING: one, two,

(b)

one, two, three, and KING: (*sings*) Or, per - chance when the last lit - tle

Example 3. “Shall We Dance,” (a) mm. 85–90; (b) mm. 96–100, act 2, scene 4.

If Tuptim had not yet married the King, or had run away by herself, things would have been easier. The King would have had a chance to allow Tuptim to explain herself. But because she ran away with her lover and is one of his wives already, the King cannot do so. He must punish her in front of his subordinates to maintain his superiority or his wives and ministers will no longer listen to him. But Anna does not understand this; all she sees is a wretchedly unhappy girl who tries to escape, like Eliza in the ballet “The Small House of Uncle Thomas.” She says:

She’s only a child. She was running away because she was unhappy. Can’t you understand that? Your Majesty, I beg of you—don’t throw away everything you’ve done. This girl hurt your vanity. She didn’t hurt your heart. You haven’t got a heart. You’ve never loved anyone. You never will.³¹

Instead of pleading with the King, Anna accuses and lashes out at him, knowing that he always listens to her advice. The King is hurt by her words and tries in vain to fight back because he is afraid of losing her respect. He has a heart and has given it to her already, but neither of them consciously acknowledges that. When the King threatens to beat Tuptim so that Anna will run down the hall on hearing her scream, Anna delivers the fatal blow, “You *are* a barbarian!”³² The King collapses in confusion.

KING: Am I King, or am I not King? Am I to be cuckold in my own palace? Am I to take orders from English schoolteacher?

ANNA: No, not orders . . .

KING: Silence! . . . (*He hands the whip to the Kralahome*) I am King, as I was born to be, and Siam to be governed in my way! (*Tearing off his jacket*) Not English way, not French way, not Chinese way. My way! (*He flings the jacket at Anna and takes back the whip from the Kralahome*) Barbarian, you say. There is no barbarian worse than a weak King, and I am strong King. You hear? Strong. (*He stands over Tuptim, raises the whip, meets Anna’s eyes, pauses, then suddenly realizing he cannot do this in front of her, he hurls the whip from him, and in deep shame, runs from the room.*)³³

When Anna utters the word “barbarian,” it might as well be an order. Unlike Kralahome, she does not understand the impact of her words on the King until the last moments of the scene:

ANNA: I don’t understand you—you or your King. I’ll never understand him.

KRALAHOME: You! You have destroyed him. You have destroyed King . . . He cannot be anything that he was before. You have taken all this away from him. You have destroyed him. (*His voice growing louder*) You have destroyed King.³⁴

As she does in all things, Anna teaches her students (in this case, the King) in her own way and never tries to understand him with her heart. She knows precisely how to harm him and is perhaps guilty herself of the very accusation leveled at the King. She is the one who has no heart for him. If Anna plays “mother” to the King as “boy,” it is certainly not the role of a patient mother.³⁵ Nor is the King a willful child. Both are adults and both have their own cultural traditions. The King sincerely wants to learn while Anna adamantly refuses to know. Little by little, their conflicts push them closer to each other, yet their reconciliation is but a forecast of their imminent break.

On such conflicts is *The King and I* built. Ironically, the King cares about every word Anna says to him, but Anna seems not to care in the slightest about the King’s feelings. In this respect, she acts rather like a colonial power. She arrogantly believes that she and her culture are right, forces people to accept her beliefs, and is decidedly unwilling to consider the King’s point of view.³⁶

The story thus reverses the traditional gender relationship between West and East, presenting an Eastern male essentially dominated by an uncompromising Western female. The King’s death is perhaps the most potent symbol of this reversal. For although he is not the first male character to die in a musical—Jud Fry falls on his own knife in a fight with Curly in *Oklahoma!*, Billy Bigelow stabs himself after the bungled robbery in *Carousel*, while Lt. Joe Cable is killed (offstage) during military maneuvers in *South Pacific*—the manner of the King’s death is highly unusual because it is so un-masculine compared to the rather violent ends of his hapless theatrical predecessors. Like a nineteenth-century Victorian lady, he simply fades away from an unspecified illness—perhaps a broken heart. In her behavior toward him, Anna has essentially emasculated the King both as a man and as a ruler while her culture has also subjugated his. What we learn from this tale is that there can be no reconciliation between East and West or between Anna and the King without something being lost. In this case, the King and his relationship with Anna must be sacrificed in order to make way for the modern reforms and more “scientific” approach of the next generation.

Notes

1. Ethel Aaron, “The Morning Line: Chill Wind Fails to Daunt Seekers of Tickets to ‘The King and I,’” *The New York Times*, 18 March 1951, 3.

2. John M. Willing, “One Man’s Way with a Melody,” *The New York Times*, 18 March 1951, SM12.

3. “The King and I,” Internet Broadway Database, <http://www.ibdb.com> (accessed 8 December 2007).

4. Abe Laufe, *Broadway’s Greatest Musicals* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1977), 153. Margaret Landon, *Anna and the King of Siam* (New York: The John Day Co., 1944). Anna Harriette Leonowens, *The English Governess as the Siamese Court: Being the Recollections of Six Years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok* (London: Trübner & Co., 1870).

5. “Thailand,” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9111153> (accessed 9 December 2007).

6. Ethan Mordden, *Rodgers and Hammerstein* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 132.

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. The screenwriters were Talbot Jennings and Sally Benson.
9. Ibid.
10. All musical examples are taken from Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *The King and I*, Vocal Score, ed. Dr. Albert Sirmay (New York: Williamson, 1951).
11. Gerald Martin Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 578.
12. Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1975), 270.
13. Thomas S. Hischak, *The Rodgers and Hammerstein Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 148.
14. Rodgers, *Musical Stages*, 271–72.
15. Mordden, *Rodgers and Hammerstein*, 136.
16. Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 261.
17. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, “About ‘The King and I,’” *The New York Times*, 25 March 1951, 77.
18. Hischak, *The Rodgers and Hammerstein Encyclopedia*, 149.
19. Richard Kislak, *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theater*, rev. expanded ed. (New York: Applause, 1995), 139.
20. Scott Miller, *Deconstructing Harold Hill: The Insider’s Guide to Musical Theatre* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 44.
21. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *6 Plays by Rodgers and Hammerstein* (New York: Random House, 1955), 394.
22. Ibid., 397.
23. Ibid., 398.
24. Ibid., 404.
25. Ibid., 432.
26. Ibid., 434.
27. Polygamy was common in the upper classes of Asian society before 1900, especially in those countries under the influence of China.
28. Miller, *Deconstructing Harold Hill*, 45.
29. Ibid.
30. Knapp, *The American Musical*, 266.
31. Rodgers and Hammerstein, *6 Plays*, 439.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 439–40.
34. Ibid., 440.
35. Bruce A. McConachie, “The ‘Oriental’ Musical of Rodgers and Hammerstein and the U. S. War in Southeast Asia,” *Theatre Journal* 46 (October 1994): 390.
36. Perhaps in recognition of the imperialist overtones of the show, and because audiences today tend to know more about Asia, Australian director Christopher Renshaw’s 1996 revival incorporated production elements that were more sensitive to Thai/ Siamese culture. For example, Thai people believe everyone has two souls. One is kwan, a person’s sense of self, his confidence, his self-respect. They believe that your kwan can be lost through the top of the head, which is why hair is worn in topknots in order to keep the kwan in. (See Miller, *Deconstructing Harold Hill*, 40). In other words, the iconic image of a bald-headed King so engraved on our imagination through Yul Brynner’s performance and many subsequent Kings is, in fact, completely inauthentic to Thai people or those who know Thai culture well.

Sharon O'Connell Campbell

The Actor's Voice: The Non-Singing Lead in Broadway Musicals of the 1950s

The leading man of the Broadway musical might be expected, by definition, to contribute great singing to the show. Perhaps the most compelling proof of this expectation can be found in its opposite manifestation, the notoriety of the non-singing star of the musical. In a consideration of the Broadway musical in the 1950s it seems worthwhile to examine the stunning examples of non-singing leading man characterizations through Rex Harrison as Henry Higgins, Robert Preston as Harold Hill, their predecessor, Yul Brynner as the King in *The King and I*, and their female counterpart, Rosalind Russell as Ruth Sherwood in *Wonderful Town*. As Denny Martin Flinn unabashedly asserts,

Until *My Fair Lady* and *The Music Man*, the lead in a musical had to sing, or at least attempt to. Professor Henry Higgins and Professor Harold Hill (Rex Harrison and Robert Preston) didn't, couldn't, and probably shouldn't have. However, like their Gilbert and Sullivan antecedents, Higgins and Hill's songs satisfied a much more important tenet of the modern musical—they were dramatically appropriate. Hill's spiels and Higgins' musings served their characters far better than glorious melody could have.¹

Singing for the Broadway musical is generally acknowledged to be a different discipline than classical or operatic singing. Classical singers are considered to have a greater preoccupation with beauty and expressiveness of tone color, while musical theater singers often eschew the classical sound ideal for more naturalistic, speech-inspired sounds. While any contemporary student of opera would be bound to dispute frequent assertions that classical singers are less concerned with intelligibility of text, the advent of supertitles combined with a history of audiences willing to engage with texts in foreign languages perhaps provides the operatic singer with backups unavailable to the Broadway performer should some faults in text projection occur. While conversely the musical theater singer is likely to disagree that beautiful sound is of little or no concern, nevertheless the demands of the text must be the deciding factor in determining vocal color

at any given moment of singing. The choice of vocal beauty over intelligibility would be simply an incorrect choice in this style.

