# The Gene Kelly/Stanley Donen Trilogy: Singin' and Dancin' in the Narrative and Film Structure

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# Introduction

Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen co-directed three films -- On the Town (1949 release date), Singin' in the Rain (1952), and It's Always Fair Weather (1955). For a variety of reasons, the films are important to the study of film and in particular, the film musical. For example, the collaboration of two directors who both had subsequent careers as directors working alone, while not unheard of, is certainly a rarity. An auteurist approach to both Kelly's and Donen's careers would have to take these films into consideration, of course. Beyond that, these three films permit the study of collaboration in cinema in general and the study of the role of collaboration in the evolution of the musical in particular.

It is within the history of the musical, however, that the three films have most to share. The time in which they were made is part of the reason. They came at the peak and continue through to the end of what is considered the "golden age" of the Hollywood musical. (A case can be made for stretching the end to Bells are Ringing in 1960. A number of factors, however, point to 1955 as the better date. The breakup of the Hollywood studio system, the political climate,

and the subject matter and treatment of themes in It's Always Fair Weather point to the last of the Kelly/Donen trilogy as a logical end of an era.)

The three films also offer a look into the development of a kind of dance musical where dance is more than just the spectacle. Dance becomes increasingly interwoven into the progression of the narrative, the creating of the central couple, and the very structure of the film. A code of values begins to develop in these films that is expressed in terms of dance. Extending the romantic and sexual connotations of dance in the Astaire/Rogers series, the Kelly/Donen films give dance the power to bring communities of people together, the power to cover "impossible" spaces and blocks of time, and the power to overcome personal, internal restrictions and problems.

In his films with Vincent Minnelli, Kelly had already been developing the role of dance in the film musical. To be better understood, the first two Kelly/Donen films need to be seen in the light of The Pirate (1948) and An American in Paris (1951). The two Minnelli films demonstrate the growing scope of dance within the musical, with Kelly at the center of this growth. With Donen, however, Kelly took the dance musical in a different direction. Donen and Kelly retained, and

in some ways, broadened the scope of dance's influence which Kelly had been developing with Minnelli. Yet they redefined the role of dance in their films together, going beyond Minnelli's and Kelly's expressions of dance in film, and establishing different relationships between dance and the diegetic worlds of their films.

The Kelly/Donen trilogy is also unique in that the two directors were performers. Until the recent work of Barbra Streisand, Kelly was the only musical performer of his stature to direct his own films, and only Bob Fosse comes closest to inheriting his mantle in the dance musical, though Fosse is more of a choreographer than a performer. The Kelly/Donen films are, to a great extent, performers' films. A performer's sensibility permeates the films, dictating the particular expression of each musical number and helping to specify the role of dance in each film as a whole.

It is at this point that some historical background is needed. Donen, too, was a dancer, and he met Kelly in 1940 in Pal Joey, the Broadway musical that made Kelly a star. Donen was a dancer in the chorus. Donen and Kelly worked together on the musical numbers in Cover Girl (1944), and then in Anchors Aweigh (1945). Before On the Town, they directed the musical

numbers in Take Me Out to the Ball Game (1949), a precursor to On the Town in terms of cast: both starred Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Jules Munshin, and Betty Garrett. Because of Kelly's previous experience as choreographer and Donen's subsequent career as director, it might easily be assumed that Kelly handled the musical numbers and Donen the dialogue scenes. Such was not the case.

In interviews, neither director indicates that the work load was anything other than totally shared. Kelly describes the process in Singin' in the Rain: "Stanley Donen and I did the whole movie, the direction and the choreography."[1] In another interview, he clarifies his stance:

> "As a choreographer, Stanley actually did not make up any steps, or enchainments, a dancer's word for a dance phrase. But his value was just as great as if he had made up half the steps . . . . I thought we complemented each other very well. On the last picture we had together -- It's Always Fair Weather -- we were so used to each other, that we didn't need each other. It was almost dull doing it together . . . . But on the other pictures we did -- On the Town, Singin' in the Rain -- we were a good team. We were one mind working toward an end."[2]

A Donen interview on the same subjects garners a similar response:

> "We really worked as a team. We didn't say, 'I do this and you do that.' No,

> not a bit. Even through rehearsing the numbers, when everything would really get complicated I would be with him. When there was really pressure to get a lot done in terms of rehearsal, I would rehearse in one hall and he would rehearse another number, but then we would switch and I would go supervise his number and he would come and do mine. So it really was a collaboration. There was no question about it."[3]

Even as late as their last film together, Donen comments that "Gene was in all the numbers, practically, so they were filmed in such a way that we could collaborate on all the dancing."[4]

The fact that the two worked on both the numbers and the "straight" scenes is important. The performer mentality in the films is not limited to the musical numbers, but it is integral to the whole film. The joy of performing informs Kelly's acting performances, and helps to explain and specify Kelly's energy, which is the energy of a excited performer; what is often called Kelly's joie-de-vivre is really more of a joie-de-dance-et-chanson. The element of performance is also significant in the creation of the couple, with the call of performer to performer serving as a part of the mating ritual.

Very closely related to the question of performance is the use of the musical numbers in the contexts of the films. There is, at least from On the Town to

Singin in the Rain, an increasing flexibility toward the interpretations of the numbers. This is partially due to the growing sense of character as performer in the films, with the songs sometimes used less for what they say, than for how they can be performed. Yet that flexibility is also due in part to the three different ways in which each film's music was created.

On the Town, for example, was based on the Broadway musical On the Town, which in turn was based on Fancy Free, a Jerome Robbins ballet. Singin' in the Rain was based on the song catalog of Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed, the latter being the producer of the three Kelly/Donen films, the Minnelli films mentioned earlier and a great many other M-G-M musicals. It's Always Fair Weather had music written at the same time as the script, with lyrics by the scriptwriters, Betty Comden and Adolph Green. In terms of how numbers are used in a musical, the three different approaches yield three different results. While the creation of the music in regard to the film certainly must be considered in evaluating each individual film, it also raises the issue of how music in a musical is evaluated. For far too long, musicals have been judged according to an arithmetic progression of elements: narrative plus songs plus dances plus color plus acting plus directorial skill (or style) plus performance equals a critical judgment. Films with good music, or more precisely,

films which can yield good cast recordings, are determined to be better than ones with inferior music. Or the film with superior dance performances is considered better than the one with less skilled dancers. The Kelly/Donen films demonstrate that the musical can be a gestalt, or a geometric combination of song, film, and dance. How the song and dance numbers are used in a musical is at least as important as the quality of the song or dance performance itself, and in some cases, can be shown to be a much more important element.

Finally, the three films are not esthetic equals, and understanding why raises a number of issues. These have to do with Kelly himself, the rise of Donen as a "more equal" partner, and perhaps most importantly for the study of the musical, a loss of confidence in certain musical forms combines with an inability to discover newer, more pertinent ones.

The Kelly/Donen films possess a great unity. Besides the co-directors, the films also have screenplays by Comden and Green in common. Yet there are clear patterns of development of the role of dance and in the way in which the musical numbers are used that stand out all the more because of the other similarities. These patterns shed light on the understanding of each individual film, lead to a greater knowledge of the development of the musical in the early fifties, and open the door to the inner workings of the musical in general.

## Notes: Introduction

[1]Curtis Lee Hanson, "An Interview with Gene Kelly," Cinema, 3, No. 4, Dec. 1966, p. 24.

[2]"Dialogue on Film: Gene Kelly," American Film, IV, No. 4, Feb. 1979, p. 37.

[3]Steve Harvey, "Stanley Donen," Film Comment, 9, July/August 1973, p. 5.

[4]Albert Johnson, "The Tenth Muse in San Francisco," Sight & Sound, 26, No. 1, Summer 1956, p. 50.

# I

On the Town first began life as Fancy Free, a Jerome Robbins ballet with music by Leonard Bernstein. In 1944, Betty Comden and Adolph Green supplied the book and Bernstein the score for the Broadway musical On the Town. The show was choreographed by Robbins, who kept the balletic heart of the original Fancy Free. By the time the play was filmed in 1949 by Kelly and Donen, a pattern was established: dance first, with songs added later. The foundation of choreography was set. With that in place, two other elements entered at the filmmaking stage that more specifically defined the role of dance in the film.

The first element was casting. The original sailors in the ballet and play had been innocents. According to Green, "With Gene as the leading character and the star of the picture, the angle of the story had to be changed. He couldn't be a helpless, naive type. The whole structure of the story had to be changed to suit the people who were going to play the characters."[1] Kelly's character, Gabey, was thus changed from a passive one to an active one.

The other element was the switch from stage to film, from the proscenium to the outdoors. In the two

stage versions of the piece, dance was spatially contained. The world created by both the ballet and the musical was defined in terms of dance. The bottom line was that everyone danced; it was up to the choreographer to define values in the piece through certain types of dance. When the Broadway musical was "opened up" in the film version, more than just the physicality of the locations underwent a change. The role of dance changed as well. It became free from the conventions of ballet, where everyone -- or nearly so -- was a dancer. It became free to be reinterpreted. New values could be ascribed to dance, and very specific associations and responsibilities given to it. Considered dynamically, dance could have developed in two different directions. The more common occurrence is the implosion of the stage piece's choreography into discrete bits called musical numbers, the "spectacle" portion of a musical. But dance can also be rearranged, parceled out to some and not to others and given value not possible in a stage world, where choreography is the norm. Kelly and Donen took dance in the latter direction.

Kelly, alone and with Donen, had already been experimenting with the role of dance in film, carrying it beyond the merely passive, entertaining, or expressive. As far back as Thousands Cheer (1943), a war-time M-G-M revue, Kelly was developing dance as an active force.

In the "Mop Dance," Kelly uses an ordinary mop and the diverse elements of a soda fountain as props in his number. Yet the subsequent direction of the evolution of dance in Kelly's hands indicates that the use of everyday, familiar props reflected more than the ingenuity of the choreographer; it reflected the beginnings of a relationship between Kelly's dance numbers and the world around him. In her book The Hollywood Musical, Jane Feuer describes the kind of number that uses apparently "handy" items as the bricolage number, using Levi-Strauss' term, meaning "tinkering," to describe the tendency of pre-scientific cultures to use any easily obtained object for the purpose at hand.[2] She also refers to this as "environment choreography," which is dance that makes use of the elements peculiar to the environment in which the dance takes place. Feuer goes on to describe such dances in other Kelly films, such as Living in a Big Way, On the Town, Singin' in the Rain, It's Always Fair Weather and Summer Stock. Astaire and his use of props in different films is also discussed. But Feuer makes a distinction between the two performers. Of Astaire, she notes that "he appeared to use the prop dance out of a kind of despair -- no partner of flesh could match his grace. Kelly made of it a peculiarly American institution, giving bricolage the stamp of good old American inventiveness."[3]

The "Americanism" of Kelly will be discussed later. Her point that there is a difference in the two kinds of "prop dances," however, is a valid one, and one that should be made more precise. What Feuer terms "good old American inventiveness" is actually the energetic subjugation of Kelly's environment through dance. The mop and the parts of the soda fountain are given new functions under Kelly's choreographic hand. Kelly is starting to create environments in which dance functions as a transforming power, changing the very nature of the setting.

This transforming aspect is expressed very clearly in the first Kelly/Donen collaboration at M-G-M. Kelly asked Donen to assist him in creating a follow-up to their successful "Alter Ego" number in Columbia studio's Cover Girl, where Kelly had danced with his own image, leaping and whirling around himself with the help of special effects. Anchors Aweigh (1945) paired Kelly with Jerry Mouse of the cartoon characters Tom and Jerry. In the story-within-the-film, Kelly plays a sailor who magically stumbles upon a cartoon kingdom where music -- here expressed in dance -- is disallowed because the king (Jerry) believes that he cannot dance. Since the king reasons that, as king, he must do everything better than his subjects, he has determined that no one

else may dance. The sailor explains to him that dancing is not an acquired skill available to only the chosen few, but that "anybody whose heart is big and warm and happy" can do it. With that, he teaches the king a few steps, which very quickly leads into a two-man dance number. The result: the king rescinds his order and music is once again permitted.

The number is especially indicative of the attitude of Kelly and Donen toward the role of dance. The number was theirs to develop as they chose, and the story line was theirs as well. Not bound by any ties to the narrative, the story of the release of music in the land seems to spring directly from their convictions. In subsequent films, the same story is played out, but is broadened in scope and brought into the diegesis of the film. A value judgment is also given to dance in the sentiment that relates dancing to being "big-hearted, warm, and happy." As an apology for how dance operates in Kelly's and Donen's films, no statement was ever so direct, explicit, and precise.

Further associations are given dance, and the scope of its role broadened in The Pirate, made the year before On the Town. In this film, directed by Minnelli, Kelly further defines the role of dance in the musical. It becomes an integral element in the

creation of the central couple. It is used to both subdue and entertain a community of people. Performance -- here including dance and song -- becomes a major aspect of the numbers in two ways. The numbers are performances within the diegesis; one performer relates to another performer by performing. Performance is also the dormant force awaiting the touch of Kelly to be released, much as dance lay dormant in the kingdom in Anchors Aweigh.

"Nina" is Kelly's first dance in the film, and it serves to establish the element of performance in the film as well as the role of dance. Kelly's character is Serafin, a magician and entertainer. The musical sequence "Nina" marks Serafin's entrance into the Caribbean community. It also serves as a display of his abilities as an entertainer. Serafin leaps from balcony to balcony in a style evocative of Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. As Serafin defies the laws of gravity with his leaps and stunts, he is also taking the town by storm -- the storm of dance. His potential partner in the dance is every "nina," or little girl, and by the time Serafin's dance is over, he has choreographically seduced all the young and beautiful women who have come out into the town square and onto the balconies. By drawing in the onlookers and "ninas" into his

dance, Serafin has drawn forth the choreographic potential under the surface. It is as if the town had been waiting for someone like him to come along, someone who could call forth the performing spirit in the town.

A number of precedents are established in this number. Kelly is presented as a performer, which will be an underlying characteristic in many other roles, even those where his character is not a performer. Dance and an element of power are also associated in the number. Through dance, Serafin has been able to put the town under his spell. A connection with magic is made as well, but it is the magic not of illusion, but of persuasion and power. Dance begins to take on qualities of domination and envelopment. The arena has moved from the cartoon world in Anchors Aweigh to the diegetic world of the entire film.

