

### Dance in Musical Theater

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### Abstract and Keywords

Musical theater dance inhabits the intersection between choreography and written text, whether dialogue or sung lyric. Dance, as an extended expression of language, exemplifies the collaboration between choreographers and writers. This chapter defines and examines seven primary functions of dance in musicals: as an exploration of character in psychological terms, as a narrative tool, as an unspoken aspect of libretto, as a transitional device, to develop character, as metaphor, and as danced abstraction within the narrative. Focusing on the contributions of prominent musical theater choreographers, including Agnes de Mille, Jerome Robbins, Bob Fosse, Michael Bennett, and Steven Hoggett, the chapter analyzes their methods, considering how each negotiates the balance between advancing a musical's narrative and creating an innovative movement landscape within the structure and conditions of the written or sung text.

Keywords: Broadway, musical theater, integrated musical, Stanislavski, abstract dance, libretto, psychological ballet, "Golden Age" musical, method acting, narrative

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### Introduction

*A Chorus Line*, Michael Bennett's groundbreaking 1975 musical about Broadway dancers' lives, begins in darkness. The audience hears a simple, even stereotypical vamp played on a single piano, a man's voice calls, "Again!," and the lights bump up to their full power, bright and unfiltered. The performers, their backs to the audience, face an upstage wall of mirrors, allowing those seated in the Shubert Theatre to see their bodies reflected as multiple, inevitably distorted shapes. The voice calls out, "Step kick kick leap kick touch. Again. Step kick kick leap kick touch. Again. Step kick kick leap kick touch. Again," and the dancers follow the instructions, moving almost together but not quite in unison. "Okay, let's do the whole combination, facing away from the mirror," instructs the voice, which the audience might surmise is the director's: "A five six seven eight!"<sup>1</sup> A full orchestra joins the piano, filling the theater with composer Marvin Hamlisch's brassy, half-

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step-rising, excitement-inducing melody. The dancers turn 180 degrees and explode into a combination etched in Broadway musical theater's cultural memory.

*A Chorus Line*, a collaboration among director and choreographer Bennett, composer Hamlisch, lyricist Edward Kleban, and book writers James Kirkwood and Nicholas Dante, won nine Tony Awards, five Drama Desk Awards, and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It became the longest running musical on Broadway for almost 20 years until it was surpassed by *Cats* in 1997. It bankrolled the Public Theatre where it was workshopped and premiered well into the 21st century, launched actor Priscilla Lopez to stardom, reignited Donna McKechnie's career, and gave performance opportunities to hundreds of dancer-actors over its fifteen-year run.<sup>2</sup> The 2006 revival made virtually no changes in the script, music, or choreography and became a kind of performed love letter to Bennett, whose life was cut tragically short by AIDS in 1987.<sup>3</sup> Add the hundreds of national and international touring companies and the thousands of regional, semiprofessional, community, and high school productions, and *A Chorus Line* has been performed by many performers who no doubt deeply identify with the roles they take on. Moreover, the show has been seen by countless (p. 149) more who are touched by the representation of hard-scrubbing, relentlessly determined, dedicated, and passionate dancers and who likely make the analogy with any situation where few are chosen from the many who aspire to be chosen.

In addition to its unique, deceptively casual opening moment, *A Chorus Line* broke other musical theater conventions that had solidified (or to some, ossified) by the mid-1970s. Its set, designed by Robin Wagner, consisted only of a simple white line painted across the stage parallel to the proscenium and a series of three-sided flats that rotated to a blank wall, a mirror, and the art deco design used in the glittery finale of "One." Its lighting design by Tharon Musser shaped the show's emotional journey and signified each character's private moment of contemplation and memory with a special saturated color. *A Chorus Line* was also the first show to use a computerized light plot and among the first to eschew an overture, a front curtain, and an intermission.

The musical's workshop process, as well, was completely unique to Broadway at the time and was even considered experimental in more avant-garde circles. Veteran Broadway dancers Tony Stevens and Michon Peacock invited a number of their peers, many of them out of work in the depressed economy of New York City in the early 1970s, to gather to eat, drink, and tell stories about their lives. They intended to create an opportunity for dancers to develop work of their own and included Michael Bennett, whom the dancers respected and who had a successful track record and could get things done. The meeting encouraged Bennett to pursue an idea he had for a "dancers' musical," and he began editing and shaping the stories into a series of monologues, each to be delivered in the fictitious setting of an audition in which the director requires the dancers trying out for the chorus and bit speaking parts to talk about themselves.<sup>4</sup> The conceit provides a psychologically realistic way for characters to sing solo numbers about themselves and how they came to be dancers. In this way, every song in *A Chorus Line* functions as a character's typical first number according to mid-20th-century Broadway musical theater conventions: the "I am/I want" song, which tells the audience who the character is, how

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she sounds—both in terms of the music and the lyrics—and what she wants. The songs and stories are ordered by the dancer's age, from three-years-old to now, so that they trace a larger trajectory of a Broadway dancer's life from childhood through adolescence and adulthood. Near the end of the show, one of the dancers gets injured and is carried out to the hospital, and the remaining auditioners must face the painful question, which Zach the director asks, "What you would do if you had to stop dancing?" The ensemble answers, led by the feisty, irreverent Diana in a moment of dark melodious contemplation, "What I Did For Love."

The finale of *A Chorus Line*, an elaborate, Busby Berkeley-style production number, is at once a rousing celebration and an ironic comment on what has occurred over the preceding ninety minutes. The chorus sings how "she's the one," referring to the leading lady whom the audience never meets. And this crew, each of whom the audience has grown to care about, is virtually undistinguishable from one another in their identical top hats and tails. After an entire show that values each individual person's story, life, hopes, and desires, the ending reminds the audience that the Broadway chorus dancer's ultimate role is to blend in, all differences and distinctions erased.<sup>5</sup>

*A Chorus Line* made Broadway dance and a gypsy's life visible in a new way. Though the producers, creators, and audiences recognized the metaphorical power of the audition, of striving to be seen as an individual, of dreams fragile and possibly unfulfilled, the show featured dance as the subject as well as the means of communication and an element of beauty. (p. 150) In some ways, then, *A Chorus Line* might be seen as the crystallization of Broadway dance history from the 1940s to then.

Though the field of musical theater studies has exploded since the early 2000s, little has been written about dance in the context of the Broadway musicals. Scholarly examinations of the genre have focused, for example, on people and their roles, especially composers and lyricists, librettists, directors, producers, and performers, and on the musicals in their historical context, whether to trace the creative process or to analyze from various identities' positions. This essay seeks to redress that absence, with a focus on Broadway musicals since the "Golden Age" of the 1940s.<sup>6</sup> If musicals are made of music, lyrics, spoken word, design, and dance, how does dance function in the form?

