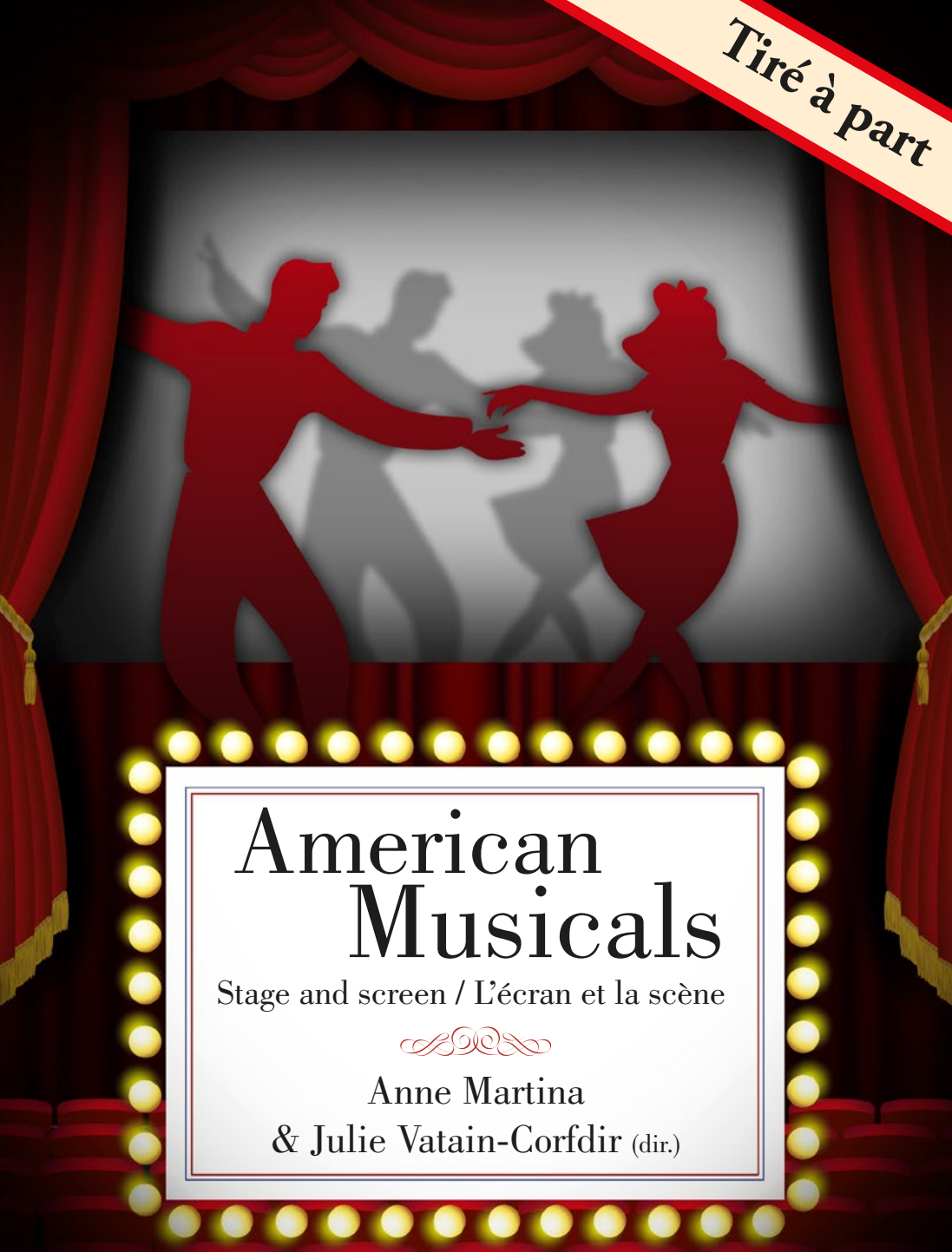

American Musicals

Stage and screen / L'écran et la scène

Anne Martina
& Julie Vatain-Corfdir (dir.)

SUP

What happens when American musicals travel from Broadway to Hollywood, from Hollywood to Broadway – or indeed to Paris? Taking its cue from the current partiality towards cross-media interaction, this collective volume aims at reassessing the role and impact of stage/screen transfers on the genre, by blending together academic and creative voices, both French and American. The bilingual chapters of the book carefully explore the musical, dramatic and choreographic repercussions of transposition techniques, evidencing the cinematographic rewriting of theatrical processes from Lubitsch's screen operettas to Fosse's *Cabaret*, or tracking movie-inspired effects on stage from *Hello, Dolly!* to *Hamilton.*

The focus being at once aesthetic and practical, equal attention has been paid to placing performances in a critical framework and to setting off their creative genesis. Musicals are approached from the varied angles of dance, theater, film and music scholarship, as well as from the artist's viewpoint, when Chita Rivera or Christopher Wheeldon share details about their craft. Taking full advantage of the multimedia opportunities afforded by this digital series, the chapters use an array of visual and sound illustrations as they investigate the workings of subversion, celebration or self-reflexivity, the adjustments required to "sound Broadway" in Paris, or the sheer possibility of re-inventing icons.