It turns out, however, that there is a person in the town who has not succumbed. It is Manuela (Judy Garland). Plot lines of the film concern Manuela's impending marriage to the fat, older town mayor and the true identity of a pirate called Macoco, but there is a strong sub-text concerning Manuela's resistance to Serafin's power. Under hypnosis, Manuela is released in the number "Mack the Black" as a dynamic performer. Her repression as a performer continues after coming out of the trance, but her imagination is fired. Her

imagination is later released in a highly erotic and violently charged way with "The Pirate Ballet," which "transforms" Serafin into the coveted Macoco. Finally faced with the reality that Macoco is the fat mayor, Manuela willingly becomes a partner with Serafin. Released as a performer outside the realms of hypnosis and imagination, Manuela joins Serafin as performer. Her decision to do so in turn affects the quality of the power he had wielded. Once a form used for purposes of domination and conquest, ("Nina"), that power, joined with Manuela's power of song, is used to entertain, as exemplified in "Be a Clown," the final number in which Serafin and Manuela sing and dance.

On one hand, the sub-text in the film is the release of imagination, a sub-text common to many of Minnelli's films (Yolanda and the Thief, Zeigfeld Follies, On a Clear Day You Can See Forever). Yet it is also the story of the dance-power held by Serafin. What that power brought forth choreographically in the "ninas," it brought forth vocally from Manuela. What the two responses have in common is that they are both performance. Kelly's performance is more than just contagious; it is provocative. His dancing affects both the object of his affections and the world around him. It is a force that can be used to both conquer

and serve.

Other associations are made with dance as well in the course of the film. The connections with being "big-hearted, warm and happy" expressed in Anchors Aweigh basically continue. Those on the side of the protagonist either cooperate with dance (e.g., the "ninas"), are dancers themselves (e.g., the Nicholas Brothers, who team with the protagonist in the first rendition of "Be a Clown"), or complement dance with song (Manuela). The enemy of the film is the real Macoco, the fat mayor, played by Walter Slezak. He is a rotund, lumbering man quite incapable of dance. Neither the mayor nor any of his associates ever participate in a dance. The division between protagonist and antagonist is the same one that separates the performer from the non-performer.

The creation of the couple is also shown as related to performance. Manuela is released as a partner for Serafin at the same time that she is released as a performer. Indeed, it is her ability to perform that establishes her as the partner. Her rendition of "Mack the Black" is as mesmerizing a performance as "Nina;" the listeners are as entranced by her story as the townspeople were by Serafin's first number. The consummation of the couple's relationship is also seen in terms of performance. "Be a Clown" is their only performance

together, and is as much of a marriage ceremony in the form of song and dance as any scene of the two before the local priest.

Many of these same associations are to be found in On the Town. The scope of the influence of dance is enlarged with On the Town in as much the same way that The Pirate enlarged it over its role in Anchors Aweigh. The "stage" has moved from a Caribbean port city to New York City, where three sailors (played by Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin) are on a 24-hour leave from the Navy.

The conflicts in the plot also serve to increase the scope of dance's power. In The Pirate, the primary plot conflict pitted the dancing Serafin against the fat, slow-moving mayor. The sub-text involved Manuela's resistance to Serafin's power of performance, her gradual release in the imagination, and her eventual submission to that power, causing her ultimate release as a performer herself. On the Town places the sailors in New York for one day, and pits them against the limits of time (24 hours), space (How much ground can they cover in that short period of time?) and energy (Can they race from here to there, find companions, form meaningful relationships, see all the sights, help Gabey find his

dream girl Miss Turnstiles, and still have enough energy to face the next day's work on ship?) The power play changes from the domination of a small, Caribbean city and a woman to the conquest of the country's largest city and the limits of time and space. Dance is the means by which these ends are accomplished.

"New York, New York" is the first number performed by the sailors, and it has much the same function as "Nina." Yet instead of conquering every corner of the town square, "New York, New York" takes the sailors all over the city, from atop the Woolworth Building to Chinatown to Grant's Tomb to Central Park and more. Anyone even remotely acquainted with the city would be able to see the physical impossibility of visiting all these places in the time allotted. It is the number that allows them to cover the area. Through their song and dance the men are able to "take the city."

The reality of the setting places dance in a slightly different context than it has in The Pirate, however. While "Nina" was performed in the town square, the square was very obviously a set. In the hands of Minnelli, a former stage designer, it became a highly designed and theatrical setting. Kelly and Donen's interest took another direction. The world that dance would conquer in On the Town would be as close to the real world of the spectator as possible. Their original

intention was to shoot the entire film on location. That request was denied by M-G-M, but in the short time they were allowed to shoot in New York, they were able to capture enough footage to create a number in which the real city, and not just a set, was shown. Their vision was dance and its affect on the real world outside of any artificial arena.

Once the city has been conquered, the sailors go down into it as the three meet their partners, releasing the choreographic potential there. The legal restrictions of the cartoon kingdom and the personal inhibitions of Manuela are replaced here by a variety of individual and social restrictions. Claire (Ann Miller) is temporarily repressed. Ivy (Vera Ellen) is shy and is attempting to cover a socially embarrassing employment predicament; studying ballet, she is forced to make a living as an exotic dancer. Brunhilde (Betty Garrett) is the exception to the rule: she has no apparent problem, and spends the entire film pursuing Chip (Sinatra).

Richard Dyer, in discussing the dynamics of the men's effect on the women, phrases his comments in a way that raises a distinction that must be made in discussing how dance operates in Kelly's films. According to Dyer, in On the Town, "The sailors release the social

frustrations of the women. . . not so much through love and sex as through energy."[4] The energy that Dyer and other critics point to in Kelly's work (and which is often credited with being the active force in so many of his films) is not so much energy per se as it is the gusto with which he attempts to change the world around him <u>through</u> performance, which is most often expressed in dance. Kelly is not trying to bring energy to bear upon his circumstances and those of others; he is merely working very hard at conjuring up a spirit of dance, both in himself and from beneath the surface of the world around him. Martin Sutton comes close to expressing this in "Patterns of Meaning in the Musical:"

> Open space in the musical is the most expressive of media -- it gives the body room to move and, through this, the mind to expand. Neutral space is charged with vital meaning by the dancer's movement, it is encompassed by the individual or couple and becomes transformed into another world (their world) . . . . The transmutation of objects, of the quotidian, is achieved by sheer force of imagination in the protagonists.[5]

The world that Kelly's dancing creates is a world of performance, and with <u>On the Town</u>, becomes more specifically a dancer's world. Kelly is certainly one of the most energetic dancers ever to appear in cinema, especially in comparison to Astaire. But energy is

really characteristic of his dancing and of his persona. That writer most associated with the concept of energy in the musical, Leo Braudy, touches upon the more specific idea of dance when referring to Kelly:

> The energy that Astaire defines within a theatrical and socially formal framework Kelly takes outside, into a world somewhat more "real" (that is, similar to the world of the audience) and therefore more recalcitrant . . . . Astaire may mock social forms for their rigidity, but Kelly tries to explode them . . . . Kelly dances on streets, on the roofs of cars, on tables, in general bringing the power of dance to bear on a world that would ordinarily seem to exclude it . . . . far from taking refuge in theater, (Kelly) wants to make theater take over daily life . . . . (he) wants to galvanize a community of nondancers as well . . . . Kelly and his partners are often amateurs, but everyone they meet knows the steps to their dances and the words to their songs."[6]

Such musical personalities as Eleanor Powell, James Cagney (especially in Yankee Doodle Dandy) and Betty Hutton are tremendously energetic, but it is only Kelly who consistently brings out the dance in the world around him.

It is in the creation of the couples that dance is brought out most dramatically. Not only is dance released in the partners, but, like Manuela's "Mack the Black," their performances express their suitability as partners. This is particularly evident in two numbers: the "Miss Turnstiles Ballet" and "Prehistoric

Man."

The "Miss Turnstiles Ballet" does not occur in the diegetic world of the film, but takes place in Gabey's imagination. The sailors note a poster of the "Miss Turnstiles" of the month which is mounted in a subway car. Ivy Smith (Vera-Ellen) is described on the poster in terms that demonstrate her talents and varied interests. As Gabey gazes longingly at Ivy's picture, moans "She's wonderful," and begins to read about her, the film switches to a world of imagination. As Gabey continues to read, Ivy is seen in an undefined spatial setting, demonstrating via choreographic routines those qualities and characteristics that Gabey is listing. The woman does everything: she appreciates the Armed Forces ("She goes out with the Army, but her heart belongs to the Navy"), is a homeloving girl who is just as comfortable in "high society's world," studies painting and dance at Symphonic Hall, and is a frail, flower-like girl, but "Oh, boy, what an athlete!" Ivy is seen in ballet attire, formal dress, casual clothing and athletic outfits. The last part of the number consists of a sports-inspired set of routines with Ivy dancing out games of football and boxing.

While the number demonstrates Ivy's breadth of talent and interest, it also just as obviously demonstrates Vera-Ellen's choreographic capabilities. Ivy

is already shown as a partner for Gabey through his evident interest in the poster of her. But the Kelly persona demands a partner with the range and energy that can match Kelly's own. By going outside of the diegetic world, Kelly and Donen can demonstrate a range of different dance styles that demonstrate the performer's skill which would otherwise have been more difficult to show in any one number confined to naturalistic time and space. Through a display of Vera-Ellen's skills, especially in athletic choreography, the directors are able to pair Vera-Ellen the performer with Kelly the performer. Her abilities speak to the spectator of her suitability for Kelly as much as Ivy's and Gabey's common home town speak of the compatibility of the characters. The central couple is thus created in part through alluding to the persona of the actor playing the central character.

This film illustrates a change in the way the central female demonstrates her suitability for Kelly. Garland's demonstration came vocally, which made for a more complete musical complement with Kelly. Both Kelly and Garland could sing and dance, but their strengths obviously lay in different areas. "Be a Clown," their one number together, showed the strengths and limitation of each. The number was both a song

and a dance, but the steps were limited and simple compared to those in a typical Gene Kelly number. But vocally, Garland carries the number; even though both are singing, Kelly's voice is weaker and softer. But it seemed that once Kelly assumed the mantle of director, his dance partners became more like him. They were dancers, not singers, and their talents encompassed a wide range of dance styles, from ballet to Kelly's own brand of athletic dance.

Once established as a suitable partner for Gabey, Ivy is still defined in terms of dance as her relationship with him progresses. Their one dance in the diegetic world of the film is "Main Street," which occurs after Gabey has scoured New York and located Ivy in Symphonic Hall at a dance rehearsal. In the course of their conversation, Ivy discovers that Gabey is from her home town of Meadowville, Indiana. Maintaining the illusion that she is a New York sophisticate, Ivy conceals her own origins, but still accepts a date with Gabey. "Main Street" confirms and strengthens the budding relationship. Lyrically, the song evokes scenes from daily life in Meadowville, where life is apparently slower, friendlier and simpler than in New York. Musically, the number reflects the lyrics with its own gentle lines and shuffling rhythm. The choreography is gener-

ally rather slow and easy, with no daring leaps, no long and expressive balletic lines, no agitated short steps -- an equivalent in dance to the gentleness of the shared memories of back home. Yet there is a moment in the dance when the two share just a few steps of tap, look at one another with a short and quick smile, and then resume the slower dance. It is if the two had suddenly taken a step back, noticed what they were doing (the taps), had mutually taken enjoyment from it, and then just as quickly had gone "back to work." In the context of the dance and the status of the new relationship, the smile seems out of place; it is more the smile of two familiar performers rather than of two recently-introduced characters. The level of intimacy shared there has no foundation in the narrative, but can only be understood as reflective of the joy shared by performers. The moment is not so abrupt as to break the characterizations, but it is strong enough to add a dimension of performance to the relationship, as well as a dimension of "performer" to the characters.

Performance plays an even larger role in the creating of the Claire-Ozzie (Miller-Munshin) couple. Claire is initially presented as a lovely but repressed woman whose wild libido is currently being sublimated through anthropological studies. Her number, "Prehistoric

Man," functions on several levels. It satisfies musical comedy tradition by showcasing the talents of Miller, a well-known and highly regarded dancer and the second dancing lead in the film (Sinatra being the singing second lead, and to stretch the point, Garrett being the comic second lead).

The number also functions narratively and as a performance -- and the points are related. The number is a dazzling display for the spectator of Miller's talent, but is played as a dazzling display of Claire's talent for the other characters. Beginning as a solo, the number eventually draws in the others as back-up dancers. When the dance is finished, there is an enthusiastic response of appreciation from the others, with Brunhilde giving her a hearty, congratulatory shake. Brunhilde had been suspicious of Claire and her motivations, especially vis-a-vis Ozzie, and the handshake expresses both acceptance and respect for her performance.

Narratively, the pause for appreciation is short-lived. Ozzie reacts to her performance with the others, and in his excitement, accidentally knocks down the dinosaur skeleton behind him, sending it to the ground and setting up the grand chase that figures in the rest of the plot. It is a good example of the integration

of dance into the narrative, but a curious one in the context previously established of dance as a creative force. A dinosaur skeleton could stand for history, antiquity, old-fashioned and out-moded manners of acting or thinking, or the status quo. Its demolition turns dance into a force inciting revolution, albeit accidental, involved as much in tearing down as in building up. The number could also be interpreted as representing the darker side of dance, with free expression that is effectively destructive.

Interestingly, this kind of performance plays no part in the creation of the third couple, Chip and Brunhilde. Brunhilde has no inhibitions, and is the aggressor in the relationship; she needs no release in dance. Their relationship is expressed and furthered in two sequences. Brunhilde from the outset has been attempting to lure Chip up to her apartment. "Come Up to My Place" is a comic duet, which is actually more screeched than sung, and which finally seduces Chip away from his sightseeing agenda. Later, after realizing that his insistance on playing the tourist is threatening his relationship with Brunhilde, Chip throws his guide book away and sings the ironic love song "You're Awful (Nice to Be With)." Both numbers are completely integrated into the narrative, with the singing presented

as naturally as speech. There is no recognition of either of the songs as performance within the diegesis. For Kelly and Donen, most of the acknowledgements of performance as such in the diegetic world are related to dance.