Like all Broadway musicals of the mid-twentieth century, *A Chorus Line* tells a story, and the script (also referred to as the book or the libretto) serves as its key organizing document. As Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II—possibly the most important and influential creators of Broadway musicals—asserted, the book is everything. Even when a choreographer's style is idiosyncratic and unique—such as Agnes de Mille's privileging a woman's point of view, Jerome Robbins's comic virtuosity, or Bob Fosse's gender-bending distortions—the dance emerges from and supports the musical's text. Every musical theater choreographer, from George Balanchine to Andy Blankenbuehler, creates movement material related to the libretto.<sup>7</sup> Dance in musical theater, then, is always created in relation to the musical's story or its narrative, and since the 1940s, choreographers have used dance in a number of ways, including (1) dance to reveal a character's psychology;

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(2) dance to tell a piece of the story; (3) dance to express an unspoken aspect of the libretto; (4) dance to transition to another scene; (5) dance to allow the characters to express themselves; and (6) dance to present an idea or feeling metaphorically or abstractly. In many cases, a specific dance functions in more than one way.

Analyzing dance in musical theater is particularly challenging.<sup>8</sup> First, like all dance, musical theater dance is fleeting and ephemeral. What does the scholar see to analyze the work? What is the archive that remains for analysis and interpretation? Must a scholar experience the show—in person or on tape—to be able to write about it responsibly? Second, musicals are, as Bruce Kirle argues, always in process and constantly reinvented with each new production.<sup>9</sup> The nominal opening night of a musical, the day after which the *New York Times* publishes the review of the show, is only one show among many.<sup>10</sup> The Broadway cast album, frequently the only remaining document of the show, is typically taped before the show opens. Which performance, then, is the best one to study? Opening night? Closing night? And how does a scholar get access to a certain performance? Third, the choreographer is only one among many collaborators. *A Chorus Line* may have been Michael Bennett's brainchild, but the show is ultimately the result of complex collaborations among the choreographer and a score of others: composer and lyricist, director and designers, producers and marketers, and of course, the audience. (Interestingly and perhaps not surprisingly, some of the most successful and influential choreographers were also directors: Agnes de Mille, Jerome Robbins, Gower Champion, Bob Fosse, and Michael Bennett. By combining the role of choreographer and director, the creative team is reduced by one artist and unified around one central vision, thus reducing the degree of contentiousness among the collaborators.) In the commercial theater world of Broadway, the expense of the production and need to sell tickets above all puts a certain pressure on the artistic team and gives the producers more power than anyone.<sup>11</sup> On whom does the scholar focus? Whose point of view is authoritative in the (p. 151) musical's creation?<sup>12</sup> Finally, because musical theater is a popular form of entertainment that aims to communicate directly with its audience, every element of a musical is functional and meant to be legible. Every gesture, every movement phrase, every dance number intends to communicate something specific about the character, the world, and the story.

In what follows, we offer some answers to these questions. How does dance function in musical theater from the 1940s to today? What does dance do? How does it communicate? How does it work in tandem with the other communicative and expressive modes of the musical theater, including spoken script, music, lyrics, and design? Our examples are organized by choreographer, although we realize that each dancer's actualization of choreography—such as Donna McKechnie's incomparable "Mirror Dance" as Cassie in *A Chorus Line*—is essential. Still, we credit Bennett as both the imagination behind the dance and director of the dancer. Our examples are loosely chronological to convey how choreographers, consciously and not, respond to what's preceded them, though we frequently loop back to de Mille, who originated many of Broadway dance's functions. Dance, in the words of theater scholar Marvin Carlson, is "haunted."<sup>13</sup> Some choreogra-

phers overtly quote their predecessors; others strive to create new movement vocabularies; some use dance conventionally; others work to find new purposes for dance.

## Dance to Examine Character in Psychological Terms

In her *Oklahoma!* (1943) dream ballet, “Laurey Makes Up Her Mind,” Agnes de Mille expands and enhances the character of Laurey, the musical’s female principal and ingénue. De Mille’s inventive movement schemes and her insistence on casting the ballet with dancer-actors rather than with Broadway chorus dancers introduced a new kind of dance to the commercial theater.

The ballet explores Laurey’s subconscious sexual desires and internal struggle in her attraction both to Curly, the play’s hero, and to Jud, the villain. Though de Mille didn’t invent the use of dance to examine a character’s psychology—George Balanchine, Albertina Rasch, and Seymour Felix created psychological dream ballets in musicals prior to *Oklahoma!*—her dream ballet humanized Laurey by exposing her hidden desires.<sup>14</sup> De Mille posits the revelation that Laurey, while frightened and repulsed by Jud, is also sexually attracted to him. Absent the ballet, this aspect of Laurey’s character would not be explored in the musical and so is necessary for the audience to understand Laurey’s feelings and actions.

The ballet is structured as a dream that begins with a pas de deux between Laurey and Curly, culminates in their wedding, and turns into a nightmare when Laurey realizes that she has in fact married Jud. Jud carries Laurey to a saloon, where she is taunted by the “Post Card Girls,” who are Laurey’s imaginings of saloon hall girls. Rather than simply creating a rowdy saloon dance, de Mille employed Louis Horst’s method of introspection-expression and created a modernistic representation of a dance hall girl. Horst, influenced by Freudian psychology and the study of the subconscious, developed the method as a technique for discovering movement. Using Freudian analysis as his map, he devised a system for the choreographer to examine inner feelings, to delve into personal interior landscapes, and to [\(p. 152\)](#) discover “inward-turning,” “in-pointing” movement. Just as a psychoanalyst leads a patient back to childhood in order to discover suppressed feelings, Horst developed the method of introspection-expression to guide the choreographer to develop movement that originated from an essential, personal emotion.<sup>15</sup> With the monumental success of de Mille’s *Oklahoma!* dances, the psychological ballet became a standard element in musical theater.

De Mille also used dance in musicals to make personal and political statements. Due to a highly attuned dramaturgical approach and a consummate ability to analyze text, de Mille could put forth her point of view while never diverting from the narrative goals of the libretto. From her earliest days as a self-producing female soloist, she engaged in a highly autobiographical approach to her work, making dances that addressed the concerns of women. Her “Venus in Ozone Heights” ballet from *One Touch of Venus* (1944), for exam-

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ple, is a scathing parody of the stultifying lives of women in World War II suburbia. In Act II scene 3, the Goddess Venus is about to embark on a life with a mid-twentieth-century American, Rodney. He regales her with his description of all the fun they are going to have as a married couple living in Ozone Heights, a new real estate development on Staten Island:

Rodney: Every bungalow's just the same; they got an electric incinerator, and a radio, that looks like a fireplace. And a fireplace that looks like a radio ... The most important thing of all—a dandy big yard for the kiddies when they start to come along.