Singers in this [musical theater] genre must adapt their voices to produce a sound that is appropriate for the character, the situation, the text, and the musical style, for that is how "beauty" is defined in music theater. The quality of the voice becomes a means of expression; even "ugly" sounds can be acceptable, and in fact, are required at times to reflect text or character. Additionally, the audience's ability to understand the text is of utmost importance.²

In a study of acoustical differences in a particular singer capable of singing credibly in both musical theater and operatic styles, Prokop, Sundberg, Cleveland, and Stone find a stronger fundamental and weaker level of early partials in the spectrum for the operatic style than in the musical theater style, which is to say that the acoustical "fingerprint" (spectrum) for operatic singing is significantly less similar to the patterns of spoken sound than is the spectrum for musical theater singing. The Prokop study also notes, "The voice source characteristics found in the Broadway style were somewhat similar to those found in loud speech. . . . [and that] vibrato was found in both singing styles but less often in Broadway. The rate was marginally slower, and the extent somewhat wider in the operatic style."³ This study provides acoustical validation to the assertion that musical singing style is "more speech-like"—both from the listener's point of view and from inside the vocal tract—than operatic style, with less frequent but wider vibrato tending to be employed in musical theater singing.

The Broadway singer employs a variety of techniques to extend speech-like quality into song, including more "forward" vowels and a more chest-dominant registration, the extreme of which is known as "belt." In general, differences between musical theater and operatic singing styles are more marked for female singers than for male singers.

In her book, *Singing and The Actor*, Gillyanne Kayes identifies six vocal qualities used in theatrical singing: speech, falsetto, cry, twang, opera and belt. Kayes calls "speech quality the musical theatre version of operatic recitative needed for the verse part of a set song . . . narrative, direct communication, for patter songs and point numbers: all those moments when you are not actually in song mode but have notes to sing!" She believes that "speech quality works best in the bottom of the range for women and toward the upper-mid range for men. . . . Speech quality is comfortable up to E or F above middle C (real pitch for both genders)."⁴ We will find that this analysis corresponds well to the speak-singing of the singers under consideration.

The term falsetto is used in many different ways in literature about the voice and, indeed, in voice studios themselves.⁵ Falsetto in this instance refers to a quiet, whispered speech quality employed by either men or women. It is used sparingly as a coloristic effect rather than as a register or

vocal quality employed throughout a song. Cry is identified as the quality used in the classic book musicals: *Carousel*, *Show Boat*, *Oklahoma!*⁶ Cry, also commonly known as legit, (short for legitimate) describes the sweet and sustained lyrical singing commonly associated with romantic leads. Twang is akin to cry, but employs less vocal effort; the sound quality may or may not be nasal. Twang quality is a character actor's tool, used to portray folksiness, coarseness, or frenzy.

Kayes's analysis of cry and opera qualities indicates that the difference is in the greater thickness of the vocal folds in opera, an attribute that corresponds to the differences in voice spectrum found in the Prokop et al. study. Some musical theater works like *Phantom of the Opera* call for a great deal of opera quality; for many musical theater characters (e.g., Maria in *West Side Story* or all characters in *Sweeney Todd*) it is used for highly dramatic moments when a deeply colored tone is required to convey the character's emotion. Belt, as alluded to earlier, employs the vocal musculature used in the operatic 'chest voice' to a very high degree.⁷ Belt is the high-energy, broad and brassy sound most commonly associated with Broadway; it is absolutely essential to musicals composed in pop and jazz idioms.

In *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical*, Mark Grant traces the evolution of the legitimate singing style of early Broadway operettas to these varieties of more speech-like singing styles. For Grant, the influences of Irish-American and African American consonantal singing styles infiltrated Broadway through Irish performers and composers such as Edward Harrigan, Tony Hart, and George M. Cohan; through African American singers like Bert Williams, George Walker, and Noble Sissle; and through Anglo singers imitating African American singing styles, known as "coon shouters," like May Irwin.⁸ Such singers did not just eschew rounded vowels for consonant clarity, but also used unmelodic vocalizations in their performances.

But when used by early musical comedy singers like Cohan, vocalization without pitch wasn't just singsong; it was a style of musical speech that imitated musical instruments. In a 1911 recording, Cohan sings from *Mother Goose* (a 1903 show he did not write) "Hey There! May There!" in a nasal twang in which his voice ornaments some pitches by gliding between them like a trombone slide, falling off on other pitches like a brass instrument smear. Al Jolson, soon after Cohan, did much the same thing. They ornamented their singing or talk-singing by imitating instruments heard in vaudeville pit bands even before jazz, and long before Louis Armstrong, who is generally credited with the invention of this practice. The fact that Cohan used these vocal practices indicates that they were not unique to African American styles; rather, there was an interactive melting pot of Irish and African American that eventually brought us to modern nonlegitimate-voiced musical comedy singing.⁹

Not only is Cohan a pioneer in this non-singing style, he provides an excellent early example of the charismatic force a non-singing leading man can exert.

No small part of the electricity [Cohan] brought to our musical stage was his own brazen, singular personality. His broad infectious smile, his “talked” delivery, his exuberant eccentric dancing brought patrons flocking to his shows as much as anything else.¹⁰

Another fascinating figure in this genealogy of leading men is Al Jolson, whose sound evolved into his oft-parodied covered, wide-vibrato tone from a light Irish (in quality not ethnicity) tenor.¹¹

Cohan and Jolson, however, must be considered the exceptions rather than the rule for Broadway leading men, as the legitimate baritone or high baritone made a smooth transition through the evolution of the Broadway musical play from operetta.

In order to sound like ordinary people, musical theater performers set out to sing in natural voices in the speech patterns and inflections of the characters they are portraying. Somehow, only the classical baritone voice, of all the classical voice types, has struck producers, directors, and audiences over the decades as sounding natural. Other voice types have had to use straight tone (tone without vibrato), belt, falsetto, twang, and other vocal modes to project the illusion of naturalness.¹²

The use of the baritone voice for most male leading roles has allowed the leading couple in the musical play to maintain a legit, or more classical vocal style, with the more lyrical singing used to convey their romanticism, youth, and idealism, as in *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*. *South Pacific*'s Emile de Becque is one of the rare examples of a bass leading man, as premiered by the operatic veteran Ezio Pinza. Pinza's deeper voice conveys de Becque's age while his classical singing style conveys his ageless romanticism and idealism. The example of *South Pacific* also highlights the wider acceptability of non-Classical style for the female lead, with Mary Martin's belt-dominant voice conveying her lack of sophistication and American rural everywoman qualities.

After using tremendous legit baritones—Alfred Drake as the traditional romantic lead Curly in *Oklahoma!* (1943) and John Raitt as Billy Bigelow in *Carousel* (1945)—the producers' less traditional choice of Pinza as leading man in *South Pacific* (1949, with William Tabbert playing the more-to-type handsome young man Lt. Joe Cable) allowed Rodgers and Hammerstein to explore more adventurously the realm of non-stereotypical leading men. Similarly, having agreed to Gertrude Lawrence's project of adapting Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam* as a musical, Richard Rodgers reports looking to Hollywood for his next leading man.

With the “I” in *The King and I* already cast, we began thinking about “The King.” Since Rex Harrison had given such a splendid performance in the movie version, we got in touch with him. Though he had never before sung in a stage musical, Rex was interested and was sure he could handle whatever singing was required.¹³

More than one commentator considers the conflicts that kept Rex Harrison from taking the role a happy circumstance that brought Yul Brynner’s incomparable characterization of the King into being.

The choice and identification of Yul Brynner as “The King” was one of show business’s fortunate accidents. Yul Brynner was the King incarnate and his gravelly voice, half singing, half shouting, was the template for Rex Harrison’s *sprechstimme* in *My Fair Lady*.¹⁴

An examination of the score reveals that Rodgers and Hammerstein did not envision a King of great lyrical singing ability for the role. The King sings in only two songs, “A Puzzlement” and “Shall We Dance” (“Song of the King” is a brief musically set dialog between the King and Anna and is marked *quasi parlando*). “A Puzzlement,” reportedly written with Brynner in mind,¹⁵ encompasses the range of a tenth (C3–E4)¹⁶ (high notes for Curly and Billy Bigelow were F4 and G4 respectively). The vast majority of the song consists of text set to repeated eighth notes—a declamatory patter-song device. The repeated notes also evoke an image of chanting—both in reference to the King’s Asian origins and to the nature of the song’s exploration of traditional didacticism. As can be heard in the original Broadway cast recording, Brynner sings the song with accurate pitch and with a nearly staccato articulation.¹⁷ Long notes are not used as vehicles for increased lyricism, but as somewhat comic character touches with leaps within the chord that Brynner articulates with a hard attack and often a transition through the second sound of a diphthong—a distinctly non-lyrical feature.

The image shows a musical score for the song "A Puzzlement" from the musical *The King and I*. The score is written in 2/4 time and B-flat major. It consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "There are times I al-most think no-bod-y sure of what he ab-so-lute-ly know,". The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of repeated eighth notes in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand. The dynamic marking is *mp* (mezzo-piano).

Example 1. Richard Rodgers, *The King and I*, “A Puzzlement,” mm. 127–38.

The high notes of the piece (E4) come in the final verse in the King's invocation to Buddha. Brynner's tone quality is gravelly and almost shouted at the top of his voice. However, Rodgers does not leave this as our final auditory picture of the King in the song, as the King's line descends to a more easily sung D4 in a repetition of his prayer, culminating in his spoken conclusion, "But . . . is a puzzlement!"

"Shall We Dance" is a brief and simple melody introducing the King's and Anna's most intimate moment—their polka. The narrow range falls between D4 and C5 for Anna (an octave lower for the King), accommodating the limited singing skills of Gertrude Lawrence as much as those of Yul Brynner. In this brief sample of Brynner's singing, we hear him choose not to sustain a long tone in his solo line, but sustain a similar long tone in unison with Lawrence. Again, his clipped articulation perhaps hides vocal faults but is highly effective in conveying the King's exoticism, his impetuosity, and lack of concern for others' expectations.

From their experience with the operatic Pinza as their leading man, Rodgers and Hammerstein learned that the second man could fill the musical play's need for a traditional romantic voice. In *The King and I* this position is reduced in the role of Lun Tha (played by Larry Douglas), who sings two duets with Tuptim: "We Kiss in the Shadows" and "I Have Dreamed."