Once the three couples are created, dance again sends them down into the city in the same way that "New York, New York" had originally dispatched the three sailors. "On the Town" begins on top of the Empire State Building, providing a similar overview of the city that had been provided by the rapid series of city-side famous sights in "New York, New York." The number is sung and danced by all six of the main characters, and sends them down the elevator to the street level, and on into the city night. Narratively, the number launches them upon a new round of adventures. In terms of the development of the couples, the number establishes the group as three sets of partners for the evening, and the partners as a united group; a community is built.

Yet like the earlier numbers that helped create the couples -- "Main Street" and "Prehistoric Man," -- "On the Town" also defines further the characters as performers. Much of the number consists of the men performing part of the song for the women, and then

the women responding by performing themselves. The sailors do a mock tribute to Navy life, followed by a mock song of sympathy from the women. Each group uses the other as audience before the final group chorus.

The "Day in New York Ballet" has many different functions in the film. It is used to further express the creation of the couple, though it does not develop it because the plot of the ballet is a recapitulation of the plot line of the film up to that point. It is the means through which performance becomes more explicit and actually overrides narrative. And it functions as well as a kind of repository for kinds of dance that Kelly and Donen only put in a non-diegetic framework.

It is this last point that must first be understood for a proper appreciation of how the ballet expresses the situation of the central couple, and how performance is favored over narrative. The ballet is a wordless dance with long, slow movements. The number recounts the basic plot points, but spends a disproportionate amount of time expressing the love relationship between Gabey and Ivy. The expressions of deeply felt love and passion that were never part of the diegetic world are contained in the romantic pas de deux of the ballet. While Gabey was disappointed when Ivy had to leave him in the diegetic world of the film, the moment was lighter

in tone. Here in the ballet, with near slow motion movements and a wailing instrumental in the background, the tone is close to that of grand tragedy, with the yearning and longing of Gabey set in relief. The sequence contains the more rarified, exquisite emotions that are not expressed in the diegetic world. Narratively, the number adds nothing new; emotionally, it paints a rainbow. And the non-diegetic world is the place where these emotions can be expressed.

Donen was apparently not in favor of either this ballet or the subsequent one in Singin' in the Rain. He later expressed strong opinions about them both:

> They (the ballet sequences) were never an integral part; that's their problem. I don't think they are even now -- I never thought they were. I'd like to take them out of the pictures. I wish they weren't there. The one in Singin' in the Rain is actually less objectional (sic) because it has less phoney pretension about it than the one in On the Town. They both feel like something added to me, but the one in Singin' in the Rain is less sort of horseshit. And it's helped by the fact that it's done with some humour. We always knew we were going to have to do something and we never knew quite what. It's true of every sequence; some of them just came out better. First of all, if they had been shorter they would have been less of an intrusion. It's because they are so heavy, in length, that they feel something of a wart."[7]

While Donen seems more concerned here with structure (a trait especially recognizable in his films sans Kelly,

especially Two for the Road), Kelly was seeing something entirely different in these ballet sequences, and what he saw appears to have had to do with Kelly's being a performer, plus a specific aspect of his personality that manifested itself in dance. As a performer, Kelly was aware of the myriad of expressions available to him. If as a director, Kelly could not put these expressions in the diegetic world of his films, then he could at least create a world in which these expressions could be presented. Kelly's cynical persona may have worked against the expression of such sensitive emotions in the narrative, and would certainly have been out of place in the equally cynical screenplays of Comden and Green. The movement out of the story's space and time was Kelly's choice.

Kelly also seems to have had a synthesizing aspect to his personality that endeavored to incorporate as many kinds of dance as possible; he wanted to explore all the possibilities. As early as the summer of 1939, when Kelly was working with Comden and Green in their act "The Revuers," Kelly was finding ways in which to include all forms of dance. His act with them has been described as follows:

> . . .[It consisted of] a series of satirical take-offs on how various types of dancers would negotiate a tap-dance. He demonstrated

> how, for example, a ballet dancer might approach some basic hoofing; or how a 'flash' dancer might cope with an elementary time step; or how the "personality" girls would handle a single tap-dance . . . . The big finish to his act was a highly effective combination of dance and acrobatics as he sprang across the floor bouncing on the palms of his hands, with his legs stretched out behind him.[8]

Seeing the potential of ballet expressively, he may have incorporated it just because "it was there."

A similar expression of ballet, though on a much smaller scale, occurs in "Prehistoric Man." Claire does a tap en pointe for a few seconds. She also has a moment in the number where she sits and executes a rapid series of steps on tiptoe, simulating en pointe. Here there are no emotional attachments. It is a choreographic reference to another dance style. The steps seem to be saying that the dancer is capable of a broader range than is currently being demonstrated; she is merely choosing not to show it. It is Miller's equivalent of Kelly's dance with "The Revuers," and indicates that Kelly, as the choreographer, was still very much the synthesizing spirit.

The performing dimension of the characters has been demonstrated in "Main Street," "Prehistoric Man," and "On the Town." These numbers involve dancing before the other characters. The same sense of performance

is also found in the numbers favoring the vocals, and have a very specific effect on the interpretations of those numbers.

Except for "Come Up to My Place," the numbers favoring vocals were written by Roger Edens, with lyrics by Comden and Green. Edens was associate producer of the film, and a strong musical force in the musicals produced by Arthur Freed at M-G-M. He worked closely with the singers in the films, and was instrumental in developing vocal arrangements. His contributions to On the Town were numbers featuring more voice than dance, with the one exception of "Prehistoric Man," which would obviously feature Miller's dancing more than her voice. His other songs in the film include "On the Town," "You're Awful," "You Can Count on Me," "That's All There is, Folks," and "Pearl of the Persian Sea."

"You're Awful" is the love song uniting Chip and Brunhilde. It is technically a duet, but Sinatra, possessing the stronger voice, sings melody to Garrett's soft harmony, not unlike Grace Kelly's harmony to Bing Crosby's melody in their duets in High Society. As stated before, the element of performance before the other character is not present in the sequence. The sequence provides Sinatra his vocal showcase as

"Prehistoric Man" gave Miller hers.

Once they have moved away from the vocal showcase, however, the directors begin to express a flexibility toward the music in the numbers favoring vocals. Performance in this regard takes on the form of comic interpretation, both in song and dance. In "You Can Count on Me," for example, the characters -- including Lucy Schmeeler, Gabey's unattractive substitute for Ivy -- are trying to cheer Gabey up after Ivy leaves him. The lyrics themselves are sufficient to get the point across. They consistently reiterate the group's support of Gabey and their loyalty to him. Gabey is also invited into the clowning dance routines that accompany the song, -- another example of the creation, or here, the re-establishment, of the community through dance. But it is neither the words nor the dance which brings Gabey back into the fold. It is Lucy Schmeeler's performance.

All the other characters have sung before Lucy, and while the words are humorous, the singers stuck to the melody line and allowed the quality of their voices to come through. Lucy clearly has a comic role in the film, and Alice Pearce, the actress playing her, possesses a definite comic talent. Yet in theatrical circles she would be defined as a comic actress who sings and moves well; she can carry a tune and can move expressively, but could not legitimately be called

a singer or dancer. When Lucy performs her part of the song, she makes no pretense at being able to sing or dance as well as the others. She very energetically tears into the vocal line with full throated timbre breaks, the kind of catch-in-the-throat sound marking internal vocal changes that any singer would otherwise work very hard to cover over. Pearce's trademark, a screaming, almost witch-like "Ha-HA," is made part of the interpretation, doing violence to any semblance of continuity in the vocal line. The dance at this point also turns very parodic, with Lucy grabbing Gabey and leading him in an exaggeratedly performed tango. It is her performance rather than her words which finally brings Gabey out of his mood and back into the group. As Claire's performance of "Prehistoric Man" was integrated narratively by demonstrating Claire's acceptability to the group and by indirectly causing the downfall of the dinosaur, so it is Lucy's performance that drives the narrative forward at this juncture.

So far in the film, performing before other characters in dance has been expressed skillfully, demonstrating the range of the dancer's talents. Performance in song has not yet existed up to this point. When it appears, it is contained in the interpretation of the song that partakes of an extremely flexible attitude

toward the structure of the vocal line and toward the traditional rules of good vocalization.

Also seen in "You Can Count on Me" is the first example of parodic dancing. Lucy's exaggerated gestures and near-total lack of dance technique form the first expression of dance in the film that is not meant to be taken seriously. Kelly and Donen allow satiric choreography, but only in the context of a comically sung number. Two other numbers reflect the same treatment.

"That's All There is Folks" is sung three times in the film, each time by a different chorus line in the various nightclubs the three couples attend. Each time it provides the exit line and is sung as the chorus, out of sync with one another and grinding their heels in the most awkward way possible, concludes the evening's performance. The vocals are done with little enthusiasm, and the last lines end with an abrupt instrumental "sting," indicating a flippant attitude toward the entire musical endeavor. The couples also demonstrate a marked decrease in their own appreciation of the performances, as they applaud less each time as their evident level of boredom increases. The series of performances essentially constitute a running gag on the similarity between all second-rate musical performances; hence the sloppiness of song and dance.

By far the most dramatic example of flexibility toward song structure and good choreography comes with "Pearl of the Persian Sea." It is the number that Ivy is performing on Coney Island where she is discovered by the sailors and the two other women. Ivy's work has been presented as a necessary evil, both through Ivy's attempts to cover up her job, and her pleading with her dance teacher not to tell her parents about it. That the spectator is not supposed to endorse or enjoy Ivy's predicament is amply shown through both song and dance. The number to which she is dancing has a thin and pallid arrangement, and it is dragging its tempo mercilessly. Her dance is equally as ludicrous; she is bent over almost completely backwards when she is discovered by Gabey. When lyrics are finally put to the music, they come from the mouths of the three sailors in harem outfits. Not only does the sense of comedy tend to obliterate attempts to understand the lyrics, but the pinched falsetto voices of the singers render the lyrics all but incomprehensible. Finally, the wild chase scene going on around them reduces the song to little more than a melody and set of words on which to hang the final comic climax. No musical respect at all is rendered the lyrics or vocal line.

In the context of a badly performed song, Kelly and Donen will allow badly performed dance. In "You Can Count on Me," it was Lucy's comic performance that was integrated into the narrative by bringing Gabey back into the community of fellowship. "That's All There is, Folks" is a structurally integrated running gag, and "Pearl of the Persian Sea" is almost tossed aside as a musical piece in the tidal wave of comic activity both in the performance and around it. Well-performed dance is acceptable, but badly performed dance, apparently only in a context of comedy.

In those numbers where dance is not performed within a comic context, it is so respected as performance within the film that it begins to act as a pivot point for structural changes. "New York, New York" and to a lesser extent, "On the Town" are the two numbers that give evidence of the interplay between dance and film form that is beginning. Referring specifically to the first number, Kelly remembers the editing rhythms:

> We did a lot of quick cutting -- we'd be on the top of Radio City and then on the bottom -- we'd cut from Mulberry Street to Third Avenue -- and so the dissolve went out of style. This was one of the things that changed the history of musicals more than anything.[9]

Bombarded as the current generation is with the

rapid cutting patterns of soft drink commercials and new hybrid forms of film and music (e.g., rock videos, Flashdance), it should be remembered that the norm for dance musicals in terms of filming performance was the Astaire dance, which was photographed to allow a continuous head-to-toe viewing by the spectator. "New York, New York" is filled with high and low camera angles, rapid cuts and shots only a few seconds long, and a few very rapid pans that convey a sense of dizzying exhilaration and speed. Kelly and Donen allow the treatment of the dance rather than the dance itself to operate upon the spectator; it is to the film form that the dance directly relates. "On the Town," which functions in a similar way narratively to "New York, New York," also contains the same kinds of quick cuts and pans.

On the Town defined and developed the role of dance beyond its functions in The Pirate. Dance was removed from its context of magic, hypnosis, imagination, and theatrical setting, and placed in as real and contemporaneous a world as the directors were allowed to create. Dance retained its ability to be instrumental in creating communities, but the scope of its power was enlarged, breaking out of its limited expression in Anchors Aweigh and The Pirate to inter-

act with the largest city in the country. The personal and political conflicts in which dance became expressively involved in The Pirate grew to more universal concerns in On the Town; dance helped overcome both time and space.

Creation of the couple(s) increasingly became a series of events involving dance, and not just song and dance. Two out of the three couples in On the Town were created through events expressed choreographically. Kelly's partner under his and Donen's direction was defined in terms of dance and became his equivalent, or in a sense, his reflection, instead of the complement that Garland was.

The element of performance remained, and in a way became a stronger element, in that the characters were no longer all performers, as they were in The Pirate. Only Ivy was actually a performer by profession in On the Town, yet many of the numbers, especially "Prehistoric Man," "On the Town," and "You Can Count on Me," were performed in front of the other characters as much as they were performed for the spectator.

Related to the importance of performance is the flexibility toward vocal lines and rhythms in comic numbers, such as "You Can Count on Me" and "Pearl of the Persian Sea." This is an integration of music into

the film that uses, rather than showcases, the music. It is a tendency that will reach its height in Singin' in the Rain. Similarly, the affecting of film form by the music, as seen in "New York, New York," will play a greater role in Singin' in the Rain as well.

Two different expressions of dance are held in a kind of suspension in On the Town. There is the outward, extroverted dimension of dance, in which dance conquers space and time, and is able to create couples and communities. There is also the dance of performance, of dance within the film, which not directly presented to the spectator, but to the characters in the film. In the next two Kelly films, An American in Paris and Singin' in the Rain, the two kinds of dance begin to separate.

## Notes: Section I

[1]Hugh Fordin, The World of Entertainment: Hollywood's Greatest Musicals (New York, Doubleday and Co., 1975), p. 352.

[2]Jane Feuer, The Hollywood Musical (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982) p. 4.

[3]Feuer, p. 6.

[4]Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia" Movie, Spring 1977, 2-3; rpt. in Genre: The Musical, ed. Rick Altman (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 188.

[5]Martin Sutton, "Patterns of Meaning in the Musical" in Genre: The Musical, ed. Rick Altman (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 192-3.

[6]Leo Braudy, The World in a Frame (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976), pp. 148-9.