Que se passe-t-il quand une comédie musicale américaine voyage de Broadway à Hollywood, d'Hollywood à Broadway… ou à Paris ? Le penchant ambiant pour l'intermédialité et le succès grandissant du *musical* en France ont inspiré ce volume collectif qui, en croisant les voix universitaires et artistiques, françaises et américaines, entreprend de réévaluer l'impact des transferts scène-écran sur le genre. Les chapitres bilingues de cet ouvrage sondent les répercussions musicales, dramatiques et chorégraphiques des techniques de transposition, mettant au jour la réécriture filmique de procédés théâtraux depuis les opérettes cinématographiques de Lubitsch jusqu'au *Cabaret* de Fosse, ou pistant les effets de cinéma sur scène, de *Hello, Dolly!* à *Hamilton*. Dans une visée à la fois esthétique et pratique, la genèse créative des œuvres est envisagée aussi bien que leur cadre critique. Les *musicals* sont ici abordés sous l'angle de disciplines variées : danse, théâtre, cinéma, musique ; ainsi que du point de vue de la pratique, lorsque Chita Rivera ou Christopher Wheeldon témoignent de leur art. Au fil de chapitres enrichis d'un éventail d'illustrations visuelles et sonores grâce aux ressources de l'édition numérique, les auteurs interrogent les mécanismes de la subversion, de l'hommage et de l'auto-réflexivité, les ajustements nécessaires pour « chanter Broadway » à Paris, ou encore la possibilité de réinventer les icônes.

Anne Martina & Julie Vatain-Corfdir (dir.)

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Stage and screen / L'écran et la scène

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FOREWORD

Anne Martina & Julie Vatain-Corfdir

The history of American musicals is that of constant, complex, and fruitful media interaction. And yet, media crossovers long escaped enquiry. Artists themselves were often to blame for a biased perception of their work, particularly in film. In the many interviews they gave, Busby Berkeley or Gene Kelly were keen to present their work, and the history of film musicals in general, as a growing emancipation from stage models. Following their lead, early film critics showed a tendency to analyze Hollywood musicals produced in the 1930s, '40s, and early '50s as *cinematographic* achievements, characterized by a refined use of the codes of classical Hollywood cinema. When increasing economic difficulties arose in the mid-fifties – due to the collapse of the old studio system, the rise of television, and gradual shifts in public tastes – Hollywood was compelled to devise a set of strategic responses, leading to the evolution of the film musical (some would say its decline). The first, and most conspicuous reaction was to limit financial risk by increasingly foregoing original works in favor of adapting successful Broadway shows as faithfully as possible. A second response was to use rock 'n' roll music, and later pop music, to cater to younger generations, thereby often altering the classical syntax of the genre through increased subservience to the record industry (examples abound from *Jailhouse Rock* to *Woodstock* and *Moulin Rouge*). A third, more creative reaction was to scatter the script with elements of *auto-critique*, at the risk of undermining the mythologizing process at the heart of the genre and alienating its traditional audiences (from *A Star is Born* and *It's Always Fair Weather* to *All That Jazz*, *Pennies from Heaven* or *La La Land*).[1] From these combined factors stemmed the common belief that artistic achievement in Hollywood musicals was synonymous with aesthetic autonomy and narrative originality, while decline was entailed by a growing subjection to other media forms.

Conspicuously enough, reciprocal trends have been pointed out – and found fault with – on and off-Broadway, where musical versions, sequels or prequels of profitable films and Disney movies are a staple cause for complaint or irony among critics and audiences alike. Scholars of the stage musical have in fact shown the recent evolution of the genre to respond to economic pressure in ways that mirror the choices made

1 See Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical*, Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1987, pp. 120-121.

earlier by the film industry – some, like Mark Grant and Ethan Mordden, explicitly lamenting the supposed collapse of musical shows. Grant's catchy (albeit reductive) book title, *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical*, encapsulates a Spenglerian model, according to which the demise of the genre has been entailed, since the late 1960s, by radical economic and aesthetic shifts – the rise of entertainment conglomerates functioning as theatre producers, the popularity of spectacle-oriented "megamusicals," and the proliferation of adaptations. All of which testify to Broadway's increased dependence on mass media, in particular music videos and film.