Venus: (wryly) You better look for something with a lake; with me, you might get swans.<sup>16</sup>

Rodney sings, "Waiting for our wooden wedding, Golly how the time will fly, Stealing kisses in the kitchen, Holding hands while the dishes dry." After the song Venus questions if she is in fact the right wife for Rodney: "I can't sew or weave or milk a goat." Rodney replies, "When I get through with you, you'll be a Number One homebody!" Venus asks, "What will it be like—you and I—in five years?"<sup>17</sup> The stage directions describe the beginning of the ballet:

The life of Ozone Heights closes in on her—the neighbors, the children; Rodney dividing his attention between the lawnmower and the comics. Stealthily the creatures of her magic world invade the scene. She resists them, but they will not be resisted; now ancient Greece is real and Ozone Heights the myth. Rodney vanishes, the humdrum houses vanish, only the vast open sky remains. Venus, once again the goddess, returns to her people.<sup>18</sup>



*Photo 08.1* Mary Martin in *One Touch of Venus* amid nymphs and satyrs in the "Bacchannale" section of Agnes de Mille's, "Venus in Ozone Heights." The far left of the photo includes the romantic couple from the act one ballet "Forty Minutes for Lunch."

De Mille depicts "the creatures of the magic world" as nymphs and satyrs engaged in a bacchanalia that culminates in Venus being carried aloft to Olympus.

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The ballet is less a psychological examination of character than it is a dance-pantomime depicting the culmination of Venus's twentieth-century visit to earth from her point of view. As the sole means by which the audience gains information about Venus's life in Ozone Heights, the dance functions as both narrative tool and, for the women in the audience, as a means of identification with the character and a cathartic release from lives of children and housekeeping.

As the ballet begins, children's voices are heard and Venus is revealed in ordinary housewife garments seated in front of one of three identical suburban homes.<sup>19</sup> De Mille's original choreographic scenario indicates that Venus, along with two more wives in their respective houses, perform household chores as children play outdoors and an adolescent couple engages in a flirtation all to the accompaniment of a pastoral arrangement of "Wooden (p. 153) Wedding." The wives' husbands return home from work, kiss them on the cheek, and settle in with their evening newspapers and beers while the women sew, knit, or darn. Suddenly a women's vocal chorus is heard from offstage and nymphs appear in the yard calling eerily and rolling in the grass—there is a flash of heat lightning. Photographs of the original production depict the nymphs writhing on the floor, backs arched, heads thrown in sexual abandon. The husbands become jumpy and close windows against the impending storm as the stage fills with Baccantes and bewitched mortals. De Mille's notes indicate that Venus, called from every direction, "Dances wildly and tears off her clothes ... Rodney brings her a shawl ... She stands up with an ancient and terrible cry." As the suburban houses fade away the scene changes to "a wilderness ... ancient Greece."<sup>20</sup> As the ballet continues, more satyrs and nymphs enter, executing a primitive foot stomping as Venus exits. De Mille writes, "The enormous and terrible figures of the Zodiac appear in the heavens ... Venus appears naked, translucent, Olympian, awful and walks in wreathings of mist against the stars."<sup>21</sup> Finally, she is carried off high overhead by two satyrs in a whirl of dancing bodies.

The first half of the ballet depicting Venus in suburbia is at once a severe condemnation of bourgeois utopias, a stark depiction of contemporary marriage, and an insightful but tragic foreshadowing of what was to become the accepted role of women in the 1950s. It is no surprise that de Mille, a newlywed war bride, was preoccupied with the idea of domesticity; it is to her credit, however, that she discovered a way to express her preoccupation in a musical. Both "Venus in Ozone Heights" and "Laurey Makes Up Her Mind" offer a side of the play's heroine that would go unacknowledged minus the ballets. De Mille supplies voyeuristic (p. 154) thrills inviting audiences to experience Laurey's dream life and Venus's alternate universe. As an artist who moved between the dance and theater worlds, de Mille created innovative movement vocabularies for dance. Compelled by modernist movement invention prevalent at the time, she challenged herself to invent movement and developed a distinct dance style.

# Dance to Narrate the Story

De Mille and Robbins established musical theater's choreographic paradigms and paved the way for a new breed of choreographer on Broadway.<sup>22</sup> They both explored how to insert dance seamlessly into a musical play, but for Robbins, that smooth integration eventually took precedence over movement innovation and personal social commentary.

In Jerome Robbins's first two shows, *On the Town* (1944) and *Billion Dollar Baby* (1945), he followed de Mille's example and created psychological dream ballets that explored a character's psyche. His early imitation led a critic in the *Evening Bulletin* to describe his work as "Run of de Mille."<sup>23</sup> As reviewer Edwin Denby wrote of the dances in *On the Town*, "They generally tell a little pantomime story but you don't think of them as distinct from the rest of the show. They generally emerge from the stage action and melt into it again so as to give value to a scene rather than a hand to the dance. Often they express a sentiment too, much as Miss de Mille's musical comedy dances do."<sup>24</sup>

In time, though, Jerome Robbins focused less on movement innovation and social commentary and more on creating dances that developed organically from the text, employing Group Theater and Method acting principles and techniques.<sup>25</sup> Maintaining a strict adherence to time and place, Robbins's dances emerged out of the fabric of the libretto. Whereas de Mille manipulated texts in order to insert her ideas, Robbins developed his dances as a natural extension of the text.

By 1948 audiences were becoming weary of the dream ballet, and as Robbins gained his footing he developed a system of choreographing for musicals that was separate from de Mille's. For example, he wrote and co-directed with George Abbott *Look Ma I'm Dancin'* (1948), a musical based on his experiences touring with a ballet company. Critic Jerry Gaghan wrote of the dances, "For once in a musical, someone doesn't have to go into a dream, a trance, or a funk to start a ballet sequence. The people in 'Look Ma' dance because they are dancers."<sup>26</sup>

In *High Button Shoes* (1947), Robbins's "Keystone Ballet" demonstrated what would become a defining aspect of his work: comic virtuosity and showmanship. The *New Yorker* reported, "Mr. Robbins probably hasn't Miss de Mille's intensity of purpose, but he is certainly her superior as a conscious humorist."<sup>27</sup> The show takes place in 1913 and revolves around con men Harrison Floy and Mr. Pontdue, who cheat an unsuspecting family, the Longstreets, out of a large sum of money, and take Fran Longstreet to Atlantic City, where they are discovered and pursued by police. The ballet advances the plot in narrative pantomime. It begins with Keystone Cops on patrol and a group of turn-of-the-century bathing beauties out for a day at the beach. A family of crooks appears, tricks Floy and Pontdue into giving them the absconded money, and a chase ensues. With a line of bathhouse doors as the primary element of the chase hijinks, the characters run in and out, and what begins as amusing combinations of characters appearing through the doors becomes riotous until finally, a gorilla emerges. (p. 155) Original cast member Helen Gallagher recalled, "When that gorilla came through it was like a blow. It was almost as if the