[7]Jim Hillier, "Interview with Stanley Donen," Movie, No. 24, p. 32.

[8]Clive Hirshhorn, Gene Kelly (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1974), pp. 79-80.

[9]Fordin, p. 269.

## II

It is in An American in Paris (1951) that the outward, explosive dimension of dance reaches its peak. In On the Town, two numbers, "New York, New York" and "On the Town," established the pattern of how dance worked to create communities and extend its scope of expression. Both numbers began with a group of people literally at the top of the city. The songs united the groups and then sent them down into the city, first to find companions (and here dance is used to release the women as partners), and then to "paint the town red."

There is a similar pattern established in An American in Paris. It is demonstrated over four different numbers in the film, and also uses a large city as its setting. As in On the Town, it was Kelly's desire to shoot the film on location in Paris. This was not his film to direct, however, and Paris was created on the studio lot.[1] But staged in a real setting or not, the extension of dance into the city was as clear and dynamic as in On the Town.

The first "number" is really not a number at all. It is a bit of choreographed movement detailing Jerry Mulligan (Kelly) in his early morning routine. Jerry arises out of bed and gets his breakfast -- a simple

bit of action. Kelly performs it as a smooth dance routine, with doors opening and closing, the bed being hoisted up and out of the way, and with body movement that combines every action into a fluid whole. Because Jerry also uses household utensils in the number, the dance takes on the quality of a bricolage number in reverse. He does not borrow from the environment for purposes of performance, but imposes dance on the environment; every household item, the act of awakening and the physical necessity of eating all bow to the fluid choreographic line. It is an expression of the triumph of dance in Jerry's own world. The other numbers chronicle the development of that triumph out onto the street and into the rest of Paris.

"By Strauss" occurs in the coffee shop downstairs from Jerry's apartment. Narratively, nothing is developed, and in terms of musical tradition, the number merely allows the lead and second lead (Oscar Levant) their first chance to perform together. But this number links Jerry's personal dance expression to the community. The dance accompanying the vocals eventually attracts the spectators in the film -- the other patrons of the shop and the local citizenry. Concentrating on Minnelli's camera movements, Jane Feuer performs an extensive analysis of this sequence in terms of

spectator identification in which the audience is created in the diegetic world of the film. Within her argument, she also mentions the extension of dance to the street:

> As the camera swings laterally back and forth to capture the graceful pas de deux [Jerry dancing with an old woman] it gives us a peek at the audience surrounding the dancing couple. Inside and outside space have merged into a community celebration.[2]

The third number takes place on the street itself, and brings children into dance with Jerry acting as Pied Piper. The song is Gershwin's "I've Got Rhythm." Though no liberties are taken with the vocal line -- no doubt due to the high reputation of the composer and the stature of the song -- liberties are taken with the lyrics. The song is again recast as a performance for characters within the film, and not just a performance for the spectator of the film. The children ask Jerry to dance, and he responds by giving them an English lesson, using the lyrics of the songs. He substitutes "J'ai du rhythme, j'ai de la musique," in place of the classic first line, integrating the song more into the diegetic world of the film and aiming it less toward the spectator. He invites the children to share the vocals with him, and then teaches them some of his dance movements, which are less traditional enchaînements

than danced imitations of airplanes, trains and Charlie Chaplin's Tramp. He finally takes his leave, uniting them in his performance and in corporate appreciation of his talents.

The progression is made complete with "S'Wonderful," a song duet by Jerry and Henri Bourel (Georges Guetary), with dance provided by Jerry. The two men are sitting at a cafe table discussing their current state of bliss: both are in love. Neither knows at this point that they are in love with the same girl, a fact the audience is aware of and which undercuts the sense of exuberance with an ironic undertone. The two men arise from the table and move down the street, collecting an appreciative audience along the way. The sense of building community is very much like that in "Nina," but substituting shared joy for that earlier song's more manipulative intent. The number is also a dance, with Henri moving rhythmically (Guetary is the vocal lead in the film, and is not a dancer) and Jerry doing more complex steps. The final overhead shot shows the two men, now at a distance one from another, with the local community between them, sharing in their joy and being incorporated as audience to Jerry's dance. The progression is complete; from Jerry's room to the shop, out onto the street, to the

children in the street to the adult community sharing the joy of romantic joy, dance has been brought to bear on Paris.

The creation of the couple is also the province of dance in the film. As Ivy was first presented through narration and choreography in On the Town, so the lead female Lise (Leslie Caron) is here. At the point in the film that she is introduced, she is presented as Henri's ideal -- as a complete female. That completeness is presented wholly in a world devoid of natural time and space, possessing only the same simple props and single-color lighting schemes used for Ivy in the "Miss Turnstiles Ballet." Lise's various qualities are each demonstrated by a brief description by Henri and a snippet of dance, ranging in style from the Charleston (representing her fun-loving, vivacious side) to classic ballet moves (representing her studious, serious nature). Lise is presented as first and foremost a creature of dance, and therefore a fit match for Jerry (and Kelly).

Creation of the couple also implies the elimination of the competition, and here, Henri is that competition. Though in the narrative he is presented as a rival to Kelly, the romantic associations established for dance keep him out of the running from the very

beginning. Jerry and Lise can dance, but Henri cannot. Though he is one of the only two in the film who is a professional performer in the narrative (the other being Adam Cook, played by Oscar Levant), and is by far the most talented vocally, the definition of couples as products of dance eliminates him from the realm of consideration. Not only does this delineation help to pair Jerry and Lise, but it also solidifies the film's preference of dance over song. Song in On the Town had been used to confirm and develop Chip and Brunhilde's relationship ("You're Awful"). Here song, even performed as well as Henri sings, serves to disqualify a character from the possibility of a romantic relationship.

When Jerry and Lise share their first number together, "Our Love is Here to Stay," it follows the formula established with "Main Street." In both, the Kelly character sings to his partner, they dance while he sings, and they continue dancing together while the instrumental carries the melody. It then ends with Kelly again picking up the vocal. Yet a change has occurred. The balletic gestures and all their attendant emotions, which were reserved for the "Day in New York" ballet in On the Town, find a place here in the dance duet. The more delicate movements, the longer dance

lines, the more fluid integration of parts into a whole, have all been brought out of the world of imagination and dreaming and into the diegetic world of the film. While the balletic movement in the 17-minute ballet later in the film contains even more dramatic choreography, "Our Love is Here to Stay" supplied Kelly with his most balletic expression in the diegetic world of one of his films.

The ballet at the end of the film demonstrates again Kelly's propensity for using the non-diegetic world as a setting for a wide variety of dance styles. In On the Town, the ballet was shorter and mainly gave expression to ballet. In An American in Paris all kinds of dance are displayed, from bouncy jazz steps to George Cohan's more open-ended form of dance to very classical dance steps. The purpose of the ballet was not to extract the more exquisite feelings already found in the narrative, as had "A Day in New York." It was dance intended to fit a changing background of French painters, which in turn was created as a backdrop to the film's title song. The number serves, however, to provide a space and time where the two leads can develop their relationship choreographically. Should there be any question left about it at this point in the film, the sequence displays the complete compatability of the pair.

The context of the sequence is what ties the number tenuously to the rest of the film. It comes at the moment when Jerry has lost Lise and he is mourning. Most of the number is joyous, and only at the very end does Lise slip away, allowing for the segue back into the narrative. The number thus takes on a utopian quality; it provides a dream of what could be in the relationship, interpreted through dance. Kelly had designed "A Day in New York" to increase the emotional boundaries of the film through use of ballet. Here he employs the "An American in Paris" ballet as almost a catch-all, a musical sequence where a more complete variety of dance styles may be shown and their expressive possibilities explored. And while the more direct display of dance to the spectator may have been out of place or unacceptable to the audience, the framing device of imagination, plus the placement of the ballet at that particular point in the narrative, tends to refract the vision of the various dance forms through suggestions of utopia.

The same kind of framing device is used to include the third movement of Gershwin's "Concerto in F," performed by Adam. Producer Freed had apparently declared that there would be no concert music, as "There will be no lulls in this film."[3] The way the piece was "shoe-

horned" into the film was through the back door of a framing device, used in the ballet and later employed much more extensively in Singin' in the Rain. Called "Ego Fantasy," the number begins with Adam's daydream of performing the concerto on the piano, with his also taking over the roles of conductor, every member of the orchestra, and those of every member of the cheering audience. The third movement is presented in toto, but is framed in a supporting structure of comic irony. As "Pearl of the Persian Sea" was too silly to be performed "straight," Gershwin's concerto was deemed too serious, and needed the same framing device.

An American in Paris continued to explore many of the uses of dance found in On the Town. Though not extended to every corner of Paris as it had been in New York City, dance nevertheless maintained its ability to create communities. It was also as instrumental as ever in creating the couple, now totally locking out song as a creative or bonding force. In this context, Kelly also brought more purely expressive balletic movements out of the non-diegetic world and into the couple's relationship within the narrative. At the same time, the range of dance expressed in the film as a whole increased, with the long ballet sequence containing styles of dance not related to one another

nor directly connected with anything happening in the narrative. Lastly, the use of framing devices develops to include music that would otherwise not have had a place. Beyond just using a number in a comic sequence, comedy is used for the purpose of including the number.

The presentation of numbers in such contexts is at the very heart of Singin' in the Rain. There are framing devices used constantly, and more flexibility is shown toward the vocal lines of some numbers than is seen in either On the Town or An American in Paris. Part of the reason lies in the songs themselves.

An American in Paris is based on the George Gershwin song catalog. Producer Freed decided that Singin' in the Rain was to be based on his song catalog, in which he composed lyrics to Nacio Herb Brown's melodies. Most of the songs chosen for the film were written for early M-G-M musicals. According to Comden and Green, "It occurred to us that, rather than try to use them in a sophisticated, contemporary story or a gay-nineties extravaganza, they would bloom at their happiest in something that took place in the very period in which they were written."[4]

Therefore, like An American in Paris, Singin' in the Rain contained songs that could be integrated lyrically into the film (e.g., "Our Love is Here to

Stay" and "S'Wonderful" in the former and "You Were Meant for Me" and "Singin' in the Rain" in the latter) and others for which a place had to be found. Unlike Minnelli's film, however, the song catalog did not consist of classics which demanded respect for the vocal line. Only "Singin' in the Rain" was a bona fide classic, and that due more to its reputation as a popular standard rather than to respect for it musically. There was therefore with Singin' in the Rain a greater possible range of interpretation of the songs. Relying on the framing devices learned in An American in Paris, the directors found a myriad of ways to integrate the songs into the narrative. In certain ways, Singin' in the Rain is the integrated musical par excellence, going far beyond the traditional sense of integrated musicals, which are really nothing more than the integration of the lyrics of the songs into the narrative flow. Singin' in the Rain integrates lyrics as well, but also integrates whole songs as performances, weaving the numbers in and around the role of dance, the film's thematic concerns, and the comedy. The elastic approach taken toward the songs' structures and lyrics leads to a breakdown of the song units as discrete musical entities, allowing their melding into the directors' gestalt of story, comedy, and performance.

The world in which these numbers are presented has changed from that of An American in Paris, however. The other direction that dance had taken in On the Town, that more introspective, implosive aspect, comes to the fore in Singin' in the Rain. Dance still unites communities, though the communities are much smaller. And it also still expresses the milestones in the creation of the couple. The element of performance, though, is brought to a peak here both in the way the characters perform before one another, and in the theme of the ballet. And while there is a confidence about the use of song and dance, and a brashness about the comedy, there is the very beginning of a sense of self-doubt, of a loss of faith in the validity of the conventions of musical comedy that expresses itself in a defense of illusion, comedy and artifice.

Instead of chronicling, through dance, the progression from individual to community as seen in On the Town and An American in Paris, Singin' in the Rain presents dance in its diegetic world in the context of performance for the character and/or spectator, in the creating of the couple, or as a part of a comic routine. The first number, "Singin' in the Rain" sung over the credits, presents the cast of characters who embody the world in which dance lives in the film. Kelly,

Donald O'Connor and Debbie Reynolds directly address the audience in a setting of Technicolor blue and yellow, with torrents of rain coming from nowhere. The song is delivered in a straightforward style, with no change in structure or lyric. The lack of definite context maintains the focus on the performers, and allows the possibility of developing the performance in any direction, by defining context, character, situation or style of performance.

The first treatment given to a number is a comic one, and the number is seen through another framing device as well. The song is "Fit as a Fiddle." It is shown as a flashback, as Don Lockwood (Kelly), famous silent screen star, tells the story of his rise to success to Hollywood interviewer and columnist Dora Bailey. Lockwood's theme is "Dignity, always dignity," but the visual presentation belies Lockwood's story. "Fit as a Fiddle" places Lockwood with long-time companion Cosmo Brown (O'Connor) as they perform a two-man dance routine before a vaudeville audience. The tempo of the song is speeded up for comic effect, and a heavy one-two beat is imposed, working against an appreciation of the words. The pattern of their costumes consists of a loud turquoise plaid, and the comic gestures are bold, drawing further attention from the

music. Lockwood's story is always at odds with what the spectator sees, so that the number is seen in a totally ironic light. Yet there is an inconsistency here that is based in Kelly's refusal to laugh at dance. In On the Town, bad or comic dance was only seen in the context of a comic number or routine whose primary musical expression was bad or comic vocals. In "Fit as a Fiddle," dance is clearly meant to be laughed at, as the diegetic audience of Lockwood's memory is booing and the ironic context is putting the lie to everything Lockwood is saying. But the dance performance is superbly executed. Costumes and props notwithstanding, no audience could fail to appreciate the complexity, ingenuity and brilliance displayed. While the directors allow songs to be "thrown away," the preference for dance over song already exhibited in the other films prevents them from allowing dance that same flexibility. The high level of performance works against the narrative concerns of the memory sequence, and confuses the comic point. It is not unlike the incongruity of Liza Minnelli's performance in Cabaret, where she is supposed to be a mediocre singer and dancer in a sleazy nightclub. Second-rate entertainment has already been shown to be entertaining in "That's All There is, Folks" and "Pearl of the Persian Sea." Either Kelly and Donen

were reluctant to show badly-executed dance, or Kelly was reluctant to show himself performing it.