Yet laments about the end of a so-called "Golden Age"[2] characterized by artistic integrity do not resist critical investigation. Not only are they imbued with nostalgic overtones, implying that musical works produced before and after the "Golden Age" have less artistic value and cultural depth than those from the pivotal period, but

they also ignore the complex, ceaseless interaction between Broadway and Hollywood *throughout* the history of the genre, which more recent research has brought to light. The rise of cultural and intermedial studies in the 1990s was critical in this respect. Opening new avenues for research on the American musical, it has led to a fruitful reassessment of the influence of Broadway stage forms and aesthetics on iconic Hollywood films. This has been exemplified by Martin Rubin's illuminating investigation of the way Busby Berkeley's art is indebted to 1910s and 1920s Broadway shows[3] or, more recently, by Todd Decker's insightful study of the many rewritings of *Show Boat*.[4]

However notable and influential such analyses have proven to be, much remains to be investigated. This reliance on recycling other media to spur creativity prompts enquiry into the nature, shape and influence of Broadway-to-Hollywood or Hollywood-to-Broadway transfers, as well as into the interactions and cross-fertilizing processes they generate. Current research indicates that such sustained investigation is under way. Theater-driven reference works on the American musical[5] have shown a growing interest in film, though chapters that truly focus on cross-media transaction are still rare. In France, a 2015 international conference – from which five of the essays in this

2 For a critical assessment of the term "Golden Age" in the field of musical comedy, see Jessica Sternfeld and Elizabeth L. Wollman, "After the 'Golden Age'", in Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, Stacy Wolf (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2011, p. 111.

3 Martin Rubin, *Showstoppers: Busby Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle*, New York, Columbia UP, 1993.

4 Todd Decker, *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2013.

5 See Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2011; William Everett and Paul L. Laird, *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 3rd ed., Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2017.

volume proceed – directly addressed those issues, while the three-year "Musical MC²" research project headed by Marguerite Chabrol and Pierre-Olivier Toulza has been comprehensively exploring the influence of cultural and media contexts over classical Hollywood musicals. Simultaneously, on the Paris stage, a reciprocal interest in the reinvention of classics has been displayed, for instance, in the Théâtre du Châtelet's widely-acclaimed productions of *An American in Paris* (2014), *Singin' in the Rain* (2015) and *42nd Street* (2016), all of which have been hailed as fully creative rather than derivative.

Such contemporary partiality – and curiosity – towards intermediality provided the inspiration for the present volume, which aims at reassessing the role and impact of stage/screen transfers (in both directions) on American musicals, by blending together academic and creative voices, both French and American. The essays and interviews collected here carefully explore the musical, dramatic and choreographic repercussions of transposition processes, evidencing the wide range of rewriting and recoding practices encompassed in what is commonly referred to as "adaptation." How does re-creation for another medium affect the shape and impact of a musical, both aesthetically and practically? How can the "adapted" version assert its status and value with regards to the "original," striking a balance between due homage and legitimate creative claims? These questions are tied to issues of authorship and authority, as well as to the notion of self-reflexivity, which can prove equally conducive to celebration or to subversion. They also call into question the audience's reception of the work, in particular when it comes to iconic scenes, or to characters illustriously embodied by a famous performer. In fact, any study of the relations between Broadway and Hollywood would be incomplete without reflecting upon the impact of *human* transfers – not only in terms of stars, but also in terms of directors, composers and lyricists, choreographers or costume designers.

The chapters of this volume fall into three sections, the first of which focuses on formal innovation and re-invention. It opens with an investigation into Ernst Lubitsch's endeavors to invent a cinematographic equivalent to the operetta around 1930, when the norms and form of the musical picture were yet to be established, ultimately showing how music, in such early examples, becomes a way to create a fictional world on screen (Katalin Pór). While this study offers a chronological foundation stone to analyze subsequent transfers and influences, the second essay provides a more theoretical perspective on the question, by comparing directorial choices in adaptation over a wide range of periods and production types (Dan Blim). From *Damn Yankees!* to *Hamilton*, the chapter explores the ways in which stage and screen

media deal differently with breaks and "sutures" in a musical's narrative continuity, thereby shedding light on the specificities of each medium. These insightful inaugural essays then make way for the in-depth study of such canonical examples as the screen-to-stage transfers of *42nd Street* and *An American in Paris*. The two shows are carefully compared in terms of their "conservative," "innovative" or "reflective" approach to adaptation, and placed in the context of constantly refashioned Hollywood and Broadway motifs (Anne Martina). This is given further resonance by the following roundtable with the creators of *An American in Paris*, which provides a mirrored point of view on reinvention from the artists' and producers' perspective. The precision and generosity with which they discuss the show's genesis, musical construction and color palette offer a unique insight into the vision behind this contemporary (re-)creation (Brad Haak, Van Kaplan, Craig Lucas, Stuart Oken, Christopher Wheeldon).[6]