Yul Brynner, the King, and *The King and I* set the stage in many ways for Rex Harrison, Henry Higgins, and *My Fair Lady*. Not only did Brynner's robbery of star status from Gertrude Lawrence in the show reveal how completely entrancing a non-singing performance could be, but the lack of an overt love story between the King and Anna opened the door for the non-love story between Higgins and Eliza. The declamatory devices employed by Rodgers and Hammerstein would be expanded upon by Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner to allow Harrison to "not sing" six numbers in the character of Henry Higgins.

While some accounts proclaim Rex Harrison to be Lerner and Loewe's first choice for Professor Henry Higgins, others rank him behind Michael Redgrave, Noel Coward, George Sanders, and John Gielgud.¹⁸ According to Lerner, the idea of Harrison as a musical lead was suggested by Kurt Weill, proposing to cast Harrison as Mack the Knife in a hypothetical English version of *The Threepenny Opera*. To Lerner's question, "Does he sing?" Weill reportedly replied, "Enough."¹⁹ Weill's intriguing suggestion and Shaw's own apparent endorsement of Harrison in the film *Major Barbara* combined to mark Harrison as the man for the job.²⁰

In spite of Rodgers's report of Harrison's confidence in his own singing ability in the context of discussions for *The King and I*, Harrison did not apparently take his lack of singing ability lightly. After agreeing to do the role of Higgins, he sought vocal training in London. After a few unsuccessful traditional *bel canto* voice lessons, Lerner recommended Bill Low, a London musical director. According to Harrison,

[Low] told me not to think about singing the words, but to start by just saying them. He said, "There is such a thing as talking on

pitch—using only those notes that you want to use, picking them out of the score, sometimes more, sometimes less. For the rest of the time, concentrate on staying on pitch, even though you're only speaking." This advice came as a revelation to me, and I practiced away, with Bill's constant encouragement and help, and thus created the style which I used in *My Fair Lady*. I think I was the first actor to use it as a singing style, and it wouldn't have worked without my having an innate sense of rhythm.²¹

Low's instruction seems to reveal his acquaintance with theatrical tradition rather than terrific innovation. The style he taught Harrison was idiomatic to late nineteenth-century ballad singing.

Singers who in the nineteenth century performed in a vocal style closer to the Tin Pan Alley popular song or folk song—singing with more emphasis on consonants and the clarity of the lyrics than on vowels and tonal beauty—were at the time called ballad singers (a confusing term, because popular sentimental ballads of that day were often sung in the legitimate voice). The ballad singer style has been called talk-singing and even "non-singing" by some authorities. Recordings from the 1890s reveal that ballad singing existed before 1900 on the legitimate stage, although it was the exception. For example, the great comedic stage star DeWolf Hopper (1858–1935) sings "You Can Always Explain Things Away," a song from the hit 1890 musical *Castles in the Air* composed by Gustave Kerker, in a style quite similar to Rex Harrison's talk-singing through the songs of Professor Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* (1956).²²

Frederick Loewe was aware of precedents for Harrison's singing style, but attributed the anticipation of this style in his compositional process as spurring him to create a new form. Loewe agreed with Harrison's self-assessment of his rhythmic ability. In a radio interview with Miles Kreuger he identified the vocal technique as *Sprechgesang* and explicated how Harrison's vocal manipulations became an asset to his musical characterization:

The patter songs in *My Fair Lady* are not just rhythmical patter songs, they have a character and a melody of their own. And that is what made it different. It is the combination of the lyrics and *sprechtesang* [sic] that made a new form. Up to then patter songs had no melody to be distinguished. Also they made no attempt in characterization of the character. . . . I attempt characterization in the music, as well as in the lyrics.²³

Higgins's songs include "Why Can't the English?," "I'm an Ordinary Man," "The Rain in Spain," "You Did It," "Hymn to Him," and "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face." As in "A Puzzlement," "Why Can't the English?" is

set principally in eighth notes with long notes acting as periods at the end of sentences.²⁴ Careful attention is paid to proper metrical placement of accented syllables with some rhythmic variations to the eighth note general pattern reflecting natural declamation. The range is C3–C4.

In the original Broadway cast recording, Harrison speaks the first section of the verse, and then sings very accurately the first three measures of the second section of the verse, “This is what the British population,” before reverting to speech.²⁵ The lines Harrison chooses to sing from the chorus are generally the first lines of Loewe’s catchy melody, such as “Hear them down in Soho Square, dropping aitches everywhere” (mm. 28–31) and “Why can’t the English teach their children how to speak?” (mm. 64–67). These singing choices draw attention to the melody and allow us to hear Higgins’s rant as if more of it *were* sung. He also sings “In France every Frenchman knows his language from ‘A’ to ‘Zed,’” which provides through greater contrast a better set-up to the spoken joke, “The French never care what they do, actually, as long as they pronounce it properly.” Harrison’s sense of rhythm is evident in the way his spoken passages line up metrically, often in a natural-sounding strict interpretation of the notated rhythm. When he varies from this rhythm he still manages to line up with the downbeat of the measure.

The choice of sung lines to draw the ear to the melody combined with the rhythmic solidity of Harrison’s performance bolster the impression that he is speaking on the notated pitch. In “Why Can’t the English?” this is rarely true. The word *Sprechstimme* is frequently misused in the context of Harrison’s singing. This word refers to a vocal technique required by Arnold Schoenberg (unfortunately without specific instructions as to its production) to be a rhythmically strict delivery that preserves notated intervals and whose quality inhabits the gray area between song and speech. *Sprechgesang* is a better term to indicate the “type of vocal enunciation intermediate between speech and song” that refers to the ballad singing style described above.²⁶ Harrison’s rhythmicized speaking does not approximate Loewe’s composed melody in this first song and is rather a form of recitation.²⁷

In “An Ordinary Man,” Lerner provides gentle iambs for Higgins’s description of himself and his quiet ways, which Loewe sets to an easy soft-shoe melody. Higgins’s first line in the “ordinary man” sections is notated as spoken but is accompanied by a clarinet melody that possesses the proper rhythmic profile to declaim the text.

These sections are contrasted with the trochaic consequences if one should “let a woman in your life,” set with angular melody accompanied by madcap orchestrations. The number’s range again is confined to an easy Bb2–C4.

Harrison certainly earns his reputation for novelty in his performance of “An Ordinary Man” as surely as Lerner and Loewe deserve credit for enabling the innovation. An examination of Harrison’s singing style in the piece reveals a cunning mixture of vocal stylization. Out of the spoken incipit “I’m an ordinary man” Harrison continues to speak the verse with just a

Moderato

HIGGINS: (Spoken) ①

I'm an ordinary man, who de

(Cl.) (Vln.)

Piano *P* (Str. Hp.)

Example 2. Frederick Loewe, *My Fair Lady*, “An Ordinary Man,” m. 1.

short interlude of singing the easy sing-song melody accompanying “to live exactly as he likes and do” (mm. 3–4).²⁸ His emphasis on the word “precisely” (m. 4) breaks him back into speech. The earlier sung passage is mirrored by singing “doing whatever he thinks is best for him” (mm. 9–10) with the note value on “him” shortened. This allows the rest rather than a sustained note to provide the period for the sentence.

To live ex - act - ly as he likes and do pre - cise - ly what he wants. An av'rage man am I ___ of no ec -

cen - tric whim; ___ who wants to live his life free of strife, do - ing whatev - er he thinks is best for him. ___

Example 3. Loewe, *My Fair Lady*, “I’m an Ordinary Man,” mm. 4–10.

Higgins’s heightened emotion causes Harrison to sing “But let a woman in your life” (mm. 13f); he actually adds notes to the words “But let a” where Loewe provides only the x note-head notation that indicates unpitched declamation or *Sprechgesang* in m. 13. In mm. 22–39 we actually get a true *Sprechgesang* quality.

She'll re - deco - rate your home from the cellar to the dome; Then get on - to the en - thrall - ing fun of o - ver - hauling you.

Example 4. Loewe, *My Fair Lady*, “I’m an Ordinary Man,” m. 22–33.

Harrison matches the notated pitches but without the open-throated, sustained quality of actual singing. The angularity of the melody in the section beginning in m. 42 would make *Sprechgesang* sound like yodeling; Harrison returns to recitation. *Sprechgesang* alternates with recitation in the succeeding section with Loewe’s repeated note setting at m. 82 declaring, as clearly as any direction of “spoken” would, that this is patter to be declaimed. Harrison’s *Sprechgesang* takes on a clarion quality in mm. 131–37 in

response to Higgins's despair that "now all at once you're using language that would make [break into falsetto!] a sailor blush." At the end of the song, Harrison is nearly shouting as the completely exasperated Higgins intones "Let a woman in your life" repeatedly over the jabber of recordings of women's voices played at high speed on several phonographs.

"The Rain in Spain" is in function a cousin to "Shall We Dance?," serving to establish an intimacy through dancing between the non-lovers Eliza and Higgins. The range is wider, from C3–F4 (for the men, Higgins and Pickering). Harrison mostly speaks the didactic lines in which he asks Eliza to repeat her lessons but sings the title line, even ending on the high note!

Analysis of "You Did It" provides just a few new observations not related to Loewe's cleverness for the Hungarian musical touches referring to Zoltan Karpathy. A critical listener will note Harrison's excellent sense of rhythm in contrast with Robert Coote as Pickering struggling against the tempo whether he is singing or declaiming the text. Harrison's range of spoken vocal color is also very much in evidence in this number.

Of course, this technique [that Harrison learned from Bill Low] becomes transparent and boring unless the performer has enormous vocal declamatory range. Harrison's acting voice, which runs the gamut from falsetto to basso-profundo, adds color to all his songs. He has another asset: an extraordinary sense of rhythm.²⁹

Harrison's declamation ranges from crowing, "It was nothing. Really nothing" (mm. 62–65), to aristocratic drawl in the spoken "Thank heavens for Zoltan Karpathy" (mm. 126–43), to low purring ("basso-profundo" is a stretch) in the section Loewe marks *Misterioso-rubato* describing Karpathy "oozing charm from every pore" (mm. 180–85).