"Fit as a Fiddle" is only one of the two numbers used for satire. The other is "Beautiful Girl," which is preceded by a montage sequence marking the arrival of sound to film. The sequence includes short segments of "I've Got a Feeling You're Foolin'," "Wedding of the Painted Doll," and "Should I?" all played too fast, and presented with the most garish Technicolor costumes and backgrounds. The tempo slows and "Beautiful Girl" emerges at normal speed. The song is sung in a Dennis Morgan/Allan Jones style (actually anachronistic in terms of the film's plot by at least a half-dozen years) and is presented as straightforwardly as possible, with no vocal exaggerations or tempo changes. The number in fact seems more of an excuse for two comic bits than a performance for the spectator. In the middle of the number, there is a fashion display highlighting the outmoded fashions of the twenties. Later, as the number ends, there is a slightly comic tribute to Busby Berkeley (Kelly's first director in film, for <u>For Me and My Gal</u>), with overhead camera angles and kaleidoscopic patterns. The satire that pervades the rest of the film in a playful but respectful way comes to the surface here in the treatment of the number. Kathy Selden (Reynolds)

is one of the "beautiful girls," but that narrative connection is a weak one that fails to tie in the number to anything other than satire. In the end, the number fails because its musical interpretation is not determined by the narrative or the role of performance, but by an attitude.

A much more integrated number, and one that advances the tendency toward performance among the characters, is "Make 'Em Laugh." The number is actually not out of the old Freed/Brown catalog, but was created by the two men for the film, and was their last collaborative effort. Musically, it is a complete plagiarism of Cole Porter's "Be a Clown" from The Pirate, and according to Donen, was intended to be a song "like" "Be a Clown." Apparently, when the song was heard, no one had the courage to speak up and note the similarity.[5]

The purpose of the song is to prove a point. The audience consists of Don alone, and the point is that entertainment, specifically clowning, is legitimate. Kathy has insulted Don, ridiculing his profession, and it is Cosmo's job to cheer him up by reinstituting his flagging faith in entertainment. The performance is similar in purpose to "You Can Count on Me." And like that number, it is the performance, not just the words, that is emphasized. "You Can Count on Me" featured

the introduction of Lucy as performer, and used Alice Pearce's comic style and attributes to that end. Here, it is O'Connor's talents as a dancer which are brought into play, and the number both satisfies musical tradition by giving the second lead the chance to display his particular talents, and also succeeds in integrating itself into the narrative, much like "Prehistoric Man." Yet the number, for all its integration and technical brilliance, represents a change of direction for the role of dance.

The audience for the number only consists of Don, though the first part of the dance has stage hands unknowingly involved in Cosmo's routine. Had the number been in a Kelly film a few years before, it may well have ended up drawing an audience of those on the set, and concluded with a hearty round of admiring applause. But the audience is first Don, and then no one but the film's spectator, as Don is ultimately removed from the sequence. The last half of the song is performed directly for the camera, which completely loses its identification with Don as it moves into an overhead shot at the very end. The number reverses the progression that has been demonstrated in numbers such as "You Can Count on Me" and "On the Town," which created communities and advanced the influence of dance within the

film. The scope of dance's effectiveness has been reduced here to two people. And that scope is rendered smaller yet by Don's removal as diegetic spectator, which finally turns the number into a direct performance for the film's spectator, a first in the Kelly/Donen series.

Aside from the narrowing of the scope of dance's influence, the argument that Cosmo is making differentiates the number from all others preceding it in On the Town and An American in Paris. The dance itself is a response to Don's wavering faith in the validity of his profession. Don has professed doubt about the worth of entertainment, and Cosmo's dance seeks to reassure him. Yet by shifting the spectator from Don to the film viewer, the number also seeks to convince the viewer of the validity of entertainment as well. The question raised by Don is of course emanating from the script, and ultimately, from Comden and Green. The only answer offered is the performance itself. Don himself is never seen in that sequence after the first part of the number, and his reaction is not recorded, or even alluded to later. What speaks most loudly in the number is the brilliance of its execution and the very obvious hard work involved, a common trait in Kelly's choreography. The fact that the issue is not

completely resolved indicates the narrowing of scope of dance's power. The belief that dance is accepted by "anybody whose heart is big and warm and happy" is cracking. In the context of the narrative argument that Cosmo is making, the energy that infuses the dance can be read as a striving to convince Don, Cosmo himself, and the film spectator of the validity of entertainment. The simple faith in it no longer suffices; an explanation, a reaffirming is necessary. In the diegesis of the film, that raising of the issue and answering through dance only involves those who are performers, decreasing the parameters of the community created by dance. The new community, the group that will appreciate dance, is the community of performers in the film.

Related to this defense of entertainment is an elaborate celebration of illusion. Cosmo's number is filled with illusion, from the dummy with which he fights and the phony hallway, to the door that leads nowhere. The routine redeems illusion by first exposing it, then by using it for comic effect. Here, it is the usefulness of illusion, its practicality in provoking laughter, its use as a tool of entertainment, which is highlighted as its redeeming quality.

Two other numbers continue the trend toward the

limited audience for performance: "Moses Supposes" and "Good Morning." "Moses" begins as a comic take-off on the problems of silent film stars having to adjust to the demands of sound films by taking vocal lessons; here the humor is derived from the tongue-twisters that Don has to master to satisfy the coach's demand for proper enunciation. The sequence begins with Don's diction lesson. Cosmo enters and engages the instructor in some tongue-twisters of his own. The leap to song is made from a sentence beginning with "Moses supposes his toeses (sic) are roses." The spectator is ostensibly the speech instructor, but he is progressively removed as Cosmo and Don bury him underneath a load of props. The performance thus shifts to one for the film spectator, much like "Make 'Em Laugh." Unlike "Make 'Em Laugh," however, the number is not as well integrated narratively. The burying of the instructor is a triumph over a minor inconvenience, and Don's success with the tongue-twisters was never in doubt. His ability to get through the song lyrically is no victory, as his diction has always been superb. The number thus becomes a mere performance for the film spectator. It is well executed, but unrelated to the narrative concerns.

Better related is the other number with limited audience, "Good Morning." The number is a celebration

of the decision to turn a failed sound film into a musical, in which Kathy will substitute her voice for the untalented, vocally repellent Lina. (It should be noted that this is an example of the narrative's doing what the directors have been doing with the numbers: creating frames and recasting the material to re-present it. Cosmo suggests that the sound film with Lina, a period piece, be framed with contemporary material involving song and dance. What had been filmed could then be incorporated in a flashback sequence. The process described by Cosmo is essentially the same used by Comden, Green, Kelly, and Donen in regard to the Freed/Brown song catalog.) The tenuous narrative link is Kathy's discovery that the film-saving decision came in the early hours of the morning. The number's primary function is the strengthening of the community -- here, a community of three, the largest community that dance effects in this film. The three dance before one another and dance as a group. Kelly and Donen use the number to incorporate a variety of different dance styles, as each of the three takes a solo turn before the others. By the time the number is ended, the three are laughing and smiling at one another, having enjoyed the performance and celebrating the salvation of the film. It is the most creative and expansive work done through

dance in the diegetic world of the film.

The title song indicates more strongly than any other, even more than "Make 'Em Laugh," why the world that dance can influence is becoming smaller. "Make 'Em Laugh" posed the question of the validity of entertainment, but nevertheless made room for performance. "Moses Supposes" and "Good Morning" were limited in scope, but they found their audience. "Singin' in the Rain" has no audience; it is a moment of sheer self-expression. Don and Kathy have expressed their love for one another, and Don is expressing his joy. Unlike "S'Wonderful," where the joy was shared, "Singin' in the Rain" has Don savor the joy by himself. But instead of ultimately handing the number over to the film spectator, as in "Make 'Em Laugh" and "Moses Supposes," Don is stopped by the presence of a policeman, who causes him to shrug and slink away. The moment is given a socio-political interpretation by Leo Braudy:

> The dream of the future that the musical could embody was being suffocated by the harshness of the present. The cop who stops Kelly's exuberant dance in Singin' in the Rain asserts the reality of the streets and the rain and the lamppost Kelly is holding on to -- a reality that is in opposition to what dance would like to make of the world. Throughout the sequence our point of view is with Kelly, but at the end we stand behind the cop's shoulder and watch Kelly walk away. Acting out, exuberance, energy, all seem suspect, both psychologically and politically.[6]

If this had been made years earlier, the cop might have been drawn into the dance instead. What is evidenced in the other numbers with their small communities and limited conquests, is explained here. Non-performers cannot be trusted to understand or be touched by performance; it must be preserved for the initiated, for those of like mind and talent. With this number, Kelly and Donen have come full circle to the "King Who Couldn't Dance," with the cop and all that he represents standing in for the tyrannical Jerry Mouse. As Don slyly skips off, it is as if he carries with him not only the secret of Kathy's love, but the secret of the dance, a personally-held treasure.

The two areas where dance does maintain its power and even increases it over past films include the creation of the couple and the effect of dance on film structure. The same general pattern found in On the Town and An American in Paris in regard to the introduction of the love interest and the subsequent development is found in Singin' in the Rain. As Ivy and Lise were given numbers in which to demonstrate their talent, and the dancers playing them their choreographic range, so Kathy/Debbie Reynolds has her number. The only difference is that it is performed not in the imagination, but in the diegetic world of the film. As Kelly brought

the more expressive balletic gestures into the diegetic world in the creation of the couple in An American in Paris, so here he brings the number that introduces the female lead into the diegesis as well. The number is "All I Do is Dream of You."

The number may not be in the realm of imagination, but it is seen through a framing device nonetheless. Kathy has already met Don, insulted him, and indicated her own preference for stage over film. The number begins as Kathy steps out of the prop cake at the party Don is attending, and proceeds to join a chorus line for the number. The number includes enough visual references back to Don to link the spectator's point of view with Don's perspective on the number. Instead of imagination, the number uses Don's surprise, delight, and obvious respect for her performance as the filter through which the spectator views the number. While the number fails to define Kathy as the compleat woman in choreographic terms, as had Ivy's and Lise's numbers, it does demonstrate Kathy's equality with Don as a performer.

It is Kathy's performance itself which is the raison d'etre of the number. The number is thrown away in terms of melody and lyrics, the better to focus on Kathy's interpretation. It is speeded up in the same manner as "Fit as a Fiddle" and given the same heavy

one-two beat, accentuated by a drum that distorts the melodic flow while providing musical accompaniment to the swinging legs and derrieres of the dancers, including Kathy. This musical attitude increases as the song reaches its conclusion. The song speeds up even more, and the last word is accompanied by a tonic/dominant below/tonic configuration, a trope usually reserved for calliopes at circuses or trombones at burlesque shows. Its net effect is the song's quick dismissal, allowing for a rapid segue into the next scene.

As a showcase for the song, the performance is abysmal; as a showcase for Kathy, the violence done to the lyrics and vocal line work to her favor, as does the framing device. Reynold's personality is a bouncy, effervescent one, and the quick tempo and one-two beat accentuate that quality. The less-than-serious treatment of the song also sets in relief the contrast between her earlier protestations about serious art and her present performance. The solid presence of the framing device of Don's reaction also helps Reynold's performance in that the surprise and delight tend to cover her limitations as a performer. Reynolds had had minimal dance training before working with Kelly and Donen, and her voice, never very strong, was weak in this stage of her career. Her performance here is adequate, but no

more. The flow of her dance is interrupted by the continual visual references to Don, and her voice is barely audible above the other dancers' voices. It is the flexible attitude toward the interpretation of the song that allows the musical moment to succeed.

After the introduction of the female lead in On the Town and An American in Paris, the central male/female relationship is next expressed in a song and dance number, seen in "Main Street" in the former and in "Our Love is Here to Stay" in the latter film. Singin' in the Rain follows the same format, but the song is a richer musical experience in that it also includes and explores some of the other concerns in the film. The number is "You Were Meant for Me." Like its predecessors, it is respected musically; indeed it is one of Kelly's most sensitively sung songs in any of his films. And like the other two songs, it begins with Kelly's character singing, then singing and dancing with the woman, then just dancing, and it concludes with song.

As in "Main Street," the number does serve to extend the role of character as performer. The quick look shared by Gabey and Ivy when doing a little series of taps is repeated here with Don and Kathy. They share an even broader smile as they jointly execute a relatively

rapid series of dance steps in what is generally a slow number characterized by flowing dance lines reflective of the melody. The two characters are confirmed as two performers who derive as much enjoyment from their shared dancing as they do from their growing relationship.

The number also addresses the question of illusion that had been broached in "Make 'Em Laugh." The setting for the number is a Hollywood sound stage. Don has reached the point where he wants to express his feelings for Kathy, but finds that he cannot do so directly. He brings her into the stage, turns on colored lights, starts a stage fan, releases artificial fog and aims a special spotlight on Kathy, creating an overly romantic backdrop. Only then is he ready to convey his feelings.

Within Kelly's career, the same kinds of expression were found in Anchors Aweigh with Kathryn Grayson on a Hollywood sound stage, and in Summer Stock, with Judy Garland on a theater stage. As one performer dealing with another, Don is merely using the accoutrements of (motion picture) performance to express his feelings for Kathy. As a statement of the legitimacy of illusion, the number pretends to be able to use all manner of artificiality to make an honest statement;

in fact, artifice becomes the means, in the context of this particular number, through which honesty can be attained. In this regard, the number is a further indication of the eroding of faith in musical convention. The props and the setting must be exposed as artifice before they can be used to express real emotion.

In another regard, however, the song represents an apex of the directors' ability to remake the worlds of their films in the image of dance. At this point, they can so easily reconstitute the reality of the diegetic worlds of their films through the artifice of dance that they have peaked artistically, and begun to rework the artifices as the film's realities. The song marks a reversal of artistic direction that can be compared to a mountain climber reaching a summit and descending down the other side. It seems a turning point of the same significance as the arrival of the policeman in the "Singin' in the Rain" number. The policeman represented restriction of the expansion of the world of dance: it could not extend beyond the single individual. "You Were Meant for Me" represents a similar dead end. The environment, albeit created by one of the performers, is now affecting the dancers instead of vice versa. The dynamics, instead of expanding outward as in the patterns in On the Town and

An American in Paris, now become implosive and centripetal.