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audience had socked you the laughter was so enormous.”<sup>28</sup> Richard P. Cooke reported in the *Wall Street Journal* that the ballet “reduced the audience to a pulp of laughter.”<sup>29</sup> Dance critic John Martin wrote in the *New York Times*, “During the first half of its foolery, when it follows the Mack Sennett tradition fairly closely, it may not cause you to break any ribs laughing, but when it gets along toward the end and goes berserk in a tradition nearer to Dali than Sennett it becomes cock-eyedly hilarious.”<sup>30</sup>

Robbins’s sharp storytelling, perfectly timed jokes, and embodiment of comic ideas and the number’s precise structure make the ballet a tour de force. Still, its movement draws on standard period lexicons and pastiche and makes no attempt at innovation. Rather, Robbins immersed himself and his dancers in silent film comedies and tried to “capture the rhythm, style and content” of the old movies.<sup>31</sup> From early in his career, when as a member of Gluck-Sandor’s Dance Center he was exposed to actors from the Group Theater and introduced to acting techniques developed by Constantine Stanislavsky, Robbins always researched extensively before choreographing a musical.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, his musical theater dances, with the exception of *West Side Story* (1957), lack an identifiable movement style.

Robbins’s brand of dance integration became the primary choreographic method in the “Golden Age” of musicals, with strict adherence to time, place, and the plausibility of dance in the scripted context as primary goals. De Mille also relied on these techniques of using the script and building on it to create a danced, realistic world, for example, in “The Farmer and the Cowman” from *Oklahoma!* Engaging American country dance expert May Gadd to coach her dancers in authentic square dance, de Mille then employed distortion techniques and layered the square dance with her own personal movement style.<sup>33</sup> The result is a musical number that feels entirely natural even as it builds to a dance break in which de Mille’s original movement lexicon dominates.

Robbins used a similar approach for his “Small House of Uncle Thomas” ballet in the *King and I* (1951). Assisted by Cambodian dance scholar, Mara Von Sellheim, Robbins drew on the authentic steps of Cambodian dance while at the same time injecting considerable humor to make the form palatable for an American commercial theater audience. He was able to create US-based choreography that seemed to be authentically “other” and also insert vaudeville and borscht belt gags and jokes, even in a movement form as defined and austere as Cambodian dance.<sup>34</sup>

Most choreographers embraced Robbins’s story-driven paradigm for making musical theater dance during and after the “Golden Age.” In an interview with Svetlana Mckee Grody, for example, Michael Bennett explained, “A dance number has to get you from what happened before to what happens next ... dances are never arbitrary.”<sup>35</sup> Still, some “arbitrary” dance numbers, according to Bennett’s long-time collaborator Bob Avian, had “value because of dynamics alone.” He added:

If a show or film needs a goose, you try and build a number that’s maybe a tangent, but it will give you a lift ... . We did this in the show *Promises, Promises* (1968), at the end of the first act. We put in a number called the “Turkey, Lurkey”

number. It was the big number that ended the first act because we needed it, in terms of entertainment.<sup>36</sup>

The number occurs at an office party when three secretaries, played by Donna McKechnie, Baayork Lee, and Margo Sappington, break into a dance based on 1960s social dances. By the end of the number the entire office party is dancing. Though the dance does not extend or (p. 156) enhance the plot, it's crucial to provide a moment of delightful, nonsensical dance fun, and an energy jolt at the end of the act.

## Dance to Express an Unspoken Aspect of the Libretto

Using dance to express an unspoken aspect of the libretto is one of the most sophisticated uses of dance in the musical theater. In 1966, twenty-three years after de Mille created the "Post Card Girls" in *Oklahoma!*, Bob Fosse presented another version of the dance hall girl in the musical number "Big Spender" in Cy Coleman and Dorothy Fields's *Sweet Charity* with a group of taxi dancers at work in a Times Square dance hall. Following the paradigm established by de Mille, Fosse privileged the dance's dramaturgical integrity and was also keen to develop a unique movement style. Moreover, Fosse created the role for his then-wife, Gwen Verdon, a brilliant jazz dancer trained by Jack Cole.<sup>37</sup> The plot of *Sweet Charity* revolves around a dance hall hostess, Charity Hope Valentine, and her search for love. Dramaturgically, the number presents the dance hall girls at work in the Fandango Ballroom, as Fosse explained in an interview with dance critic Arthur Todd: "Before I started my choreography I spent a great deal of time observing what really went on in the remaining half-dozen dance halls in New York. They are as close to prostitution as anything you can find."<sup>38</sup> Fosse's depiction of the women in "Big Spender" is, as actor Helen Gallagher (Nickie in the original production) said, "As close as the show got to saying we were hookers"<sup>39</sup> because the show's dialogue or lyrics never overtly state dance hall hostesses' work as prostitution, but only hint as much. As Nickie tells a new girl, "A cute lookin' thing like you can always go into the extra-curricular business,"<sup>40</sup> and there are several other mentions in the script of an "other business," a vague allusion to prostitution. In "Big Spender," lyricist Dorothy Fields allows the audience to literally fill in the blanks:

What do you say to a ...  
How's about a ...  
Laugh.  
I could give you some ...  
Are you ready for some ...  
Fun.  
How would you like a ...  
Let me show you a ...  
Good time.<sup>41</sup>

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Fosse's choreography, though, makes it clear. The women's work is stripped of its musical comedy sugar coating and a gritty, explicit exposition—the physicalization of Charity's admission that the Fandango Ballroom is “not-a-nice-place”—is presented.<sup>42</sup> The women, displayed against a rail at the downstage edge of the stage, stand gazing aggressively at the audience. Their insolence is palpable as they squirm from one distorted pose to the next appearing as painted, broken dolls with an attitude. They mount the rail splaying their legs and daring prospective customers to buy what they are selling. *New Yorker* critic Joan Accocella wrote of the taxi-dancers, “You sense that anyone who spent a little time with one of these women would have to go to the doctor afterward.”<sup>43</sup> Charity doesn't appear in the (p. 157) number, and later insists, “All I sell is my time.”<sup>44</sup> Her innocent, hopeful nature is the key marker of her character in spite of the realities of her life, and she remains isolated from any association with the sex trade. That she does not appear in “Big Spender” supports the musical's assertion that she is different from her co-workers.<sup>45</sup>