"A Hymn to Him" is a straightforward march interspersed with recitative-like sections. This is probably Higgins's least formally complex musical number with the most traditional melodic structure. It contains many more sustained tones in the written melodic line than any music Loewe has hitherto provided for Higgins. Harrison treats the march melody as underscoring to his recitation, avoiding singing the sustained tones. There is very little singing in this number and no *Sprechgesang*. There is however, much range and color in Harrison's declamation, including lots of growling as an outgrowth of his manly exasperation with Eliza.

"I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" is more gently melodic in its refrain, but with many of the repeated eighth notes we have come to recognize as a feature of Higgins's music. The ascending half-steps that set the list of Eliza's attributes, "her smiles, her frowns, her ups, her downs" (mm. 26–27) recognizably approximate pitch patterns used in natural speech. As in "I'm an Ordinary Man," the melody for the first line is found in the strings and woodwinds and not written in the vocal line, diverting the ear to the orchestra for the melody as Harrison mostly delivers the chorus in recitativo style. He sings "are second nature to me now" in mm. 27–28 and then continues in and out of singing until the section beginning with dialogue,

In a year or so, when she's pre-mature-ly gray, And the blos-som in her
 check has turned to chalk, she'll come home, and lo! He'll have upped and run a -
 way, with a so-cial-climb-ing heir-ess from New York! Poor E-li-zal!

Example 5. Loewe, *My Fair Lady*, “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face,” mm. 73–89.

“Marry Freddy!” *Sprechgesang* makes its occasional return in the *Meno mosso* section beginning in m. 78 but gives way to recitation as a bridge into the unpitched *Quasi recitativo* section beginning in m. 88.

Harrison sings throughout the reprise of the A section—even singing the notes at the final cadence for which Loewe uses the x note-head notation. Harrison’s 16 bars of singing are indicative of Higgins’s transformation in the piece to someone who can care for another. In *The Musical as Drama*, Scott McMillin posits Higgins’s tendency to subvert standard song form as giving way to a conventional ending in “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face.”

Before he could never *end* songs. He had to run on with them, carrying them into other songs, refusing to give standard endings to standard formats, but at last he becomes eligible for a singer-character like Eliza by ending the song simply and unassertively. One may argue about changing Shaw’s plot to a conventional romantic outcome, as Lerner and Loewe did, but one has to admire the skill with which they brought this piece of sentiment about.³⁰

The essence of Henry Higgins is as a man of words—of spoken words. He is unable to connect emotionally to others and therefore not a man who expresses himself in melody. It has been argued that Harrison’s performance suffered as he tried to sing more, with director Moss Hart reportedly telling Harrison, “We have a cast full of comedians and we have a cast full of singers. I want you to speak the words, and I don’t want you to be funny. You are the acerbic edge of this show.”³¹ It is only at the end of this almost-in-love song that Higgins is able to muster enough vulnerability to sustain true singing within a lyrical melody.

Rex Harrison’s performance as Professor Henry Higgins is often closely associated with Robert Preston’s performance as “Professor” Harold Hill in Meredith Willson’s *The Music Man*.

Baritone “talk-singers” on Broadway deserve to be considered a separate category. These are singers who actually have very little voice in terms of beauty of production or even in ability to carry a tune, but who can deliver text and radiate character

while still giving the illusion that they are singing because they are so accomplished at speaking. The prototypes of this category are Rex Harrison and Robert Preston.³²

Indeed, the two actors share much in common: both portray characters that center their life's work around words—Higgins in studying their use and pronunciation, Hill in their manipulation to con people. Both actors possess speaking voices of great color and variety, capable of tremendous nuance in pitch and articulation. Both possess terrific senses of rhythm. For both characters, speaking is used to convey their lack of youth and romanticism. However, as we have seen, Harrison allowed his questionable confidence as a singer in tandem with his sense of Higgins's character to inform his choices as to the degree to which he sang or spoke his songs. Preston, too, brought life to the choices made by Meredith Willson.

The talk songs that Lerner and Loewe pioneered revolutionized the musical by extending the ranges of characters available for the starring roles. When *The Music Man* came along two years later—Meredith Willson had been working on the score for seven years—the audience was prepared to hear a leading man chatter his way through several monologues. Anything else would have been overly operatic, for Harold Hill [and] Henry Higgins . . . were not the kind of men who could believably break into full-voiced, lush melodies. Suddenly a wider range of musical material was available to exploit leading characters who didn't fit into the romantic mold.³³

Harold Hill sings “Ya Got Trouble,” “Seventy-Six Trombones,” “The Sadder but Wiser Girl,” “Marian the Librarian” and “Till There Was You.” Of these, only “Ya Got Trouble” predominantly employed what Willson referred to as “speak-song”³⁴—a form of speech within a song that lacks notated pitch but that received the inflections of speech through a regulated, speech-based notated rhythm. Despite his naturalistic lyrics Willson obviously did not consider Hill to be a non-singer's role; he approached several established song-and-dance men about originating the part, including Danny Kaye, Dan Dailey, Gene Kelly, and Phil Harris.³⁵ Instead, it was Robert Preston, a Broadway newcomer known for his work in B-movie Westerns that became associated with Harold Hill.

“Ya Got Trouble” is almost entirely a talk-song.³⁶ Willson provides singing notation for selected places like, “And the next thing you know, your son in playin' fer money in a pinch-black suit and list'nen' to some big out-a-town jasper.” In the original Broadway cast recording, Preston sings this (with a falsetto spoken punch on the word “suit”), realizing the sing-song effect of a sermonizer—or con man in full tilt.³⁷

Indeed, throughout the song, Preston's greatest challenge seems to be not to veer into singing along with the bright orchestrations. A high G4 is notated to be sung on the word “pool” between rehearsal H and I; Preston does not sing it.

B

And the next thing you know, your son is play-in'—fer mon ey in a pinch-back suit, and
list'-nin' to some big out— a-town jas - per hear-in' him tell a -bout horse-race gamb - lin'.

Example 6. Meredith Willson, *The Music Man*, “Ya Got Trouble,” mm. 37–44.

“Seventy-Six Trombones” is sung throughout. Preston’s voice is not the lovely, lyrical instrument of a legit baritone, but neither is Harold Hill a young, romantic lead. Preston sings with confidence and the skillful articulations of an accomplished actor. His voice is pleasant, accurate, and large in comparison to Brynner’s and Harrison’s. The range for the march is C3–F4. Preston sounds uncomfortable at E4 and F4, but does not allow his discomfort to hamper his aplomb.

Willson writes “The Sadder but Wiser Girl” as a combination of talk-singing and singing. Preston errs on the side of singing at rehearsal D where x-notation is used. Preston proves his comparative singing chops in “Marian the Librarian” by confidently and ably sustaining the long notes that portray Hill’s attempt to mesmerize Marian—a feat we have not heard accomplished by our other non-singers. As previously discussed, love duets require singing—actual, tuneful singing. “Till There Was You” provides another example of able, pleasant if not lovely, singing on Preston’s part.

Preston is not quite a non-singer; he has enough vocal ability to sustain a musical phrase, he has an elegant sense of rhythm and a pleasing tone quality. Harold Hill is not quite a non-singing character; he has a heart for the town of River City which makes Preston’s lurking ability to sing an important aspect in revealing Hill’s character.

The final most notable example of a non-singing musical lead in the 1950s is Rosalind Russell’s star turn in *Wonderful Town*. Russell had played Ruth Sherwood in the 1942 Hollywood adaptation of Ruth McKenney’s story “My Sister Eileen.” The story, centering on the adventures of two sisters from Ohio trying to make it in New York, is told from the point of view of Ruth, the strong, practical, less alluring of the sisters. Ruth, the comic character, is the leading lady while Edith Adams’s Eileen, the second lead in the production, is the typical Broadway ingénue. Leonard Bernstein’s score accommodates this dynamic by providing lyrical, romantic melodies for Eileen and big, show-stopping musical numbers that take advantage of Russell’s non-singing performance strengths. According to co-lyricist Adolph Green,

With Rosalind, we had only four weeks to write the score in or we might lose her to some other commitments. She came to us one day and she said, “Listen, Leonard, listen, Betty and Adolph. I’ve got a voice with exactly four notes in it, and you’ve got to

write for those four notes, and you better write some stuff that's pretty funny. Then she goes something like this: "da da da da da da, joke; da dee da da, joke."³⁸

While this pattern is evident in much of Ruth's role, there are some musical moments that stretched Russell beyond this formula to help her portray a well-rounded character. Russell sings in "Ohio," "One Hundred Easy Ways to Lose a Man," "Conversation Piece," "Conga!" "Swing," and "Wrong Note Rag." It is interesting to note that Ruth's entire role is written as if sung by a tenor—in treble clef with an 8 below the clef sign to indicate that it is to be sung in the lower octave.

"Ohio," a spoof of a typical hometown song, is the first example of stretching Russell's self-reported abilities. In the original Broadway cast recording, we hear Russell croon gently and tunefully in harmony with Edith Adams in a range from C3 to Bb4.³⁹ Her quick closures to the diphthong in the third syllable of Ohio are comical and create a howling effect to portray the girls' homesickness. Bernstein provides rhythmic notation for the middle spoken section in which the girls remember what they *don't* miss about Ohio. Russell delivers these with mostly accurate rhythm that strikes the ear as neither stilted nor natural, rather as if a clever girl is reading a lesson that she understands but from which she will not deviate. The final section of this ABA song follows a fresh explosion from the neighboring subway construction site and is sung an octave higher than originally. This encourages the despairing Eileen to sound shrieky and Ruth to sound strident, with Russell belting aggressively.

Russell takes credit for having inspired Comden and Green's lyrics to "One Hundred Easy Ways to Lose a Man" by relating her own early dating experiences.⁴⁰ The song takes advantage of Russell's famous knack for quick talking. Russell certainly does not come across as innately musical in the sung portions of this song. Her attempts at vocal color tend to lead her out of tune and she lacks the sense of rhythm that will propel the song forward. However, her innate performance energy somehow conveys itself in spite of her misfiring musical energy. This performance power keeps the listener eagerly anticipating her return to speech for the meat of the jokes and leaning in for the punch line. The song, strictly following Russell's formula as reported by Green, paints the character of Ruth as hopeless in romance. She believes she doesn't succeed in love because she is unable to allow any man to feel superior to her. She parodies the dumb-bunny flirtation techniques employed to stunning success by her beloved sister Eileen. This song establishes that Ruth cannot hit the right notes in her siren song, therefore it is most fitting that she be portrayed by a non-singer.