Instead of affecting the environment and the surrounding community, dance now begins to affect film form to an unprecedented extent. In this number and in the next love song, "Would You?," dance determines the movement of the camera and the rhythm of the editing, incorporating them both into the dance as partners. In "You Were Meant for Me," the camera begins in a high position, and swoops and glides with the same long lines and grace as the vocal and dance lines, moving around the dancers and the ladder, finally tracking back at the end of the number, creating a near-spaceless void reminiscent of the spatial context of the Kelly ballets in On the Town and An American in Paris.

Kelly, with and without Donen, had always been concerned with finding the proper relationship between camera and dance. For a still camera, Kelly felt that "a dancer rushing from a fair distance away can create some sort of kinaesthetic effect . . . ."[7] Both Clive Hirschhorn in his biography of Kelly and Barry Day note that panning shots used by Kelly often made use of vertical props (such as the lamppost in "Singin' in the Rain" and the ladder in "You Were Meant for Me"), to create depth. According to Day,

> Kelly's answer [to the question of the best way to photograph dance] was to create an artificial depth of field. Place objects between the dancer and the camera and you create a totally new visual dimension. With a few vertical props strategically positioned, the camera can wander at will. Instead of revealing everything at once, it provides a series of surprises, of frames within frames. Suddenly the dancer had depth.[8]

Kelly himself commented on the quest. He told Dance Magazine that "as much of a contribution as I made, was the use of the camera for dance in big, broad movements outdoors, down the street, that couldn't be done on stage."[9] And in describing the creation of the title number in Singin' in the Rain, Kelly recalled his use of the camera:

> Stanley Donen and myself decided to take advantage again of cinematic treatment, and we kept the dance coming into camera . . . I never had any weak movements. If I stopped, we would bring the camera up and cut and come sidewards so I could move back and forth. Always into camera. Always the forces were pushing, pushing, pushing the camera.[10]

The camera in "You Were Meant for Me" is so well integrated into the performance, so designed to move with it, that it partakes of it; it becomes the third partner.

There has been a critical tendency to see the camera movement solely in the context of the revelation

of artifice. According to Jane Feuer,

> . . . Singin' in the Rain ultimately denies that technology is responsible for our pleasure. You Were Meant for Me, the romantic number on the deserted sound stage between Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds, demystifies only in order to restore illusion. Although Kelly gives us a look at the hardware behind movie magic (the wind machine, the soft lights) in an introduction to the song, the camera arcs around and comes in for a tighter shot of the couple during the central portion of the number, reframing to exclude the previously exposed equipment. We regress from an exposé of romantic duets to an example of a romantic duet, which, along with all the others, lies about its past.[11]

David Lusted, in "Film as Industrial Product: Teaching a Reflexive Movie," also pinpoints the camera as the villain:

> The film's commitment, in short, is to the idea of creativity within industrial and commercial contexts: a commitment which I understand the film to be "about" . . . . The strategy of Singin' in the Rain becomes clear [in "You Were Meant for Me"]. The audience is invited to share in the created illusion. But the construction of that illusion is such that the audience is, nonetheless, being deceived. The audience is presented with the industrial and commercial elements of the film's own construction. It pretends to a transparent representation of the means by which it creates illusion. But in the same way that the mode of the film -- musical comedy pastiche -- undermines any notion of Singin in the Rain as presenting in an unmediated form industrial and commercial processes, so the formal elements of the film betray any sense that the illusion is anything but the sophisticated deception itself -- an illusion of illusion. Singin' in the Rain is a veritable Chinese box of formal games.[12]

Both authors appreciate the complexity of the number, but seem to have different interpretations of the intent of the sequence's revelation of illusion and artifice. Kelly and Donen have demonstrated a rather consistent set of values and meanings connected with song and dance, and have shown their willingness to manipulate vocal lines, lyrics, and tempos to that end. They have indeed spotlighted illusion in this number, but in a sense the revelation is just another segue into the performance. It is self-conscious, to be sure, and it is rooted in an insecurity regarding the use of illusion, but the presence of the device does not mean the film is "about" the revelation of its own technology any more than it is "about" the interplay of dance and film form, the creation of the couple, or the diminishing scope of the power of dance in the films of Kelly and Donen. The attempt to expose some levels of illusion should not be seen as an attempt to expose them all; there is no attempt, for example, to expose the lie of rehearsal -- Kathy still joins Don in a perfectly executed dance duet that is presented as spontaneous. It also should be recalled that the purpose in exposing illusion was to use it again. Ultimately, the camera movement in "You Were Meant for Me" must be seen not only in the context of the revelation of

illusion, but also both in the context of the imploding dynamics of dance in the Kelly/Donen films which makes of the camera a dance partner, and in the context of the genre's search for a more expressive relationship between camera and dancer.

The exposure of technology is also employed, and to similar effect, in "Would You?" The song itself is a rather saccharine piece, structured in a semi-classical manner. The vocal line is smooth to a fault, and the song builds to an overblown climax. Musically, it is related to "Indian Love Song" as performed by Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald, and is as ripe for satire. The song is not performed directly, however, but is integrated into the film at several other levels. It is used to further the narrative: it too reveals illusion only to use it again; and through various ways in which the song is performed, the original love expression of the song is retained for Don and Kathy.

Narratively, the song brings Kathy's dubbing of Lina's unacceptable voice from the initial recording stage to the final product on the screen. Kathy is first seen recording the song, under Cosmo's musical direction. Lina is then seen mouthing the words in rehearsal, preparing to lip-sync the number in the

actual filming, which is the next scene. The effect is demonstrated in the final product itself, which is last seen in a screening room. At no point in the presentation of the song is it ever performed "straight" for the spectator. While the song is musically unbroken from beginning to end, what is shown to the film's spectator is the technological process of creating a cinematic effect and illusion. The number is presented as a means to an end in that regard. When the final effect is presented, the emphasis is taken off the song itself by the musical interpretation. In the film-within-the-film, Lockwood raises himself from near-death to sing the final chorus in a satiric move that comedically distracts the spectator/listener from the song itself. At the final note, the camera within the film raises itself to focus on an image of Cupid, a move which again sacrifices song for comic effect. The "Would You?" sequence does not end with that camera move, however, but with the return to Don and Kathy, who view the successful dubbing of Kathy's voice as a personally shared triumph. The song is transformed into a sequence which step-by-step displays a labor of love, thus redeeming the original intent of the lyrics by a recasting of the song.

Performance is again at the heart of this sequence.

It is Kathy's performance of the song which the spectator hears, and which is responsible for the forward thrust of the narrative at this point. Kathy's performance becomes Lina's performance, with the end result, the aim of all the activity, being Don's and Lina's performance on the screen. The whole sequence uses the song as fodder for the creation of that performance. The exposing of technology must be seen in this context. The work involved in creating the illusion is shown, much in the same way that "Make 'Em Laugh" presented hard work as a justification for the legitimacy of illusion. The creation of the illusion of Lina singing the song takes work, and the display of technology shows specifically what work goes into it. Yet the intent is not to reveal the film's mechanisms for its own sake. The creation of the final effect is the narrative's sole concern at this point, and the display of technology merely shows the process. In terms of using a Freed/Brown song, the recording, lip-syncing, and final filming of the song is one more way to re-frame and perform another number. Finally, the number is also used in developing the relationship of the central couple, as the song, <u>in toto</u>, is "made theirs" by dint of their having worked to create its performance. All in all, the number works on several levels, and is one

of the most reflexive, complex uses of song in the film.

[The reflexivity of the number is compounded by the facts of its actual production. Reynold's voice at this time was not strong enough for the song, which requires a legitimate voice, especially for the full-bodied climactic measures. A singer named Betty Royce was called in to dub Reynolds as Kathy was dubbing Lina. In the scene with Kathy recording Lina's nasal dialogue in the film-within-a-film -- "Our love will last 'til the stars turn cold" -- Reynolds voice was again not used. According to Donen, "We used Jean Hagen (Lina) dubbing Debbie dubbing Jean. Jean's voice is quite remarkable, and it was supposed to be cultured speech -- and Debbie had that terrible Western noise. . ."[13]]

As the song is integrated into the concerns of narrative, the development of the couple, and the presentation of song as performance, so too is the song integrated into film form. As the camera movement in "You Were Meant for Me" was employed as a dance partner, so the camera and editing of the song sequence become the dance partners here. The smooth panning and dollying in the various small scenes making up the sequence are reflective of the fluidity of the vocal line. The editing provides the rhythm to the camera's motions, interrelating the scene changes with the lines of the

lyrics, sometimes anticipating the change, and at other times holding a scene for a moment, creating a kind of cinematic "hesitation step."

The ballet is not well integrated into the film. It is unrelated narratively, and is ostensibly present because it is part of the film that Don and Lina are supposed to be working on. Yet it is a classic example of the reworking and re-presentation of musical material seen elsewhere in the film, and reveals, as well as the more narratively related sequences, the shrinking of dance's power. Indeed, like "You Were Meant for Me" and "Singin' in the Rain," the ballet represents another peak or dead end in the development of dance within film.

The ballet is presented as a possible production number in the reconstructed sound film proposed by Don to the studio head. It is the visual expression of a verbal description of the sequence for the producer. Like the ballets in On the Town and An American in Paris, it is a product of the imagination, with the attendant "anything goes" attitude. In Kelly's first ballet, the action reflected the plot but allowed the events to resonate on a higher emotional plane. The ballet in An American in Paris was less connected narratively, but in context, on one level, was presented as utopia.

Both ballets related to the couple and emotionally developed their relationship.

The ballet in Singin' in the Rain is also "thrown away" by its context as much as "Fit as a Fiddle" and "All I Do is Dream of You" threw away much of their melody lines and lyrics. The context redefines the entire sequence of the ballet as part of a grand joke. After the number is presented, the film returns to the room where Don has supposedly been explaining the number. The producer reacts, saying that he cannot visualize it until he sees it on the screen. The distancing effect that such a comment produces is of little consequence, as the number has no bearing on the rest of the film anyway. The comic framework serves merely to extract comedy from the ballet, providing another example of the continual recasting and reframing of the musical material in the plot.

With a dance partner unable to mount the choreographic heights of the other two ballets (Reynolds) and a male buddy from the diegetic world of the film unable to be in the ballet because of the actor's previous commitments (O'Connor), Kelly was forced to take the ballet in a different direction. Donen's comment was that the ballet was "too far away from the really important situations of the plot."[14] Kelly himself

expressed later that it "was out of keeping with the rest of the film. There were some arresting moments, but the overall conception seemed somewhat chaotic."[15] Yet freed from having to tie content in with the diegetic world, Kelly was able to explore other avenues. He expanded the definition of the complete woman, explored other expressions of dance not found in the diegetic world of the film, and he recalled his own roots as a dancer, coming to terms with the urge to perform that lay within him.

In both their introductory numbers and the subsequent ballets, Ivy and Lise had been presented as very nearly the "complete woman." Kathy had been limited because her introduction was in the diegesis and because Reynolds was a limited dancer. The ballet expands the definition of woman with the introduction of Cyd Charisse, who countered Reynold's effervescence with sensuality and sexual power. From the entrance of Charisse, with Kelly's character's hat dangling on the tip of her shoe, to the camera's ogling of her famous long legs, it is clear that the dimensions of woman in the film are being expanded from Reynold's innocence to Charisse's aggressive sexuality. This creature is a temptress, and the young man, on his way from small-town to Broadway fame as a dancer, is nearly enticed

away from his call. Her movements are slow and seductive, drawing him into her spider's web of dance. But she is greedy as well, and this is the aspect of her personality that breaks her hold on him; a diamond bracelet proffered by a gangster pulls her away, and the young man returns to his original quest.

This is the first time in the Kelly/Donen series that dance has been granted to anyone who could be classified as an antagonist. The harshness of the real world, heretofore seen only in the cop in "Singin' in the Rain," has made its way into the non-diegetic world as well. The ballet sequence, formerly the province of the most exquisite and sensitive dance expressions, is now the entry for the evil present in the world, the evil which has still not found a place in the diegesis. The ballet is also the setting in which the dark side of woman and the sexual aspects of man/woman relationships can be addressed.

The presence of Charisse also helps to expand Kelly's persona. Reynolds had brought out his sweetness, and O'Connor his athletic prowess and technical fire. But Charisse brought out the sexual fire in his personality. "The Pirate Ballet" in The Pirate had presented Kelly in a dangerous and explosive sexual context, and An American in Paris kept him inches away

from the role of gigolo. The diegetic world of Singin' in the Rain expressed none of that, however, and his sexuality becomes one of the elements he chose to explore in the ballet. His dance with Charisse is often little more than a choreographed mating ritual. Part of the number includes sexual thrusts so blatant that they might never have been allowed in the film had they not been "framed" by their integration into a dance routine.

The ballet also addresses the issue of performance, and makes a defense of it based on an inner compulsion -- "Gotta Dance!" Kelly has just danced balletically with Charisse in a spaceless void not unlike the backgrounds in the other ballet sequences. And like them the ballet comes at the moment he loses the girl, Charisse the temptress. As he finds himself alone, the scene behind him changes to the one in which he was originally going to become a dancer. He spies another young man dressed as he was in the early part of the ballet. He shrugs, then returns to the performance of "Broadway Rhythm" with his cry, his manifesto, of "Gotta Dance!" The shrug indicates two things: it stands for the character's shrugging off the interchange with Charisse and the complexities, pleasures and pains associated with it. It is also a shrug that represents

the giving up of the character's attempt to understand either the exchange with Charisse or his own urge to perform. He is a performer. That is his identity, and questioning it would be futile. He must give expression to it -- that one thing is understood.

The rest of the number creates a Broadway community of performers, but the emphasis has changed from the time of such community-creating numbers as "S'Wonderful" and "On the Town." The emphasis is on Kelly as the source of that power, and on the urge to perform welling up within him. Kelly is constantly kept at the center of the activities and the final shot is a rare closeup of him that offers the spectator only Kelly the performer. "Broadway rhythm, it's got me, everybody dance." The dynamics are the same as other numbers, but Kelly downplays the "everybody dance" aspect and favors the first half of the line: "Broadway rhythm, it's got me." The power of dance has now totally retreated back into its source, and exists solely as the urge to perform. The offering of Kelly to the spectator at the end of the ballet seems to be a presentation of the performance for purposes of acceptance, but the raw urge to perform is not expected to be commented on, accepted, or rejected. It is merely stated and demonstrated. Dance could not bring Charisse to Kelly,

as there were other factors deemed more powerful. Dance has hence retreated, as it did in the diegetic world of Singin' in the Rain, and is now only performed for those of like mind and sensibility. Yet the ballet takes the retreat one step further. In the diegetic world of the film, dance remained a performance for those who did understand. In the ballet, it is performed within the group of fellow performers, but not for them. Dance has retreated, finally, into the very soul of the performer.