De Mille's *Oklahoma!* choreography in “Many a New Day” offers another example of a dance that provides information apart from what is written in the text. In the scene leading into “Many a New Day,” Laurey and her girlfriends have just witnessed Curly walking with another girl. Laurey sings “Many a New Day” to save face in front of the women and to promote the image of herself as not tied down to any one man.<sup>46</sup> The lyric demonstrates how Laurey covers her feelings of disappointment after Curly has chosen another girl. The women listen, then they join in the singing, and the vocal section of the song ends in a clean musical button that signals applause. Laurey then moves to the side of the stage as the dancing chorus begins an extended dance break in which each woman's personality is expressed in moments of solo, duet, or trio dancing. Dramaturgically, the content of the dance is not an obvious choice, but de Mille expands the moment by presenting a community of women in consort with Laurey. They support her statement of independence and express sisterhood in singing, but then in dance they also demonstrate their individual personalities within the group, presenting different models of vanity as they primp and take pride in their appearances. One movement phrase, performed by a small group, emphasizes their calculated flirtatiousness as they lift their skirts, flick their feet, and adjust their corsets, pretending that they have no awareness of how attractive these movements make them to men. “The Girl Who Falls Down,” originated by Joan McCracken, appears as a giddy child in her awkward and inappropriate glee, not yet fully a woman, as she tries to fit in with the group. A stern mother hen character watches her closely, shooting her glances that insist she give up her childlike behavior and conform to the group. Finally, a “sexually adventurous” woman races through the group shaking a red petticoat. The women ignore this aberration from their homogeneous community, except for the child, who imitates her shaking petticoat movement with abandon. Laurey returns to center stage to complete the song, swats at the girl to stop her silly behavior, and the mother hen offers another determined glance that insists that the child return to the fold. She does so, however, as the women exit in a flock stage right, the child is momentarily left behind, then follows them, executing a joyous leap just before exiting the stage.

The dance reveals much about Laurey, about the women in this community, and about societal expectations. The sung music in combination with the dance break expands the audience's knowledge of Laurey's experience in a place where the population lives by a set of circumscribed mores but where, in keeping with the pioneering spirit of the American west, individual strength of character is prized.

### ***West Side Story*: Integrated Dance, Character Expressiveness, and Movement Innovation**

*West Side Story*, which Robbins created with Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim, and co-choreographer Peter Gennaro, stands as an aberration in Robbins's (p. 158) musical theater career because the dances, while adhering to Robbins's requirements of coherence with the time, place, and period, were also examples of movement innovation in a modernistic sense. Robbins's fusion of ballet, jazz, and 1950s social dance idioms was so astonishing and revolutionary that after the opening of *West Side Story*, he formed a new company, Ballets: USA, and continued to develop *West Side Story*'s movement vocabulary for the concert stage.<sup>47</sup>

More than any other book musical, *West Side Story* employs dance as a narrative tool equal to book, music, and lyric. The opening danced prologue establishes the territorial conflict between the opposing gangs, the Jets and Sharks. Originally conceived to be sung, the opening's lyrics were eventually eliminated in favor of a pure (that is, only) danced narrative that establishes from the very start of the show that dance will function as a storytelling device.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the "Prologue," "The Dance at the Gym," which uses dance at a social gathering to express animosity and competition between the Jets and Sharks, illustrates the immediate attraction between Tony and Maria, the beginning of their romance, and the disapproval of their communities. The "Somewhere (Ballet)," which depicts a utopian community in which Jets and Sharks exist together in peace and harmony, is another moment of pure dance. These numbers are not radical or unprecedented in terms of musical theater dance; Agnes de Mille created ballets with similar narrative and characterological functions, as had Robbins. What is different is that *West Side Story* contains three major dance sequences that advance the plot without any spoken or sung words. These extended moments of dance are not intended to provide comic release or social commentary, or even psychological investigation of character. In addition, "America," with choreography by Peter Gennaro, and "Cool" present extended dance breaks in a more conventional manner.

Finally, in *West Side Story*, Robbins developed an original movement style by using modernist distortion methods to create a dance lexicon rooted in the social dances of urban 1950s America. Anna Sokolow was also experimenting with a fusion of jazz and modern dance at the time, and Robbins was likely aware of her work. Artists influence each other, and those with considerable expertise, like Robbins, would readily absorb, transmit, and

transmute choreographic ideas. This sharing and borrowing does not at all diminish artistic achievement.

## Dance to Transition to Another Scene and a Cinematic Sensibility

Dance as a transitional device evolved in conjunction with scenic technology over the second half of the twentieth century. From the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, the “in one”—a dance or short scene that occurs far downstage in front of a drop—was the typical technique for a scene change or reveal. “Steam Heat,” the number in *The Pajama Game* (1954) that launched Bob Fosse’s Broadway career, is an “in one.” Positioned at the top of Act II, the number occurs during a union rally, where three pajama factory workers (played by Buzz Miller, Carol Haney, and Peter Gennaro) perform a song and dance about “Gettin’ Hot” in response to employee demands. Though it serves no narrative purpose, the show-stopping number reengages the postintermission audience and provides a seamless reveal when the drop flies out and the next scene begins.

(p. 159) As stage technology advanced, Robbins’s use of dance as a transitional device evolved, too. In *West Side Story*, for example, the transition from the bridal shop to the “Dance at the Gym” was seamless and occurred “a-vista” in full view of the audience. As the bridal shop set withdrew, the stage became populated with dancers and magically the audience was transported to a new scene.

Gower Champion advanced the technique of “continuous staging” further by introducing a cinematic sensibility to the stage.<sup>49</sup> Describing his concept for *Carnival* (1961), Champion wrote, “There are no bridging scenes-in-one for set changes, no blacking-out for set changes, no house curtain, no show curtain.”<sup>50</sup> He conceived of the ensemble as a troupe of “Roustabouts” who performed “a-vista” transitions between scenes. Champion’s dancers were “instruments, like keys on a typewriter, to tell a story,” notes John Anthony Gilvey.<sup>51</sup> Champion stated emphatically, “I hate dancing for the sake of dancing in a show. It should be used to aid the story line,”<sup>52</sup> echoing de Mille and Robbins’s core methods. Champion added, “In one scene in *Carnival*, dancers are used to suggest a kaleidoscopic view of a carnival through the eyes of a disillusioned girl,”<sup>53</sup> just as de Mille led the audience into Laurey’s mind. As a director, Champion was theatrically innovative and astute, and as a choreographer he depended on tried and true musical theater dance routine-making. While his dances were entertaining, were well structured, served the play’s narrative and character development, and functioned as effective transitional devices, they were not innovative in a modernistic sense. Gilvey, in *Before the Parade Passes By*, describes Champion’s movement vocabularies in *Carnival* as “vaudeville and social dance steps merged with marching, acrobatics, and a range of circus routines in a deceptively simple narrative.”<sup>54</sup> When asked to describe “the source of his psychokinetic impulse,” Champion replied, “I just go for the hand.”<sup>55</sup>

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With *Champion*, dance on Broadway broke from a modernistic approach that used modern dance methods, distortion, and introspection-expression. The artistic environment that encouraged the movement innovations of de Mille, Fosse, Jack Cole, and Michael Kidd was replaced by Robbins's trend toward dance realism. The question, Why are they dancing? required an answer that supported a diegetic approach to movement. Choreographers favored dance in which characters knew that they were dancing, in scenes where dance actually took place. For *Champion*, this approach meant using known showbiz dance lexicons.