Russell's non-traditional talents are further showcased in "Ruth's Stories." The song becomes an uproarious quick-change number in which Ruth pantomimes her own plots while editor Robert Baker (played by George Gaynes) reads her stories. Baker is established as a man with information and insight Ruth lacks and therefore a worthy match for her.

"Conversation Piece" was reportedly a favorite number of Bernstein's.⁴¹

All of the vocal demands of this number about the stilted chat of mismatched people lay firmly on Edith Adam's shoulders as her perky character erupts into Cunegondean coloratura to try to keep the conversation going. Russell's sung parts are in unison—in the same octave!—with the male characters.

Carrying on the tradition of Frank Butler's "The Girl that I Marry" from *Annie Get Your Gun*, Baker, completely lacking in self knowledge, sings of his ideal mate in "A Quiet Girl." According to Russell, it was her own suggestion that Ruth sing a small reprise of the song to show that she loves Baker.⁴² This reprise (not included on the original cast recording) is the most romantic singing notated in the score for Russell. It is a shame there is no audio record to allow us to examine how she fared.

In the ensuing two ensemble numbers Russell sometimes employs a throaty sound reminiscent of Louis Armstrong to convey in "Conga!" the out-of-control situation and in "Swing" her effort to lose control and surrender herself to the music. According to Laufe, "Almost every critic mentioned the number 'Conga!' because it led into one of the most vigorous dances seen on the Broadway stage in years."⁴³ As Ruth tries to get an interview with the Brazilian navy—all of them—who are only interested in dancing the conga, Russell is not required to make a lovelier sound than shouting over what must have been a considerable din.

Recordings of "Swing" made by more capable singers persuade the listener that the humor of the song lies firmly in Russell's non-abilities. Her hyper-literal square interpretations of swing rhythms at the beginning of the song which yield to a hardly more-swinging mesmerized chant by the end create a hilarious effect that is lost by singers who can't help genuinely swinging to Bernstein's irresistible rhythms.

Russell reports making further demands of the show's creators regarding her non-traditional musical theater star needs:

When George Abbott told me I'd have to sing a ballad with the leading man, I put my foot down. "This is going to be the first show ever done where there'll be no singing with the leading man. I promise I'll do the ballad for you one matinee, and you'll see, it'll empty the theatre."⁴⁴

We have seen that love leads people to sing; it seems impossible to bring Ruth and Baker together if Ruth cannot sing to him. The usually helpless sister must come to her capable sister's rescue. Eileen sings the ballad "It's Love," pointing out to Baker that he is in love with Ruth. Eileen and Baker do not sing together, but she hands the ballad off to him in this non-duet of love.

The more compelling love story in the musical is the sisterly relationship between Ruth and Eileen. Therefore the climactic duet in the piece is "The Wrong Note Rag." It seems strange that Russell notes her trepidation about singing harmony in "Ohio" in her memoir, but doesn't mention this far more difficult number.⁴⁵ Ruth sings in unison with Eileen in the really jagged melodies, which allows Russell to sound very secure alongside Edith

49

That note is such a strong note. It makes me

That note is such a strong note. It makes me

Example 7. Leonard Bernstein, *Wonderful Town*, “The Wrong Note Rag,” mm. 49–52.

Adams. Russell manages the dissonant harmonies of the “doo doo doo” refrains well, with a few phrase-ending inaccuracies that are by no means harsh mistakes. Her lack of vocal beauty is an aid to the song—helping it sound more ragged (so to speak) than Bernstein’s harmonies actually are. Russell’s reluctance to sustain tones leads Adams to chop long note values in order to remain in unison with her—again a feature that fits the style of song very well—as in mm. 49–52 in which both occurrences of the word “note” are sung as staccato quarter notes rather than the half-notes tied over the bar lines that Bernstein provided.

Rosalind Russell’s importance to *Wonderful Town* can be seen in its rapid box office decline after she finished her performances; the character of Ruth was so completely tailored to both Russell’s abilities and inabilities that this musical didn’t seem to resonate so well without her. (Although a 2003 revival starring Donna Murphy that ran for 493 performances proves that the show can transcend Russell’s memory.) As Laufe observes,

As [Russell’s] replacement, the producers brought in Carol Channing. . . . She handled the songs, which had definitely been written for Miss Russell, in a more than capable manner with perfect timing, particularly in the “Swing” number. She hurled the gags in the dialogue effectively, but with less zip than Miss Russell . . . the reviewers who covered the show for a second time admired her performance; but the show no longer drew so well at the box office. . . . *Wonderful Town* did have a long run of 559 performances on Broadway, but showmen wondered just how long the production might have run if Miss Russell had stayed in the cast.⁴⁶

Led by the innovation of Rodgers and Hammerstein, the 1950s saw the rise of the non-singing lead in the Broadway musical. It was a step forward for the musical to be able musically to portray a character that is incapable of singing using an actor with equal incapacity. Indeed, using non-singing actors became almost a fad.

[The leading man who cannot sing] was quite a novelty then, though it became more common as the decade wore on. Before Rex Harrison's Henry Higgins, Rosalind Russell, Hildegard "Neff", and Ralph Meeker were all signed to "sing" leads in musicals, though this meant careful, indulgent composition of the songs for actors who more or less couldn't carry a tune (and though Meeker ultimately gave up, on *The Pajama Game*, during rehearsals). After *My Fair Lady*, Ricardo Montalban, Max Adrian, Sydney Chaplin, Jack Warden, Steve Forrest, Farley Granger, Barry Sullivan (he, too left before a Broadway opening), Keye Luke, Tony Randall, Melvyn Douglas, and Walter Pidgeon all brought varying non-abilities as vocalists to leads in musicals; and Robert Preston and Andy Griffith could actually sing.⁴⁷

It is small wonder that Broadway creators should be inspired by the performances of Yul Brynner, Rex Harrison, Robert Preston, and Rosalind Russell to continue to stretch the boundaries of what types of characters could drive a musical play and of ways actors can use—or not use—music to portray these characters. However, the creators' success relied on these particular non-singing actors' dedicated portrayal of every nuance of the text they were given through musical and non-musical means. Likewise, these stars' success relied on the genius of their shows' composers and librettists in adapting the form to their special skills and limitations.

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Peter Purin

An Examination of Don Walker's Style of Orchestration in *The Pajama Game*, *The Most Happy Fella*, and *The Music Man*

The creative process of a 1950s Broadway musical is typically credited to one or two people. If someone were asked about the responsible party for the creation of *Guys and Dolls*, the likely response would be Frank Loesser. *My Fair Lady* is called a Lerner and Loewe show and *The King and I* the work of Rodgers and Hammerstein. While it is true that the composer and lyricist have a great deal of importance in the creation of a musical, one must also recognize the efforts of many others involved. Choreographers, producers, costume designers, and numerous others often fail to receive much credit for the important role they had in creating a show.

The composer's shadow looms especially large over that of the orchestrator, who is typically overlooked because the composer generally receives credit for the music. Orchestration is a skilled craft that shapes the style and sound of a musical. Poor or inappropriate orchestrations can ruin the style of the composers' songs, as evidenced in accounts of Philip J. Lang's original orchestrations for *Annie Get Your Gun*.¹

The critics' reaction has generally not helped the orchestrator emerge from obscurity. A general ignorance of the craft has existed among some reviewers. Lehman Engel quotes Alan Dale in the *American* as having made the following comments on orchestration: "Anything quaintly orchestrated can be exquisite. . . . Personally, orchestrations 'obsess' me, I seldom find any worthwhile."² Comments such as these might actually discourage a person from learning about an orchestrator.

Even among many 1950s Broadway scholars the orchestrator in the musical creation process is mentioned only briefly. Composers (not just in the 1950s) need the assistance of at least one orchestrator to complete the musical scoring in time for a show's run. During the rehearsal process, the composer's attention is pulled to working with actors, business dealings, writing replacement songs, and working out details of particular numbers, among other things. Considering a rehearsal period during the 1950s was typically four weeks, this did not allow the composer the time to score a show, even if he or she had the skill or desire to do so.³ Leonard Bernstein had both the desire and the skill to orchestrate *West Side Story*, but lacked

the time, even though the show had an eight-week rehearsal period. He remained a supervisor of orchestrations, but deferred to Irwin Kostal and Sid Ramin. According to Ramin, "If he had the time, he wouldn't even need us. . . . When it came to *West Side Story*, every note is his."⁴

During the rehearsal period the orchestrator would work on scoring the music and sometimes act as arranger and even composer of musical interludes. If the composer lacked the time to add musical underscoring for a scene change or additional dance music, the orchestrator may have been called in to write this music. A chief duty of the orchestrator involved writing the overture, an extremely important job as the overture sets the tone of the entire show for the audience. Often, the important themes are arranged into a large medley, giving the audience a first taste of the upcoming tunes.⁵ Regrettably, the practice of including an overture has been largely abandoned in more recent shows, and even in revivals of standards.

A probable reason for the lack of scholarship in this aspect of the field is the unavailability of full musical scores. While most Broadway shows have readily available piano/vocal scores, full scores are a rarity. The full scores that do still exist are often held in private collections or by licensing companies like Music Theatre International (MTI). Even MTI full scores are rarely leased for current productions, making it difficult for scholarly light to be shed upon the work of orchestrators.

Robert Russell Bennett is one orchestrator of the 1950s who has received just attention.⁶ However, Bennett was not the only one orchestrating or even the only prolific orchestrator working in the 1950s. Don Walker (1907–1989) scored a number of hit 1950s Broadway musicals. In the 1950s alone, there were twenty-seven shows running on Broadway featuring Walker's orchestrations.⁷ Among the heavy hitters whose music he scored were composers such as Frank Loesser, Meredith Willson, Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, Richard Rodgers, Cole Porter, and Leonard Bernstein.