As a single musical, Singin' in the Rain uses and incorporates music with so much flexibility and on so many levels that it redefines the way in which music can be presented in a musical. The hard and fast divisions often separating the song from a film's narrative, thematic concerns, or structure have here given way to a pliant attitude that softens the distinctions between a piece of music, a comic gag, or a development of the narrative. This is due to two things. The song catalog gave the directors a group of songs unrelated lyrically to the narrative. Only one song, "You Were Meant for Me," is integrated lyrically into the narrative. The rest were integrated in other ways.

The second reason for that pliant attitude is the specific way in which most of the songs were

treated -- they became performances. It is the element of performance, which began to show itself strongly in "You Can Count on Me" and "Pearl of the Persian Sea" in On the Town, that now comes to the fore. Most of the numbers are performances for the select group of Don, Cosmo and Kathy, ("Make 'Em Laugh," "Good Morning," "Moses") or are performances for shows or for films ("Fit as a Fiddle," "All I Do is Dream of You," "Beautiful Girl," "Would You?"). "Singin' in the Rain" combines performance with self-expression, and the ballet presents performance and self-expression as two sides of the same coin.

As a film in the Kelly/Donen series, Singin' in the Rain shows a marked decrease in the power of film to build communities and to transform environments. The number of people affected by dance has shrunk, and the environment has changed from major cities to the indoor arena of the movie-making world. Dance had been poured out onto strangers, and had been allowed to flow down the street. Now it is increasingly being bottled and stored, and brought out to be enjoyed in small quantities on special occasions. Yet it has not remained stagnant. It remains as instrumental as ever in the creation of the couple, which was always a function limited in scope. And like a body of water that has

been blocked up, dance is beginning to overflow its banks and find its level elsewhere. The level was in the film structure itself. Dance began to enlist camera and editing as partners to replace the partners it had lost in the narrowing of its scope. No longer extending outward, dance's influence is being absorbed by the structure of the film itself.

The ballet in Singin' in the Rain functions as the "back door" through which the real world begins to enter, a trend opposite to that of the other two ballets before it, which served to heighten emotions found in the diegesis. The real world, found in the presence and effect of the cop in "Singin' in the Rain," is expressed in the ballet in terms of woman, or specifically, the other side of woman not found in the diegesis. Greed, sexual entrapment, and lust are acknowledged and explored. The fracturing of relationships, suggested in the other two films but always resolved in the diegesis, is presented as irrevocable. The urge to perform is the bottom line, however, and turns that loss into gain.

Kelly and Donen have managed to bring a number of the qualities expressed in the non-diegetic world in On the Town into the diegetic world of Singin' in the Rain. The balletic gestures and emotional expres-

siveness of "A Day in New York" had found its way to a great extent in "You Were Meant for Me," an emotionally vulnerable performance. The dark aspects of the real world found in the non-diegetic world of Singin' in the Rain also find their way into the diegetic world of the directors' next film, It's Always Fair Weather.

## Notes: Section II

[1]Fordin, p. 309.

[2]Feuer, p. 34.

[3]Fordin, p. 311.

[4]Fordin, p. 352.

[5]Fordin, p. 359.

[6]Braudy, p. 157.

[7]Hirshhorn, pp. 118-119.

[8]Barry Day, "Cult Movies: Singin' in the Rain," Films and Filming, April 1977, p. 24.

[9]Norma McLain Stoop, "Gene Kelly: An American Dance Innovator Tells it Like it Was -- and is," Dance Magazine, July 1976, p. 72.

[10]Curtis Lee Hanson, "An Interview with Gene Kelly," Cinema, Dec. 1966, p. 24.

[11]Feuer, p. 46.

[12]David Lusted, "Film as Industrial Product: Teaching a Reflexive Movie," Screen Education, Autumm 1975, pp. 29-30.

[13]Fordin, p. 358.

[14]Albert Johnson, "The Tenth Muse in San Francisco," Sight & Sound, Summer 1956, p. 48.

[15]Rudy Behlmer, "Gene Kelly is One Dancer Who Can Also Act and Direct," Films in Review, Jan. 1964, p. 16.

## III

*It's Always Fair Weather* began as a sequel to *On the Town*, which followed the lives of the sailors ten years later. Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin were unavailable, however, so it was decided to emphasize dance in the film and replace the two men with real dancers. Thus choreographer Michael Kidd and actor/dancer Dan Dailey came into the film.

The plot takes the three men (now soldiers) from the end of the war, sends them off on their separate ways with a group pledge to meet again at a certain New York City bar in ten year's time, then brings them back together, chronicling the changes in each that tend to threaten their friendship. The three have grown apart; the film demonstrates this and shows how they recapture their former closeness.

In following the changes the three men go through during the ten year period, the film also follows the changes in post-war America as well as any documentary directly addressing that subject. Personal defeats, losses of dreams, the pain of deterioriating love relationships -- the kinds of things found in the *Singin' in the Rain* ballet -- are a part of the narrative here.

Ted (Kelly) is a cynical manager of a prize fighter, well acquainted with the sordid underworld of New York gamblers. Doug (Dailey) is a frustrated artist turned advertising executive working in television, trying to deny his feelings that he has compromised his talents. He is married, but has no children, preferring to substitute material goods instead. Angie (Kidd) had dreams of being a gourmet chef, and now owns a pretentiously named hamburger eaterie in Schenectady, New York, a location as mockingly referred to in the film as Buffalo is in common conversation. Not only are these circumstances much more realistically negative than the plot concerns of the other Kelly/Donen films, but the ways in which the stories and facts are presented differ as well. The way in which the songs were brought to the film is different. And the role of dance has changed, having turned to new directions in Singin' in the Rain. It's Always Fair Weather tries to come to grips with the loss of faith in the power of dance and with the musical forms that that faith had created in the two earlier films.

The songs for the film were all written by André Previn, with lyrics by Comden and Green. According to Previn, "Betty and Adolph initiated me into the mysteries of how to construct a musical. They pointed

out the fact (sic) that the songs must be inevitable instead of the way they were inserted in other producers' films."[1] Thus a more classically integrated tack was taken in regard to the musical, with lyrics worked into the narrative instead of the entire song itself being worked in, as had occurred with Singin' in the Rain. Previn was also responsible for the musical direction, arranging and conducting, a fact he felt worked against the effectiveness of the music: " . . . to be honest, I don't think that too many of the songs were very good, and that's because I was too intent on having them sound clever or well arranged and all that."[2] Timothy Scheurer, in defending the need for variety in the songs of a musical, criticizes It's Always Fair Weather:

> The lack of varied songs is clearly a weakness because it has not, through song, offered the viewer the opportunity to experience and understand the multifaceted natures of the different characters and their relationship to one another . . . . A well-rounded musical score is essential in a good musical for more than just entertainment's sake: it is our direct encounter with the characters' way of looking at the world and at life."[3]

Scheurer's points are generally valid for most musicals where the song is an expression of the person singing it. Yet Singin' in the Rain demonstrates that essen-

tially second-rate songs with limited musical variety can be made to express characterization, as well as build relationships and advance narrative -- all through the context in which the song is placed, and in the way it is used. Up to this film, too, the element of performance has been as significant as the style of the song or its lyrics. It is the loss of that sense of performance, that flexibility toward the musical content, that limits the expressiveness of song and dance in the film as much as the mediocrity of the score. In the context of what the directors have done in the other films, too much respect is shown to the music as music, and not enough to music as an integral element of the entire cinematic expression.

Dance has progressed in the other films from a community-creating, couple-creating, time-and-space-conquering force to an urge located in the heart of the performer and a force affecting the structure of the film around it. Yet the other two films have left a pattern of certain kinds of dance numbers, such as the ones arising from musical tradition and ones relating to the burgeoning power of dance. Attempts are made to resurrect these forms without the basis of faith in the power of dance that brought them into being in the first place. And in a reversal of dance affecting

film form, film form, especially in the form of split screen, begins to contain dance, breaking it into units and, ultimately, presenting it as entertainment.

The forms of dance found in the earlier Kelly/ Donen films and now found in It's Always Fair Weather are seen in "Can It Be That I Like Myself?," "Baby, You Knock Me Out," "Situation-Wise," and a wordless dance to a drunken binge. The first is a combination of "Singin' in the Rain" and the kind of community-building number exemplified by "On the Town" and "S'Wonderful." Ted is struggling with self-hatred in the film, and, lyrically, the song signals a change, a doubting of self-doubt, brought about by his new relationship with Jackie (Cyd Charisse). The song is preceded by a scene in a roller skating rink, which Ted leaves in a hurry to escape some thugs seeking to wreak revenge on him for punching his own fighter and stopping a fight which had been rigged -- the first "good deed" he'd done in years. Ted begins to sing, and discovers he is still wearing his skates. The song takes him out onto the street, singing, dancing on skates, and eventually drawing an appreciative audience. Ted ends the song in the middle of a street, surrounded by cheering onlookers. In form, the song is a close relation to the other community-building performances.

Yet there is something missing: faith in the ability of dance to be appreciated by anyone other than a performer. Singin' in the Rain's ballet had even defined dance more precisely as the urge to perform. For Kelly and Donen, the days of dance's reaching out to conquer space were over. The performance is a hollow one: the right moves are there, the right kind of resolution of personal difficulties is expressed, yet the underlying belief that dance could change anything had been abandoned years before.

"Baby, You Knock Me Out," is Jackie's one solo number, and functions in many of the same ways as Ivy's and Kathy's introductions. It is the first presentation of the character as a performer, and the number establishes her choreographic -- and hence, romantic -- suitability for the Kelly character, as did the earlier numbers. Yet there are crucial differences. The other numbers were either imagined by Kelly ("Miss Turnstyles") or were seen by him directly ("All I Do is Dream of You"). But Ted is not present at the number, which occurs at the gym where the fighters train. The number succeeds in establishing Jackie's relationships with the pugilists, but not with Ted, who has left the scene and only arrives after the number is completed. It gives Charisse her moment in the sun, according to the

dictates of musical tradition, but fails to establish dance as any kind of force involved in the creation of the couple.

That moment of creation, in fact, has already occurred in the film. Ted and Jackie were sharing a cab ride, and Jackie, through dialogue, is shown to be as cynical, intelligent and aggressive as Ted. By the end of the ride, they are a couple, and that status is based not on an equality expressed in dance, but on personality. Once the relationship is established, it could be expected that there will be a "Main Street" or "You Were Meant for Me," in which the couple could express their love. Yet none exists; the couple never dances together. A song was written for the two by Previn, Comden and Green, but never made it into the film. It was entitled "Love is Nothing But a Racket," and was intended to be a slow, romantic duet. The title itself suggests that the time for straightforward romantic expression of love through song is past. According to Previn, Kelly felt that no one would sit still for a slow number -- again, another indication of the loss of faith in the power of dance -- and Kelly recorded the number at quadruple speed. The number was dropped.[4]

"I Like Myself" and "Baby, You Knock Me Out" had renewed old forms, but through their context in the

films had failed to reproduce exactly the same results as earlier numbers, either in feeling or in fact. In "Situation-Wise" the failure of dance to transform the environment or solve problems is displayed in explicit detail. The number is sung and danced by Doug, and at least serves to provide Dailey with his number as a performer. Doug is drunk, having defied doctor's orders to indulge his self-pity and frustration with his job and his marriage. As he sits at a company party, the world around him begins to swirl in his imagination. His memory takes him back to events shown in the beginning of the film, when the three soldiers were friends. He begins to move to the music associated with that friendship. Musically energized by the memory, he is drawn back to the present world, where he begins to impose musical rhythms on the catch-phrases the businessmen are spouting around him, e.g., "situation-wise," "saturation-wise." This sequence demonstrates Doug's attempt to re-create his world through song and dance. It is also an all-out rebellion against the hypocrisy, pressure, tension and self-serving subservience involved in his profession. Doug dons a variety of disguises and costumes borrowed from the props at hand, and does a number of comic turns ranging from an imitation of a jousting knight to a less-than-affectionate

satire of Jerry Lewis.

Instead of drawing in the onlookers as did Ted in "I Like Myself," the number only succeeds in alienating them from Doug. Doug insults his boss's wife, scares a good number of the people present, and ends the performance by attempting the remove-the-tablecloth-without-disturbing-the-table-setting trick, a feat he had performed with ease earlier in the film. But he fails miserably here and falls down in a complete faint. His attempt at transforming his environment and working out his problems through dance has been a total failure, and not even a noble one. He has made a fool of himself, is still filled with the same self-condemnation and frustration he had before; it is only the forgiveness of his boss that prevents him from being fired or embarrassed further. While "I Like Myself" and "Baby, You Knock Me Out" were less successful than their counterparts in earlier Kelly/Donen films, it was not for want of trying. "Situation-Wise" admits defeat directly. Reality is too strong for dance to change it, and the moral of the number is the futility of even trying.

Not only does the number represent another "dead end" in the Kelly/Donen series, but it questions the very motivations behind the presence of a musical

number. Jane Feuer describes the change in attitude seen here:

> Bricolage no longer represents a carefree life force; it assumes an inner compulsion to destruction and chaos, qualities buried in the classical musical's affirmation of liberation and personal energy. Summer Stock had hinted at an anti-social tendency when the entertainers destroyed the farmers' livelihood, the tractor. Now in Dailey's frantic violence, destructive energy comes to the surface of the film in a quite disturbing way. We begin to see the dangerous undercurrent to the musical's wholehearted endorsement of spontaneous energy . . . .
>
> Situation-Wise renders explicit the counter-conventional forms the bricolage number may assume.[5]

In this number, the film has sided with forces that dance is attempting to change. The personal expression and the freedom formerly associated with dance is now filtered through suspicion and fear. The darker, destructive side of dance only hinted at once before in "Prehistoric Man" is coming forth, where it is eventually contained by society.