Champion's ascendance as one of the most important director-choreographers on Broadway occurred as Robbins transitioned to full-time ballet-maker at New York City Ballet and as de Mille became preoccupied with writing and running her own company. Over the course of Robbins's theatrical career, he gained more authority as director-choreographer, and, after *West Side Story*, his use of dance in musicals decreased as he focused on the musical's spoken and sung drama. In his last two Broadway book shows, *Gypsy* (1959) and *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), dance exists fundamentally as a realistic extension of the libretto.<sup>56</sup> The vaudeville numbers in *Gypsy*, featuring child star Baby June, are choreographed as if designed by June's overbearing mother, Rose, with classic vaudeville dance vocabularies of basic tap and acrobatics.<sup>57</sup> The brilliance of the numbers is not found in innovative movement expression but in Robbins's witty ability to tell the story using a "common fund" of dance lexicons.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the dances in *Fiddler on the Roof* are diegetic, emerging organically out of the dramatic scene and employing Jewish traditional dance.<sup>59</sup>

With *A Chorus Line* (1975), Michael Bennett succeeded in creating the ultimate dance show within the Robbins's inside out, realistic, Stanislavskian paradigm. The show tells the story of a group of dancers at an audition. The audience sees them dance and hears them tell (p. 160) their stories in dialogue and song. The characters dance because they are dancers, in dance clothes at a dance audition.

*A Chorus Line*'s "Mirror Dance," performed by the character Cassie—an almost starlet who, after failing in Hollywood, returns to New York to reclaim her career as a Broadway chorus dancer—offers an opportunity for the audience to experience and identify with Cassie's relationship with dance. She tells Zach, "I'm putting myself on the line," belts out her war cry, "God I'm a dancer, a dancer dances!" and performs a solo tour de force in front of a massive, three-way mirror reflecting multiple images of her. Like Robbins's ballet "Afternoon of a Faun," a pas de deux in which two ballet dancers meet in a studio and perform a duet while maintaining their gaze on a mirror reflection of themselves, Cassie demands, "All I ever needed was the music and the mirror and the chance to dance for you."<sup>60</sup> She then performs a dance for herself, and the audience sees the required narcissism of the trained dancer. The number is both fascinating and disturbing in Cassie's desperate striving for perfection over an ephemeral form in a tragically short career. The "Mirror Dance" is a six-minute marathon, a feat of stamina and tenacity that ends in a sequence of technically precise double turns performed along the line on stage. Moreover, Cassie is balanced on the line between success and failure and triumphs in her execution

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of the dance, baring her soul and left gasping for air. Much of the dance is performed facing up stage, her back to the audience and her front reflected in the mirror that not only captures her image but also the image of the audience watching her. In the performance, Donna McKechnie danced for the Shubert audience while Cassie danced for the audience in her mind. When Cassie is among the dancers finally cast in the “musical,” the audience is likely to notice and celebrate her achievement. The “Mirror Dance” gives the audience a visceral, real-time experience of Cassie’s life force in dance.

In the finale of *A Chorus Line*, the audience witnesses all of the characters they have come to know performing a flashy, showbiz chorus number, replete with top hats and tails, a pre-de Mille, Busby Berkley-, or for some spectators, Ned Wayburn- or Chester Hale-inspired precision dance in which each individual subsumes into the greater whole of the line. However, the audience has just completed an intimate journey with each dancer, and as they appear one at a time and fall into line, the audience celebrates their achievement. They are no longer cogs in a wheel, they are individuals and the audience experiences the sure-fire thrill attached to any number of this kind, but all the more intensely for knowing the dancers. And yet, as the bodies multiply on stage, it becomes increasingly difficult and then impossible for the audience to identify who is who. The number gains velocity and energy and becomes more beautiful and thrilling. The dancers make precise formations, pinwheels, and the requisite kicklines, and the whole subsumes the individual in a bittersweet expression of the chorus line’s and *A Chorus Line*’s raison d’être. Bennett succeeds in fusing Robbins’s diegetic approach with his own expression of the individual characters.

## Dance as Metaphor

Dance as metaphor, frequently composed from non-naturalistic movement, is another function of musical theater dance. In *Bloomer Girl* (1944), de Mille created “The Civil War (p. 161) Ballet.”<sup>61</sup> A thinly disguised piece of American propaganda, *Bloomer Girl* depicted an idealized re-vision of American freedom. Set in 1861 in the northeastern city of Cicero Falls, New York, the show advances three major themes: freedom for women, freedom for a runaway slave, and freedom of political choice. While de Mille was interested in the Broadway musical’s formal integration, she also believed in dance’s expressive power capable of delivering complex ideas. “The Civil War Ballet” is a self-contained dance, unconnected to the musical play. In fact, the dance is so self-contained that it was often cut in revivals. After the dance, the narrative resumes when the eligible male population of Cicero Falls departs for battle. Frustrated by the ballet’s lack of connection to the libretto, a critic writing for *The Commonwealth* noted:

In a Civil War Ballet she [de Mille] presents the war in its entirety with balance, feeling, striking design, some beautiful dancing. In an exact space of time the struggle is experienced and emerged from by the audience. Nevertheless, when the curtain again rises, on the final scene, what is our surprise to discover that for

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the characters of the play the war has not even begun ... . The facts of the just previous ballet are denied; its technical significance is denied; it has not been.<sup>62</sup>

Though it is an isolated moment, the ballet foreshadows the experience of women during war; it is a metaphoric dance in which the townsmen bid farewell and depart for battle, the women cope in their daily lives absent the men, long for husbands and sons, and ultimately rejoice at the men's return. In the final section of the ballet, de Mille stages a joyous reuniting of the men and women, using American country-dance vocabulary and formations. By the 1840s, country dances had been replaced by the polka, the mazurka, and the waltz.<sup>63</sup> Why then, does de Mille choose the historically inaccurate American country dance as the basis for her movement inventions? The answer lies in what de Mille is trying to convey. She uses American country dance to create a metaphoric dance language evoking democratic ideals. In *The Playford Ball: 103 Early English Country Dances*, Kate Van Winkle Keller and Genevieve Shimer explain its symbolic patterns:

The country dance is a group dance in which there is interaction between two or more couples and it is a democratic dance in that the couples often change positions in the set and take turn leading the figures. Only in a culture in which the absolute power of the king had been tempered by the demands of democracy could such a dance form flourish. And flourish it did! From 1650–1850 it was a significant medium of social expression for rising bourgeois society.<sup>64</sup>

De Mille uses the country dance to serve as a metaphor for American democracy; in 1944, the image of freedom resonated strongly with audiences.