This article examines the orchestrations from three of Don Walker's shows of the 1950s and demonstrates how Walker captured the dramatic intentions inherent in the piano/vocal scores prepared by the composers. Also noted are the particular stylistic traits that make Walker's orchestrations his own. The three shows of this study have been chosen from his vast output as representatives of his broad style: *The Pajama Game* (1954), *The Most Happy Fella* (1956), and *The Music Man* (1957). These works represent a wide spectrum of styles (pure musical comedy, operatic, and speech singing) yet retain some stylistic consistency due in part to Walker's scoring.

Born in 1907 in Lambertville, New Jersey, Walker received his early musical training from his piano teacher Mary Gillingham Brown. She provided him with a book on orchestration and he worked on honing his craft by arranging for jazz dance orchestras from the age of 14. His first professional arranging gig came after he graduated from college with an economics degree. Rather than take a job making \$35 a week in the life insurance industry, he was hired by Fred Waring to arrange for one of his orchestras at \$125 a week.⁸ Early in his professional life, Don Walker also arranged hit songs for

radio, live shows, and recordings. He secured a job arranging a couple of songs for Al Goodman and his group, which eventually brought him into contact with Sigmund Romberg.⁹ Walker orchestrated Romberg's music for the radio series *The Swift Hour* in 1934–35 and *An Evening with Sigmund Romberg* in the 1940s. William Everett's book on Romberg describes Walker's orchestrations as being "rich and string-dominated, following standard practices of the 1940s."¹⁰ His relationship with Romberg led to his first work on Broadway, *May Wine* (1935), and he continued to orchestrate for Romberg into the 1950s.

When Romberg died, Walker finished the score for *The Girl in Pink Tights* (1954).¹¹ Ethan Mordden explains that Walker attempted to replicate Romberg's style by fleshing out Romberg's sketches in the composer's style. In the end, Walker's own compositional voice crept in, and the result was a changed style.¹² During this time, Walker was under contract with Chappell Music, along with Robert Russell Bennett, Hans Spialek, and Ted Royal. This association led to Walker doing the majority of the work on Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* (1945). Around 1950, Walker ended his contract with Chappell, but continued to rise as a much sought-after orchestrator. According to Jon Alan Conrad, Walker's work stands out because his style was versatile; he did not score according to a preformatted template, but made every show an individual creation. Although he may not have been the first, he helped make the important contribution of changing the Broadway norm by not doubling the vocal line in the orchestra.¹³

Walker became known to some creators as a "typical musical-comedy" orchestrator, and thus was hired by Rodgers and Hammerstein for *Me and Juliet*. This was in opposition to Robert Russell Bennett, who was considered more of a "grandiose" operetta-style orchestrator.¹⁴ Walker was known more for his mastery of the swing sound, and for using more brass in his orchestration than others. One example is the use of four trumpets, four trombones, and saxophones noted by Rodgers himself in *Me and Juliet*.¹⁵ Rodgers even made the comment that "Walker is one of the major progenitors of the musical comedy pit sound, not, like Bennett, an operetta man."¹⁶ Walker himself saw it differently. In his own account, Walker stated: "Then Rommie [Sigmund Romberg] knew that I was a 'legitimate' orchestrator and not just a 'jazz baby.'"¹⁷ Although one might quibble about the accuracy of these opinions, it is important to note how Richard Rodgers, one of the most important creators of Broadway musicals in the 1950s, perceived Walker's style. In the following discussion of songs from *The Pajama Game*, *The Most Happy Fella*, and *The Music Man*, I will show that despite the diversity in genre and instrumentation, common stylistic elements prevail throughout Walker's body of work.¹⁸

The Pajama Game

The Pajama Game is clearly a musical comedy, and the effects this has on the scoring of the show are crucial. The songs make up a panorama of musical styles. "There Once Was a Man" is a mix between a musical comedy duet and a country-western song. The striking component of the scoring

is the omnipresent guitar. It is strummed consistently throughout (although this is not indicated in the piano/vocal score), with the following rhythmic figure: ♩ ♪ ♪ ♩ This song features instrumental fills when the vocal lines hold longer notes. Example 1 is an excerpt from “There Once Was a Man,”

73
There once was a man _____ who loved a wo-man.

Vls.
Trb. [Trb.]

81
— She was the one he ate that apple for. _____ They say that

87
no-bo dy ev-er loved as much as he, _____ but me _____

95
_____ I love you more! _____

[Brass glissandos] Trbs. *f*

Example 1. Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, *The Pajama Game*, Vocal Score (New York: Frank Music Corp., 1954), “There Once Was a Man,” mm. 73–101.

shown as a piano/vocal reduction. Aspects of the orchestration are noted with labels for the instruments, such as the above-mentioned trombone in m. 75. These fills are typically jazzy brass, such as a trombone with a lot of slide and a muted trumpet. Each of these fills acts as a response to the vocal call. These fills are important to further discussion on Walker's style of orchestration, but also raise the question of whether Adler and Ross included them in the original piano/vocal score. Even if they had, it still fell on Walker to set the instrumentation.

"Hey There," a typical musical comedy ballad, includes violin fills during vocal rests, soft strings in chordal texture, and other beautiful moments of scoring. However, this analysis turns out to be inconsequential when considering the works of Don Walker because, although Walker receives sole orchestration credit, "Hey There" was orchestrated by Irwin Kostal.¹⁹ One important aspect of orchestration in Walker's time (and even now) is that although one person was generally credited, this person would have additional "sub-contracted" orchestrators to lend a hand in scoring. *The Pajama Game* team under Walker consisted of Seymour (Robert) "Red" Ginzler and Irwin Kostal, along with dance arranger Roger Adams.²⁰ Without source material, it is impossible to determine which songs Walker himself orchestrated, and which ones he sub-contracted to his team. However, with Walker being the primary, credited orchestrator, it is likely that his team would work to match his scoring techniques. This would help to bring a sense of coherence to the show's sound. It is also likely that Walker would make corrections if something one of his sub-contractors scored did not fit into his style. Even with these considerations, because there were different people scoring certain songs, these songs need to be eliminated from a study of Walker's style. To gain a more precise idea of Walker's style, I will focus only on numbers he scored individually.²¹

The up-tempo number "Once-a-Year Day" exhibits several important aspects of Walker's style. The instrumental fills are not only at the end of each phrase or sub-phrase, but occur within phrases as well. This song lends itself to this type of scoring because of the strong eighth-note rests on downbeats in the vocal line (Example 2a, m. 55 & m. 57). In m. 54, Walker uses quick brass flourishes (written out in the score as triplet sixteenth notes) as fills that lead to an instrumental hit on the downbeat of m. 55 while the voice rests. This number highlights another important aspect of Walker's style—choosing to orchestrate subsequent hearings of the same melody with different scoring. When this melody next occurs, instead of brass fills there is a lengthened flourish in the violin (Example 2b, m. 69). It serves a similar purpose, but the additional length, different register, and timbre of the instrument provide something new for the listener.

The evidence would indicate that Walker was able to score this show with a lot of the skills he had learned from jazz arranging, and it seems appropriate to agree with Rodgers here that he is indeed a "musical comedy" man.

a. mm. 53–60

53 This is our once - a - year day. [brass flourish]

[guitar fill] [brass flourish]

57 Once - a - year day, Once a year we lose our sen - ses

57

b. mm. 69–76

69 E. Hn., Cl.
this is that [tr] once - a - year day, [strg. flourish]

[lengthened string flourish] Strgs.

73 Once - a - year day, Ev - ry-one's en - tled to be

73 [tr] [strg. flourish] [tr]

Example 2. Adler and Ross, *The Pajama Game*, "Once-a-Year Day."

The Most Happy Fella

This label, however, is severely undermined when *The Most Happy Fella* is taken into consideration, and Walker's earlier account of his own legitimacy as an orchestrator comes into full bloom.²² This show is much more dramatic and more thickly scored than a typical musical comedy, and is often considered an operetta or opera. Frank Loesser, the show's composer, avoided calling this music-heavy production an opera, for fear of the consequences that the term might have on its commercial success. Instead, he referred to it as "a musical with a lot of music."²³

Walker himself gives two separate accounts on this topic. In the first he is quoted as saying "this is Musical Comedy expanded. Not an opera cut down."²⁴ A later source cites him as saying "*The Most Happy Fella*, . . . was really an opera, although Frank just called it a musical play."²⁵ Perhaps the change in Walker's description came from perspective. The first account likely arose during the run of the show and, like Loesser, perhaps Walker did not want to hinder ticket sales by calling the show an opera. The second account came from late in Walker's life, in a newspaper interview, in which he would not have needed to worry about calling the show exactly what he thought it was.

Some musical theatre composers include quasi-Wagnerian associative themes throughout their musicals. It was probably Loesser's choice where exactly these themes would be included in the score of *The Most Happy Fella*. Geoffrey Block shows from Loesser's sketchbooks that the composer did much of the arranging of the counterpoint. However, it is unclear from Block's analysis of the "Tony" motive whether it is Loesser or Walker who decided on the use of clarinets to give it such a sweet, yearning character at the end of Tony's solo aria, "Mamma, Mamma" (Example 3, mm. 64–65).

"Mamma, Mamma" ends with tremolo strings in octaves, a harp glissando and full orchestral sound that make a gigantic, dramatic, and emotional statement at the end of act 2. Besides the use of this associative theme, the orchestration here is quasi-operatic. This seems to anticipate the highly dramatic instrumentation and epic sound of Broadway megamusicals of recent decades such as *The Secret Garden*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, and *Beauty and the Beast*.