The number is also presented as a response to drunkenness, and not to the urge to express feelings of joy, to create a group of people who can share that joy, or to perform in response to the inner compulsion to perform. This association was first created in the earlier number where the three soldiers, celebrating their last night together before parting, proceed to

visit bar after bar until they are all quite drunk. In the early hours of the morning, completely intoxicated, the three begin to dance together. There are no lyrics, and the three continue their roaming around the city, running up and down streets, jumping in and out of cabs, and creating a routine out of dancing with garbage can lids on their feet. The location and the geographical scope of the dance suggest "New York, New York," but a number of factors render it quite differently.

The city is indeed New York, but no one would know it by the dance. No highlights are seen. In fact, the very opposite is shown -- we see only the world of all-night bars and dark streets. Even physically, the number has substituted the low points -- the street level bars of the city -- for the building tops of "New York, New York." It could have taken place in any city with all-night bars. And as with "Situation-Wise," the expression of dance is a direct result of drunkenness. Even as momentous an occasion as the last night shared by three close friends who won't see each other for an entire decade is not sufficient reason for a dance. Alcohol must supply the excuse, as if the joie de vivre of old were suspect without due explanation. The repressive presence embodied by the policeman in "Singin' in the Rain" seems to have been enlarged; the

apparent need to drink to express oneself in dance implies an understanding of some kind of constraint, either personal or social, on the part of the dancers. The only creative work done by dance consists of the solidification of the group and the satisfying of musical tradition in having the lead dance with his second leads. Time or space are not conquered in any way, and no personal problems are solved. The world of dance here is the maudlin, sentimental, and anesthetized zone of drunken feeling shared between the three men. The form of a number like "New York, New York" is there, but the power of dance seen in that number is now unable to affect the environment, and is instead preserved in alcohol.

The actual containment of dance by film form is expressed in a number of ways, and in a variety of the film's songs. Part of the containment came in response to the problem of dealing with the CinemaScope screen. Many numbers are done in split screen, which has a significant effect on the role of dance in the film. The first use of the split screen is in the very beginning of the film, where the three soldiers are shown marching and fighting in the Second World War. The three panels show the three men, following their individual progress through the war. The song being sung is "March, March."

It is heard first as a choral number in the background of the action. Eventually the three men are singing it as well, and the three panels change from showing the separate activities of the men, to showing the three moving in unison, though still separated by the panels in the screen. The song brings them to the end of the war, and the three panels disappear, leaving the three in the same space and time. The effect is one of a gradual buildup of united action within the screen space that culminates in the three dancing together in the same space as they are released and enter their favorite New York bar, where the number ends. The split screen serves ultimately as a unifying force that brings the men from separate places and activities and finally joins them, abandoning them at the final moment to allow the three to share the same space at last. In this number, it is the split screen which creates the community. The dance breaks down no barriers, but rather is contained in the three panels. It is the removal of the split screen which creates the community by placing the three men in the same screen space. Film form, here with the split screen, is taking over the activities which were once the province of dance. Moreover, it is containing the dance itself within its borders.

Two other numbers, "Blue Danube" and "Once Upon a Time" carry this trend even further. "Blue Danube" takes place at the New York restaurant where the three share their first meal after the decade of separation. They have already realized how remote they have become from one another, and the number, a series of complaints sung in their thoughts to the tune of the Strauss waltz, expresses their individual feelings of discomfort and disappointment at the course of events. Each man has a turn at the lyrics, during which the singer receives a closeup and the rest of the screen is masked. As a technical solution to the CinemaScope problem, it allows full close-ups which would otherwise be difficult to achieve in that format without the sort of extreme closeups used by Sergio Leone in the final shoot-out scene in The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. It allows each man to have his own solo in his own space. And the device also allows an interaction through the editing at the end of the number, as the film cuts from man to man to man, frantically reflecting the galloping tempo of the song, finally allowing a rejoining of the three in the same space again at the climax as they mentally "belt out" the final phrases together on screen. Yet the use of split screen, for all its interaction with the musical form, is the dominant ingredient in

the number. It highlights, through its divisions, the divisions within the group of men. This functions narratively, but works against any sense of musical expression as coming from the characters. The form of the number tends to call attention to itself, drawing attention from the song and offering itself as performance instead. It also breaks down the number into discrete units and reconstitutes them, presenting a construction rather than a performance.

That same reconstituting is apparent in "Once Upon a Time." The number comes at another moment of disappointment for the three men, occurring after they have taken what they feel is their last leave from one another. Each expresses his depressed mood through dance, and the screen, through another set of three panels, contains their identically choreographed dances. As in "Blue Danube," it is a legitimate solution to the challenge of using a wide screen to present a musical number, and functions as well narratively, demonstrating that, though separate, the men share a common disappointment. The men are all dancing, but they are not <u>sharing</u> dance, neither are they dancing <u>for</u> one another. The group effort is the result of the screen's uniting them; no actual screen space is shared nor is there any intention to share dance. Again, the

"performance" is largely that of the film itself, and emanates from film structure rather than from anything to do with either song or dance. It is a complete reversal of the dynamic seen in "You Were Meant for Me" and "Would You?" in which film form grew in response to the music. Here film form manufactures the performance, which denies any deeper affinities between the characters. It is a testament to the loss of dance's power to create a community.

Having lost its battle with the harsh reality of the outside world and having surrendered to the dominating power of film form, dance regresses into the realm of sheer entertainment for its own sake. Its last expression in the film is in "Thanks a Lot, But No Thanks," a song performed by television talk show host Madeline (Delores Gray). The number is the one big vocal extravaganza, with the emphasis squarely on Gray's full-bodied voice. The context in which it is presented is Madeline's nightly performance on her show. Her performance only satisfies the vocal lack in the film, and doesn't serve to demonstrate her compatibility with another character, create communities, or solidify relationships. It is pure entertainment, both for the diegetic audience and the spectator of the film.

Dance is seen only as a back-up to the vocals,

the first time in the Kelly/Donen films that it has ever been presented in that context. The choreography is completely different from that of any other dance in this film, or in the two earlier films, and casts doubts on whether the steps were indeed created by Kelly and Donen, as stated in the credits. The lyrics describe the attempts of a man to impress the singer with outrageously expensive gifts such as Ford Motor company and uranium mines. The hyperbole extends to the choreography, which has men literally "knocking themselves out" to please Madeline. The dancers do incredibly acrobatic flips, drop into the stage area from unseen heights above, and are literally blown away at the end of the number. In terms of the comedy of the number, the dancing is perfectly integrated with the lyrics. In terms of dance itself, the choreography, with its exaggerated leaps and contortions, is almost a satire on back-up dancing. In terms of the role that dance had possessed in the other films, the dance here is an offering of dance as mere entertainment. The number as a whole certainly works as entertainment; Gray's voice is strong and expressive, the lyrics are clever and funny, and the choreography accurately reflects the sense of the ridiculous in the lyrics. And the number is not forced into the film, but is motivated

and has a sensible spot in the narrative. Yet coming at the end of a trilogy of films that has seen dance associated with a wide range of powers, this number, with its dancing in the background, serving only to explicate the lyrics, represents a confinement of dance that completes the decline of the creative powers of dance.

It's Always Fair Weather contains a great number of contradictions regarding its own attitude toward dance, and as such is the least successful of the three Kelly/Donen films. Singin' in the Rain had in many ways brought the rise and fall of the influence of dance in the Kelly/Donen films to a logical conclusion. Yet It's Always Fair Weather attempts to resurrect the influence of dance through the re-creation of community-creating numbers such as "I Like Myself" and the drunken dance of the three men. Yet the film undercuts its message via the drunken state of the three men, and later, totally reverses its message with the failure seen in "Situation-Wise." In a similar manner, "Baby You Knock Me Out" seems to present Jackie as a fit partner for Ted, but their compatibility has already been demonstrated beforehand, and Ted is nowhere to be seen during the number. Finally, the question of performance and its influence is completely overridden by the film's

structure itself in "Blue Danube" and "Once Upon a Time," and by the film's presentation of dance as mere entertainment in the last number.

There have been other attempts to account for the failure of the film esthetically. The downbeat plot is one reason often cited:

> Attempts to deal with unhappiness or unpleasantness, e.g., It's Always Fair Weather, have not been satisfactory -- perhaps because the attempts have been superficial and not whole-hearted. The 'good-guy' ideal seems still to dominate the imagination of the makers of film musicals.[6]

Yet it might not be the plot itself so much as the similarity of the plot to the real-life situation of the two directors that contributed to the contradictions. The story depicts the deterioration of a series of relationships among characters who have worked closely together, shared victories, and then gone their separate ways. It mirrors the directors' own situation very closely.

On the Town had been the first directorial outing for either of the directors. Donen had been in a position of assistant since the Pal Joey days on Broadway in 1940. He and Kelly had worked together on Cover Girl and Anchors Aweigh, but Kelly had also worked with Minnelli on The Pirate. He was a dozen years older

than Donen, and had been a respected choreographer before they had even met. His experience in films had been broader and longer than Donen's and he was therefore more likely to have been the stronger influence, no matter how unified they were in approaching their material.

Donen's first solo assignment came with Royal Wedding (1950). During this time, Kelly was again with Minnelli in An American in Paris, released the following year. After Singin' in the Rain, Kelly worked on Invitation to the Dance, which told three stories using a variety of dance forms. The film was not released until 1957, lost a lot of money, and was the last film ever directed by Kelly at M-G-M. It was also during this time that Kelly's marriage to actress Betsy Blair gradually dissolved.

The creative and marital failure of Kelly stood in contrast to Donen's success during this same period. He directed Seven Brides for Seven Brothers in 1954, in which he came to grips with CinemaScope for the first time. By the time the two teamed up again for It's Always Fair Weather, Donen's star was on the rise, and Kelly was in the midst of a great deal of trauma in his personal life. Kelly recalls the time guardedly:

> We (Kelly and Donen) were so together, we were so used to each other, that we didn't need each other. It was almost dull doing it together; we could have phoned the shots in. It wasn't a bad picture, though it was a little behind its time. That's the only picture we didn't have a lot of fun on.[7]

Elsewhere, Kelly has been described during the making of the film as an "overworked, jagged-in-the-nerves executive."[8] Donen is characteristically more caustic:

> I didn't really want to co-direct another picture with Kelly at that point. We didn't get on very well and, for that matter, Gene didn't get on well with anybody. It was the only picture during which the atmosphere was really horrendous. We had to struggle from beginning to end. I can only say it was an absolute one hundred per cent nightmare.[9]

While the status of the relationship of the two directors would certainly tend to argue against any unity of thought and expression in the film, the film and its contradictions are rooted in changes in the country as well -- and specifically in changes that were a part of Kelly's persona. The confidence of the country after World War Two gradually gave way to the "Age of Anxiety," the fifties. The role of America in the world, especially in regard to our intervention in such countries as South Korea, began to be questioned. The dynamics of male/female relationships began to be questioned as well. Kelly, more than most performers,

was a reflection of forties confidence in America. He began his film career in 1942 with For Me and My Gal, thereafter playing a variety of war-time roles (Pilot No. 5, Thousands Cheer). Some of his greatest successes were in films where he played a serviceman, such as Anchors Aweigh and On the Town, in which he played war-time sailors. It is consistent with his persona that he was the American of the title in An American in Paris. It is easy to link the influence of dance in his films with the confidence of America in itself. As that confidence waned, so did the influence of dance in Kelly's films, leaving him to create musicals without the confidence that so infused them before. And the intrusion of the dance-suppressing outside world occurred at the same time his marriage was breaking up.

Yet there is another element to which the decreasing creative influence of dance can be contributed in the films, and that is the increasing presence of Donen's structural concerns in the film. On the differences between Kelly and Donen as directors, Joseph McBride, in his review of Clive Hirschhorn's biography of Kelly, states that "Without Donen, Kelly's work has often been heavy-handed and vulgar; without Kelly, Donen's work has often seemed precious and emptily fancy."[10] Value judgments aside, the two directors as individuals have

different directing styles. Specifically, though, it is the presence of the split screen in It's Always Fair Weather that works against the role of dance and the sense of performance established in the two earlier films. While it is generally difficult or impossible to untie the various creative strands of a collaborative effort, the presence of the split screen in subsequent Donen films like Funny Face and Indiscreet suggests that Donen was responsible for it in It's Always Fair Weather. His work's continual concern with film structure in general also argues for this position.

As a team, however, the contributions of Kelly and Donen to the American musical were many. In their first two films, they created a pair of true dance musicals. They associated dance with the creation and development of the couple(s), and linked it to the power to create communities and defy the natural limits of space and time. They expanded the element of performance in the musical, weaving the performances of the characters into the narrative concerns of the films. To a small degree in On the Town and to a much larger one in Singin' in the Rain, they demonstrated a flexibility toward musical forms unprecedented in the history of the musical. The rise of performance in the diegetic worlds of their films and the way in which they

surpassed the concept of the traditional integrated musical challenge the methods used to analyze musicals. The intricate framing devices and the various tempo and vocal line changes helped to create a unity and interdependency of elements so tight that music could not easily be lifted out. Their one failure is a valuable illustration of the consequences of the loss of faith in the creative power of dance and the effect that imposed structural devices can have on the performance elements. But the pair's greatest achievement lies in their successes, which stand both as products of their time and as models for the creation of a musical.

## Notes: Section III

[1]Fordin, p. 433.

[2]Fordin, p. 435.

[3]Timothy Scheurer, "The Aesthetics of Form and Convention in the Movie Musical," Journal of Popular Film, 3, no. 4, p. 310.

[4]Fordin, p. 435.

[5]Feuer, p. 108.

[6]Bernard Hrusa, "On The Musical," Film, Nov./Dec. 1957, p. 18.

[7]"Dialogue on Film: Gene Kelly," American Film, IV, no. 4, Feb. 1979, p. 37.

[8]Paula Swanson, "Dance!" Motion Picture, Dec. 1954, p. 28.

[9]Fordin, p. 436.

[10]Joseph McBride, rev. of Gene Kelly by Clive Hirshhorn, Variety, 11 June 1975, p. 31.

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