*Photo 08.2* Michael Bennett's "Tick Tock" created for *Company*. The solo dance, performed by Donna McKechnie, depicts a woman experiencing sexual intercourse. (The costume in the photo was changed during previews).



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Michael Bennett's "Tick Tock" dance from *Company* (1970) is another example of dance as metaphor as well as dance to express the unspoken. ▶ *Company* explores the marriages of a group of couples and their relationship with their bachelor friend Robert. In Act II Robert takes April, an airline stewardess, to his apartment to have sex. April and Robert engage in an awkward (spoken) exchange, and they hurriedly undress. The stage directions read, "Kathy [an ex-girlfriend of Robert's played by Donna McKechnie] appears and begins to dance."<sup>65</sup> Throughout the number Robert and April's voices are audible; Kathy's dance expresses the difference between "having sex" and "making love";<sup>66</sup> and the title, "Tick Tock," represents (p. 162) the short time April and Robert have together and their rushed need to connect. The following spoken lines are interspersed throughout the dance.

APRIL: I think I could love him.

ROBERT: If only I could remember her name.

APRIL: He smells so good.

ROBERT: She tastes so good.

APRIL: I love you, I love you ...

ROBERT: I ... I ... 67

The audience witnesses April's initial excitement and eventual disappointment and Robert's intimate, private, and unflattering side. After declaring her love in a moment of passion, April is frozen by Robert's stumbling, "I ... I... ." and McKechnie stands with her back to the audience, arms raised over head, lowering her arms after each "I." April's pain is palpable as McKechnie's arms descend; Robert's words are body blows. His inability to connect emotionally continues with the song that follows, "Barcelona," during which he half-heartedly (p. 163) invites April to stay with him and skip her flight to Barcelona. To his surprise, she agrees, and he is faced with spending more time with a woman for whom he has no affection.<sup>68</sup>

As with "Laurey Makes Up Her Mind" and "Big Spender," dance is used in "Tick Tock" to express the taboo subject of sex. What is deemed to be too explicit for the spoken word to express finds "voice" in dance. Each number serves a different function, though. "Laurey Makes Up Her Mind" examines Laurey's psyche, revealing her sexual desires and thereby enhancing her character; "Big Spender" explicitly tells the audience in movement that the women at work in the Fandango Ballroom are selling more than a dance; and "Tick Tock" translates the act of sex and April's disappointment and resignation into movement while addressing one of the primary themes in *Company* regarding Robert's love life: why he can't or won't find a mate and whether a psychological issue is blocking his ability to have a relationship.

# Abstract Dance in a Musical's Narrative

If de Mille introduced a modern dance aesthetic to the commercial stage, Bill T. Jones in *Spring Awakening* (2006) and Steven Hoggett in *Once* (2012) ushered in a postmodern/contemporary dance aesthetic. For *Spring Awakening*, the story of repressed youths in pre-World War I Germany, Jones introduced a movement phrase in the first moments, performed by the ingénue, Wendla. The movements demonstrate Wendla's absentminded exploration of her developing body and sexual awareness. Throughout the show, the phrase is reperformed, morphing on different characters as a bodily illustration of their sexual confusion and frustration. Dance adds a layer of meaning; thus Jones returns to de Mille's system, rejecting Robbins's realistic approach and embracing the potential of innovative and abstract movement as metaphor.

Similarly, Hoggett's dance expands emotional content. While the use of dance to intensify meaning and emotion of sung text is standard practice in musical theater, Hoggett's movement lexicon is abstract and more evocative than literal. As comparison, in *West Side Story*, Robbins stages "Officer Krupke" as a vaudeville number, drawing on what would have been a familiar movement lexicon to 1950s audiences. The Jets perform broad comic gestures, smacking each other over the head with a newspaper, dropping to their knees in a "Mammy" finish, all the while tossing off a litany of 1950s psychobabble on the crisis of juvenile delinquency. The vaudeville "schtick" supports the comic irony of Stephen Sondheim's lyrics and gives the audience permission to laugh (while it articulates a harsh indictment of the system in which these boys are stuck). In contrast, Hoggett's abstracted choreography does not signify a specific place or time or presume a certain response; like the lyrics, the movement is poetic, its meaning veiled. Each audience member must interpret both lyric and movement, as they're not necessarily related to each other but rather independently explore and express the emotional content of the dramatic moment. This practice moves the staging away from literal representation and allows for an abstract movement experience that enhances meaning through the medium of movement.

*Once* tells the story of how a man, called Guy, and woman, Girl, each recovering from a failed romance, form a healing bond through a shared passion for music. As their relationship deepens they sing, "If You Want Me." Guy disappears in to the shadows while Girl and [\(p. 164\)](#) two other women perform a trio dance, each in her own world executing fluid movement phrases that evoke longing. The lyric speaks of Girl's ambivalence, doubt, and caution while her body expresses her longing:

Are you really here or am I dreaming  
I can't tell dreams from truth  
For it's been so long since I have seen you  
I can hardly remember your face anymore  
When I get really lonely and the distance causes only silence  
I think of you smiling with pride in your eyes a lover that sighs  
If you want me satisfy me<sup>69</sup>

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Does each woman represent an embodiment of Girl? Or do they represent anyone who experiences the conflict among passion, desire, and doubt? Hoggett does not attempt to answer questions; instead he presents a visual palate to be interpreted at will. Moreover, in this dance, it's impossible to assess whether the characters are consciously motivated to dance or not. In *A Chorus Line*, Cassie dances consciously and she bares her soul. In *Oklahoma!*, Laurey dances unconsciously, in a dream, revealing thoughts she can't admit to herself. In contrast to Robbins's aesthetic and methodology, which aimed for explicit narrative clarity above all, Hoggett's method is the newest installment in the methodologies developed by de Mille, adopted by Bob Fosse and later by Bill T. Jones.

## Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, musical theater choreographers continue to build on the uses of dance invented and practiced by de Mille and Robbins, by Fosse and Champion, and by Jones and Hoggett. As artists explore the relationships among the different elements of musical theater—spoken text, music and lyrics, dance, and design—they continue to reemploy old uses of dance and imagine new ones. Every musical—even those that revel in dance's ambiguities—communicates with its audience. Every musical employs movement with purpose: dance tells a story, dance reveals character, dance represents place and time, dance expresses emotion, dance evokes a metaphor. It is up to the dance scholar of musical theater to decipher, interpret, and analyze those meanings.

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### Notes:

(1.) Kirkwood, Bennett, et al., 7.

(2.) See McKechnie; Turan.

(3.) See *Every Little Step*.

(4.) Viagas, Lee, and Walsh, 24–38.