Walker chose a much fuller ensemble to score *The Most Happy Fella* (see Appendix B). Because of this, he was able to provide distinct colors for many important motives. "I Donno Noting About You" becomes a pivotal motive for the show, and Walker helps it become distinct through the use of three French horns (with trombone bass). The sheer number of horns, atypical in musical theatre, may be another reason why this show is often associated with opera. At the start of this section, the brass moves in almost strictly parallel motion. Finally, when Amy reads "I want to get marry" the strings enter, suggesting an overtly romantic musical correlation. When Tony repeats the motive to Marie (m. 219) and at the end when he sings it to Amy (m. 297), the scoring remains the same each time. The similarities to Wagnerian music drama are intriguing.

56

Tell - a me Mam - ma, Mam - ma, up in Heav - en, How - ya like - a

Strgs.

59

my sweet - heart? How - ya like - a my sweet -

add W.W. 2

Low brass, string bass, cello

64

heart?

Vln. Tremolos

Tony motive-Cl.

harp gliss.

harp gliss.

Example 3. Frank Loesser, *The Most Happy Fella*, Vocal Score and Libretto (New York: Frank Music Corp., 1957) "Mamma, Mamma," mm. 55–69.

116
I don no not ing a - bout you. where you ev - er go. wat you ev - er done I don no not - ing a - bout you.

[Fr. Horns]
[Trombone]

122
I don wan na no I don got - ta no. Wat I see is kind of yung la - dy I want to get mar - ry.

122
fp *fp* *pp* *mp*
Stgs.
Harp plus.

Example 4. Loesser, *The Most Happy Fella*, “I Donno Noting About You,” mm. 116–27.

a. mm. 23–26

23
Jo - cy. Jo - cy, Jo - cy

W.W.
pp Strgs.

b. mm. 39–42

39
Jo - cy. Jo - cy, Jo - cy

E. Hn.
pp Strgs.

Example 5. Loesser, *The Most Happy Fella*, “Joey, Joey, Joey.”

c. mm. 71–74

71 *ppp* (*Sotto voce*)
Jo - ey, Jo - ey, Jo - ey

Celeste

ppp Strgs.

Example 5 (continued). Loesser, *The Most Happy Fella*, “Joey, Joey, Joey.”

Walker’s use of different orchestrations for a repeated melody is also to be found in “Joey, Joey, Joey.” The first statement of the chorus melody features harp glissandos and triplet patterns of woodwinds in thirds that perhaps represent the wind that “sings” to Joe (Example 5a). In the next repetition of the chorus, an English horn solo provides the countermelody (Example 5b). The final chorus features a rapidly moving celeste, with the effect of evoking an even more distant, soft wind blowing behind a *ppp sotto voce* Joe (Example 5c). It is as though the wind’s message to Joe is changing in each repetition, augmenting the dramatic idea of Joe being a drifter.

Despite the epic nature of the scoring throughout *The Most Happy Fella*, Walker does not completely abandon his musical comedy style. His jazz roots remain, especially as showcased in the number “Big D” (Example 6).

Piu mosso
(Dixieland style)

Tpt., Trb., St. Bass, Cl., Sax., Drums

159 W.W.
Trbs.

161 Trpts.

170

Example 6. Loesser, *The Most Happy Fella*, “Big D,” mm. 159–174.

Cleo and Herman are Loesser's comedic couple, straight out of a typical musical comedy. "Big D" is their appropriate comedic duet, which eventually becomes a dance number. The dance also turns out to be in a Dixieland jazz style, where Walker takes full liberty in scoring a remarkably authentic-sounding Dixieland dance number (although the instrumentation is richer than typical Dixieland). The number serves the purpose of breaking up the drama of the lead romance, as the actions of these characters often do—in fact, songs featuring Cleo and Herman, whether together or as solos, all easily fit the mold of typical musical comedy—but because of the fullness of the orchestration, the number does not seem out of place within the more operatic sound-world of this work.

The Music Man

The Music Man has the charm and jazz stylization of a musical comedy, with Walker getting credit for the orchestration. However, the only number he scored in the show was "Ya Got Trouble" and its reprise.²⁶ Both numbers are crucially important to the show, and they provide another glimpse into Walker's styles and ability to handle the challenges involved in scoring speech-song.

Meredith Willson's use of the speech-song was quite an innovative compositional tool. However, there is historical precedent for this, and comparisons can be drawn in terms of orchestration. Gilbert and Sullivan made the patter song famous. Songs like "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General" (Example 7) do not derive their entertainment value from their beautiful flowing melodies. Rather, the joy for the audience comes from the singer-actor spitting out as many words as possible within a very long musical phrase. The lyrics do not further the plot or develop character, except perhaps for the character's silliness. They are simply witty lines, often with self-consciously clever rhymes.

The orchestration of the operetta patter song is usually rather light. In "Modern Major-General," the instrumentation (woodwinds, strings, brass, timpani) is thicker during the introduction and when the chorus sings. When the vocal line enters, a relatively simple, homorhythmic, chordal harmony (*pp* strings only) supports a consistent melody line of rapidly moving

melody doubled by vln

I'm ve-ry good at in-te-gral and differ-en-tial cal-cu-lus; I know the sci-en-ti-fic names of be-ings an-i-mal-cu-lous; in
Then I can write a wash-ing bill in Ba-by-lon-ic cu-nei-form, And tell you ev'ry de-tail of Ca-rac-ta-cus's u-ni-form; in

Sparse accompaniment

vln, vla

vc, str bass

Example 7. W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan, *The Pirates of Penzance*, Vocal Score (New York: G. Schirmer, 2002), "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General," mm. 37–41.

Detailed Orchestration

The image shows a musical score for 'Der Mondfleck' by Arnold Schoenberg. It is a 'Detailed Orchestration' for a chamber ensemble. The score includes parts for Piccolo (Pic.), Klarinett (B) (Kl. (B)), Geige (G.), Violoncello (Vcl.), Stimme (voice), and Piano (pno.). The vocal line is written in a 'Sprechstimme' style, with 'x' marks on the note stems indicating pitch approximation. The lyrics are: 'er be - sieht sich rings und fin - det rich - tig'. The piano accompaniment is sparse, with dynamic markings like *pp*, *mf*, and *f*. The score is in a key with one flat and a 3/4 time signature.

Example 8. *Sprechstimme* in Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot Lunaire* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1914), No.18, “Der Mondfleck,” m. 9.

eighth notes, sung by Major-General Stanley and doubled by a violin. The simplicity of the accompaniment enables the vocal line to come into greater focus than if it were more elaborately scored, and thus enables the listener to focus more on the words.

Schoenberg’s use of *Sprechstimme* in *Pierrot Lunaire* also gives another historical precedent for Willson’s use of rhythm-inspired speech (Example 8). The x on each note stem directs the singer to only approximate a pitch while stressing syllabic articulation.

This technique intends to give a general idea of vocal pitch direction, without the precision of normally notated melody. Schoenberg used it for dramatic purposes. As opposed to a lightly accompanied patter song, *Sprechstimme* pieces usually employed detailed orchestration, but within a chamber setting, allowing the singer to be heard more effectively.

In *The Music Man*, lyrics are not only important, they are crucial to the storyline. Harold Hill is a salesman and words are his livelihood. If the audiences in River City and in the theater do not comprehend what he is selling, then the rest of the show will fail. Willson uses a mixture of patter song and *Sprechstimme* techniques to let Professor Hill’s point be made, and Don Walker takes the cue to his own pen.²⁷

Orchestrations in *The Music Man* are especially effective at portraying character. During the songs in which Harold Hill is pitching ideas to the people of River City (“Ya Got Trouble” and its reprise) his scoring is consistent (Example 9). Walker’s mastery of jazz and the jazz band sound again makes itself clear. There is a prominent, active bass line and sharply articulated chords in the brass. Yet at times, Walker simplifies the accompaniment to an even greater extent than in “Modern Major-General” and the thin texture

A

think, my friends, how could an-y pool ta-ble ev-er hope to com-pete with a gold from bone? Raaaa Raaaa

Fl. Cl.

[light strgs.]

[Active bass line (also snare drum)]

22

Ru da da - da - da - Raa - a - Ra Re - member, my friends, what a hand ful of trumpet play-ers did to the fa-mous,

27

fa-bled walls of Jer-i-cho! Oh, bil-liard par-lor walls come tumbling down!

Brass Strgs. pizz.

Strg. ff pp

Example 9. Meredith Willson, *The Music Man*, Vocal Score (New York: Frank Music Corp., and Rinimer Corp., 1982), “Ya Got Trouble (Reprise),” mm. 17–32.

is also pivotal to the drama here. There is very light treble instrumentation accompanying Hill that is supported only by the bass. The brass hits never interfere with the text. The scoring only gets more complicated as the lowans become more enthralled by Hill’s sales pitch. The denser the scoring gets, the more the people of River City believe him. In some productions more citizens are added to the scene as the song progresses. They are akin to a chorus at a revival meeting responding to the ‘preaching’ of Professor Hill, whose lines become a call to which they ever increasingly respond. From this sung reaction, it is obvious that by the end of “Ya Got Trouble (Reprise)” they completely buy into his ideas.

A practical reason for the scoring to be light during the pivotal lyrics is that speaking is inherently more difficult to project than singing. A strong singer can project his or her singing voice over an orchestra. Walker realized that *speaking* over an orchestra would be much more difficult. It is not until the audience is sold on Hill’s pitch that the orchestration can get thick-

er. Too simple an accompaniment, like in “Modern Major-General,” would have been redundant. Willson and Walker engage the audience to an even greater extent by using an upbeat, rhythmically diverse bass line that acts as a contributing counterpoint to Hill’s pitch.