(5.) On *A Chorus Line*, see, for example, Mandelbaum; Wolf, *Changed for Good*, 117–126; Sandoval-Sánchez, 83–102; *Broadway: The American Musical*.

(6.) We have chosen the 1940s as the starting point for this chapter. While much wonderful and important dance happened in Broadway musicals before the 1940s, conventions were newly established after Agnes de Mille's *Oklahoma!* in 1943. We're also using the term "Golden Age" as a chronological marker and not an assessment of certain shows' aesthetic value. Scholars continue to debate the usefulness of the label and whether *Oklahoma!* should be credited as the beginning of a new stage in the Broadway musical's development. Many look to *Show Boat* (1929), to *Pal Joey* (1940), or reject this narrative altogether. This chapter is bracketing that debate. See, for example, Sternfeld and Wollman, 111–124.

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- (7.) On Dunham, see <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/freetodance/biographies/dunham.html> (accessed December 3, 2012). On Blankenbuehler, see <http://www.ibdb.com/person.php?id=32280> (accessed December 3, 2012).
- (8.) See Gennaro, "Evolution," 45–61.
- (9.) See Kirle.
- (10.) Moreover, now reviewers typically see a show in the last few nights of previews. No longer do they actually write about the opening night's performance.
- (11.) See Adler.
- (12.) Each of the four creators of *West Side Story* famously credited himself for the idea; moreover, co-choreographer Peter Gennaro's crucial contribution was written out of the musical's history, and only now is he receiving credit for his work. See Herrera, 231–47.
- (13.) See Carlson.
- (14.) On "dream ballets" see McClung; Kislán.
- (15.) Horst, 89. Introspection-expression, this "inward-turning," abounds in the work of Martha Graham and is one of the principle defining physical characteristics of the early American modern dance canon.
- (16.) Weill, Perelman, and Nash, 2.3.25.
- (17.) Weill, Perelman, and Nash, 2.3.25.
- (18.) Weill, Perelman, and Nash, 2.3.27.
- (19.) The ballet "Venus in Ozone Heights" was not recorded in its entirety; only "The Bacchanale," the second part of the dance, was taped for the *de Mille Project* in a studio reconstruction. The analysis of the ballet's first part is based on photographs and stage directions from the original production, examination of the original dance music, and letters from Agnes de Mille to Kurt Weill describing her plans for the ballet scenario. Taking into account de Mille's admission that "my scenarios always simplify as I get into rehearsal," sources have been cross-referenced to assemble an understanding of the ballet. See Agnes de Mille to Kurt Weill.
- (20.) De Mille to Weill.
- (21.) De Mille to Weill.
- (22.) For complete analysis of two central paradigms established by de Mille and Robbins see Gennaro, "Evolution," 45–61.
- (23.) *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.
- (24.) Denby.

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(25.) See Gennaro, "Evolution," 51.

(26.) Gaghan.

(27.) *The New Yorker*.

(28.) Gallagher.

(29.) Cooke.

(30.) Martin.

(31.) Rice.

(32.) Gennaro, "Evolution," 51.

(33.) Easton, 256.

(34.) Gennaro, "Evolution," 52.

(35.) Grody and Lister, 95.

(36.) Grody and Lister, 95.

(37.) See Wolf, *Changed*, 53–90.

(38.) Todd.

(39.) Gottfried, 179.

(40.) Simon, 92.

(41.) Simon, 16–18.

(42.) Simon, 94.

(43.) Accocella, 324.

(44.) Simon, 99.

(45.) See Gennaro, "Broken Dolls." This analysis of "Big Spender" is based on the 1969 Universal Pictures film version of *Sweet Charity* directed and choreographed by Bob Fosse.

(46.) This analysis of "Many a New Day" is based on the 1979 Broadway revival of *Oklahoma!*, NYPL for the Performing Arts, \*MGZIC9-5246.

(47.) For further reading on Ballets: USA, see Jowitt, 293–318.

(48.) For further discussion of the creation of "The Prologue" see Wells, 69.

(49.) Gilvey, 88.



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- (50.) Gilvey, 88.
- (51.) Gilvey, 108.
- (52.) Gilvey, 88.
- (53.) Gilvey, 88.
- (54.) Gilvey, 104.
- (55.) Gilvey, 72.
- (56.) Gennaro, "Evolution," 53.
- (57.) Gennaro, "Evolution," 53.
- (58.) On de Mille's employment of a "common fund" of dance and modernist distortion practices, see Beiswanger, 609–614.
- (59.) Lawrence, 338.
- (60.) Bennett et al, 95–96.
- (61.) Gennaro, "Evolution," 54.
- (62.) "Review of *Bloomer Girl*."
- (63.) Keller and Shimer, viii.
- (64.) Keller and Shimer, viii.
- (65.) This analysis of the "Tick Tock" dance is partly based on Donna McKechnie's performance in the 1993 Concert Version of *Company*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyiZH4HjU98> (accessed May 31, 2013).
- (66.) Sondheim and Furth, 94.
- (67.) Sondheim and Furth, 94.
- (68.) See Wolf, "Keeping Company."
- (69.) Walsh, Hansard, and Irglová, 31–32. As of 2013, one of dance's primary functions is as transition; for example, Steven Hoggett employs dance regularly to move from scene to scene, as does Andy Blankenbuehler in *Bring It On* (2012) and the revival of *Annie* (2012).

**Stacy Wolf**

## Dance in Musical Theater

Stacy Wolf is professor of theater and director of the Princeton Arts Fellows in the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University. She is the author of *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical* (2011) and *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical* (2002) and the co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical* (with Raymond Knapp and Mitchell Morris, 2011).

### **Liza Gennaro**

Liza Gennaro choreographed the critically acclaimed Broadway revival of *The Most Happy Fella* directed by Gerald Gutierrez and the Broadway revival of *Once upon a Mattress* starring Sarah Jessica Parker. She has choreographed off-Broadway and in regional theaters across America including: Roundabout Theatre, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, The Old Globe, Hartford Stage, Guthrie Theater, The Goodspeed Opera House, Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, Paper Mill Playhouse, and The St. Louis "Muny" Opera. She collaborated with Stephen Flaherty and Frank Galati on their chamber musical *Loving, Repeating: A Musical of Gertrude Stein* for the About Face Theater in Chicago. In 2013 she choreographed *Elf: The Musical* at Pioneer Theatre and the 20th Anniversary Concert of *Titanic: The Musical* at Avery Fisher Hall and she created a dance-pantomime of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* for the New York Pops Christmas Concert at Carnegie Hall. She is a member of the Tony Award Nominating Committee and on the executive board of the Stage Director and Choreographers Society. Liza has taught at Barnard College, Princeton University, and Yale University and is currently on faculty at Indiana University. Her essay "Evolution of Dance in the Golden Era of the American 'Book Musical'" appears in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*.