Walker: A Versatile Stylist

As evidenced in these vastly different musicals, Don Walker orchestrated music that would fit the sound and style called for by each composer’s work. In terms of defining a style for Walker, it is clear that his early experiences in jazz arranging affected much of his work. His regular use of active bass lines, instrumental fills over held vocal notes or rests, muted trumpets, and brass hits are all regular techniques for jazz arranging. This style fits very well with musical comedy songs. On the other hand, when a score calls for something entirely different, Walker does not appear to have any problem scoring fuller instrumentation for works in which the musical language borders on an operatic style. His ability to adapt to the work of others and still retain a sense of identity was a trait that production teams noticed. Walker even made the following comment: “I always tried for a recognizably ‘different’ instrumentation. Each show has its own special character and the orchestration should express that.”²⁸ This must certainly have been a factor in why he was so prolific in the 1950s and beyond. After the twenty-seven shows that Walker worked on in the 1950s (see Appendix A), he went on to orchestrate Broadway hits like Kander and Ebb’s *Cabaret* and Bock and Harnick’s *Fiddler on the Roof*, and so had a productive career on Broadway for three decades. The plethora of material Walker orchestrated not just for Broadway, but for jazz orchestras, radio programs, and television, should provide fertile ground for further research on understanding the significant impact this man has had on American popular music. More research might also be focused on other orchestrators as well, to give credit where it is due to the people who contribute so much to the final sound of a Broadway musical.

Appendix A**Don Walker's Work in Broadway Shows, 1950–1959²⁹**

Mar. 23, 1950–May 6, 1950	<i>Great to Be Alive!</i>
Oct. 12, 1950–May 3, 1952	<i>Call Me Madam</i>
Dec. 13, 1950–Feb. 24, 1951 (orchestration, composed and arranged ballet music, wrote song "The Desert Flame")	<i>Bless You All</i> (Revue)
June 14, 1951–July 14, 1951 (composed music and lyrics, vocal arrangements)	<i>Courtin' Time</i>
Nov. 1, 1951–Oct. 4, 1952	<i>Top Banana</i>
Jan. 3, 1952–Apr. 18, 1953 (special orchestrations)	<i>Pal Joey</i> (Revival)
May 5, 1952–July 5, 1952	<i>Of Thee I Sing</i> (Revival)
June 25, 1952–Nov. 28, 1953	<i>Wish You Were Here</i>
Oct. 14, 1952–Oct. 18, 1952	<i>Buttrio Square</i>
Dec. 15, 1952–Mar. 8, 1953	<i>Two's Company</i> (Revue)
Feb. 11, 1953–Sept. 19, 1953	<i>Hazel Flagg</i>
Feb. 18, 1953–Feb. 21, 1953	<i>Maggie</i>
Feb 25, 1953–July 3, 1954	<i>Wonderful Town</i>
May 28, 1953–Apr. 3, 1954 (vocal arrangements and orchestrations)	<i>Me and Juliet</i>
Sept. 8, 1953–Sept. 12, 1953	<i>Carnival in Flanders</i>
Mar. 5, 1954–June 12, 1954 (music adapted and orchestrated)	<i>The Girl in Pink Tights</i>
May 13, 1954–Nov. 24, 1956	<i>The Pajama Game</i>
Oct. 11, 1954–Dec. 4, 1954	<i>On Your Toes</i> (Revival)
Dec. 2, 1954–Dec. 4, 1954	<i>Hit the Trail</i>
Feb. 24, 1955–Apr. 14, 1956	<i>Silk Stockings</i>
Apr. 18, 1955–Sept. 17, 1955 (vocal and orchestral arrangements)	<i>Ankles Aweigh</i>
May 5, 1955–Oct. 12, 1957	<i>Damn Yankees</i>
May 18, 1955–May 29, 1955	<i>Finian's Rainbow</i> (Revival)
May 3, 1956–Dec. 14, 1957	<i>The Most Happy Fella</i>
Dec. 6, 1956–Nov. 30, 1957 (additional orchestrations)	<i>Happy Hunting</i>
Dec. 19, 1957–Apr. 15, 1961	<i>The Music Man</i>
Mar. 19, 1959–May 30, 1959	<i>First Impressions</i>

Appendix B

A Comparison of Don Walker's Instrumentation for
The Pajama Game, *The Most Happy Fella*, and *The Music Man*

This definitive list was compiled from transcription and the Music Theater International website www.mtishows.com.

	<i>The Pajama Game</i>	<i>The Most Happy Fella</i>	<i>The Music Man</i>
Woodwinds	(5 Reeds) Piccolo (Reed 1) Flute (Reed 1) English Horn (Reed 3) Clarinet (Reed 1-4) Bass Clarinet (Reed 5) Alto Sax (Reed 1, 2) Tenor Sax (Reed 3, 4) Baritone Sax (Reed 5)	(5 Reeds) Piccolo (Reed 1, 3) Flute (Reed 1) Alto Flute (Reed 1) Oboe (Reed 2) English Horn (Reed 2) Clarinet (Reed 3, 4) Bass Clarinet (Reed 4) Soprano Sax (Reed 3)	(5 Reeds) Piccolo (Reed 1, 4) Flute (Reed 1, 4) Oboe (Reed 2) English Horn (Reed 2) Clarinet (Reed 2-5) Eb Clarinet (Reed 3) Bass Clarinet (Reed 4) Soprano Sax (Reed 3) Baritone Sax (Reed 5) Bass Sax (Reed 5) Bassoon (Reed 5)
Brass	Bassoon (Reed 5) Trumpet (3) Trombone (3)	Bassoon (Reed 5) Trumpet (2) Trombone (2) Horn (3)	Trumpet (3) Trombone (2) Bass Trombone
Strings	Violin (4) Viola Cello Bass Guitar	Violin (2) Viola Cello Bass Harp	Violin (3) Cello (2) Bass

Percussion*	<i>The Pajama Game</i> (1 Percussionist)	<i>The Most Happy Fella</i> (2 Percussionists)	<i>The Music Man</i> (1 Percussionist)
	Bells	Bells	Bells
	Xylophone	Xylophone Vibraphone	Glockenspiel Xylophone Vibraphone
	Timpani	Chimes Timpani	Timpani
	Cymbal Temple Blocks	Tambourine Cymbal	Cymbal Temple Blocks
	Snare Drum	Wood Block	Wood Block
	Castanets	Bass Drum	Snare Drum Bass Drum
		Triangle Whistle Traps	Triangle Whistle
		Scrapers Police Whistle	
		Gourd	
	Cowbell	Ratchet	
	Slapstick	Cowbell Slapstick Wind Whistle	
	Gong Drum Kit		High Hat Tom Tom
Keyboard	Piano	Accordion Celeste (dpls. Accordion)	Piano Celeste (dpls. Piano)

* Authors note: Harp, celeste, piano, and guitar could alternatively be grouped as a rhythm section along with percussion instruments

NOTES

1. Laurence Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990), 445–460.
2. Lehman Engel, *The American Musical Theater*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), 179.
3. *Ibid.*, 172.
4. Humphrey Burton, *Leonard Bernstein* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 269–70.
5. Engel, *The American Musical Theater*, 172.
6. See Robert Russell Bennett, “*The Broadway Sound*”: *The Autobiography and Selected Essays of Robert Russell Bennett*, ed. George J. Ferencz (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1999) and George J. Ferencz, *Robert Russell Bennett: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).
7. See Appendix A for a full list of Don Walker’s work on Broadway in the 1950s.
8. Bill Allison, “The Kid from Lambertville,” *New Hope Gazette*, 1 July 1982, 3.
9. Bill Allison, “The Further Adventures of Don Walker,” *New Hope Gazette*, 8 July 1982, 3.
10. William A. Everett. *Sigmund Romberg*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 278.
11. *Ibid.*, 226, 242, 276–78.
12. Ethan Mordden, *Coming Up Roses: The Broadway Musical in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 94–95.
13. Jon Alan Conrad, “Don Walker.” Grove Music Online, ed. L. Macy, www.grove-music.com (accessed 9 February 2009). The term *doubling* is used when the vocal melody is also played in any instrumental part in any octave. This was commonplace on Broadway before Walker helped to change the practice, allowing the vocalist more freedom and the instrumental scoring to be more detailed.
14. Ethan Mordden, *Rodgers & Hammerstein* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 153–54.
15. William Hyland, *Richard Rodgers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 134, 222.
16. Ethan Mordden, *Broadway Babies: The People Who Made the American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 140–41.
17. Allison, “The Further Adventures of Don Walker,” 3.
18. Appendix B shows the precise instrumentation of each show, and helps illustrate the main differences in orchestration between the shows.
19. Steven Suskin, “On the Record: *Caroline, or Change* and *Ankles Away*,” Playbill.com (25 July 2004), www.playbill.com/news/article/87525.html (accessed 11 February 2009). Sources do exist for Walker’s work on the introduction, the reprise, an incidental, and more importantly a six-stave utility for the song that could easily be fleshed out by another arranger. The source materials concerning “Hey There” are among the collection of Don Walker materials housed at the Library of Congress.
20. *Ibid.*
21. For details of all numbers specifically scored by Walker see Steven Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway: A Book of Orchestrations and Orchestrators* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
22. Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical From ‘Show Boat’ to Sondheim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 214–15. A more extensive analysis of orchestration in this show would inevitably lead to Loesser’s compositional sketchbook in the Music Division of the New York Public Library.
23. *Ibid.*, 211.
24. Stanley Green, *The World of Musical Comedy: The Story of the American Musical Stage as Told Through the Careers of its Foremost Composers and Lyricists* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1974), 335.
25. Bill Allison, “Don Walker, Arranger of Musicals,” *New Hope Gazette*, 15 July 1982, 3.
26. According to the Internet Broadway Database, additional orchestration credits include Sidney Fine, Irwin Kostal, Seymour Ginzler, and Walter Eiger, with dance arrangements by Laurence Rosenthal and vocal arrangements by Herbert Greene.

27. The similarities between Robert Preston's Harold Hill and Rex Harrison's Henry Higgins speech-style singing in *My Fair Lady* (1956) are quite evident. Further research into Frederick Loewe's score, with Robert Russell Bennett and Phil Lang's arrangements, might reveal some precedent for Willson's and Walker's work on *The Music Man*. For additional consideration of this topic, see Sharon O'Connell Campbell, "The Actor's Voice: The Non-Singing Lead in Broadway Musicals of the 1950s."

28. Allison, "Don Walker, Arranger of Broadway Musicals," 3.

29. Adapted from the Internet Broadway Database. www.ibdb.com (accessed 2 February 2009).

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