The second section delves into the political and cultural implications of adaptation, using several case studies of major musicals which have been rewritten, reinterpreted, and sometimes transferred back to their original medium. The first of these analyses offers a refreshing outlook on *My Fair Lady*, by suggesting that the musical's romanticized ending may not be as out of line with George Bernard Shaw's original feminist vision as is commonly assumed. This leads to a detailed exploration of romantic and feminist ramifications in the crafting and filming of the musical (Aloysia Rousseau), and is followed by a performer's perspective on the same work – and others – from the point of view of a professional singer of musicals in France today (Julien Neyer). The next two essays then continue with the study of famous adaptations from the 1960s, by focusing on shifts in the political and racial significance of *Finian's Rainbow* (James O'Leary) or the consequences of tone and scale alterations in *Hello, Dolly!* (Julie Vatain-Corfdir & Émilie Rault). Francis Ford Coppola's screen version of *Finian's Rainbow* is thus shown to revise the stage show's politically-oriented innovations in order to align the script with New Left conventions, while Gene Kelly's adaptation of *Hello, Dolly!* is analyzed as the somewhat maladroit aesthetic product of contrasting tendencies towards amplification on the one hand, and sentimentalization on the other. Moving on from the last of the optimistic "supermusicals" to one of the finest examples of a darker and more cynical trend, the last essay in this section focuses on the successive rewritings of *Cabaret* for the stage, screen – and stage again. Amid this circular pattern, Bob Fosse's version of the iconic musical emerges as a re-defining moment not only for the show, but also for the evolution of the genre itself (Anouk Bottero).

6 All of our interviews are transcribed and published with kind permission from the speakers.

The third section of the volume takes a closer look at the challenges facing the performers of musicals on stage and screen, in particular when it comes to singing and dancing – live or in a studio. A shrewd analysis of Gene Kelly's career – short-lived on Broadway but stellar in Hollywood – shows how his choreographic bent towards perfectionism evolved, from *Cover Girl* to *Singin' in the Rain*, and how his apparent doubts about his acting talents came to be expressed and answered through his screen dances (Jacqueline Nacache). This is followed by the direct testimony of a legendary dancer and Broadway performer, who talks at length about the expressivity of "character dancing," the different lessons in focus learned on stage or in front of the camera, or the joys of working with Leonard Berstein, Jerome Robbins or Bob Fosse (Chita Rivera). Building on this dancer's experience, the following chapter asks the question of how to re-choreograph a cult scene and dance it anew, using examples from Robbins' choregraphy for *West Side Story* (Patricia Dolambi). Finally, shifting from dance to song, the last interview of the volume turns to the evolution of singing practices and spectators' tastes, from opera to "Golden Age" musicals and on to contemporary musicals. Voice placement and voice recording are discussed, along with specific techniques such as "vocal twang" or "belting," by a singing coach with experience both in the US and in France (Mark Marian). This comparative perspective re-emphasizes the fundamental dynamic of the volume, which is that of transgressing borders – between media, disciplines or, occasionally, reception cultures – bringing together the voices of music, dance, film and theater scholars as well as performers and producers, in order to shed light on creative phenomena which, though they are as old as the advent of the talking picture, still prove multifaceted and prolific today.

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PREMIÈRE PARTIE

Formal innovation & reinvention

MAKING OF *AN AMERICAN IN PARIS* BEYOND A RE-CREATION

Roundtable with the creative team of the award-winning stage production

The following is the transcription of a roundtable held at the Mona Bismarck American center in Paris, concerning the production of An American in Paris *which opened at the Théâtre du Châtelet in December 2014, before transferring to Broadway and, later, going on tour and opening in the West End. The participants were Van Kaplan and Stuart Oken (Broadway producers), Craig Lucas (writer), Christopher Wheeldon (stage director and choreographer), Brad Haak (musical director) and Anne Martina (moderator). We are extremely grateful to them for the opportunity to publish this.*

The roundtable was held on December 1st, 2014.

Anne Martina — Thank you for being here tonight to discuss this great show with us. Obviously, re-staging Minnelli's masterpiece and re-choreographing Gene Kelly's choreography is quite a challenge. So what I'm wondering is: how did it all start? Why *An American in Paris*?

Van Kaplan — Why *An American in Paris*? Because it's one of the best-loved films ever made! Let me just start by saying that, although we pay homage to the film in very endearing ways, this is an original work. So while we nod to the script, Craig [Lucas] has written an original book – which is quite exciting. And of course we thoroughly acknowledge the fantastic work of Gene Kelly, but Christopher [Wheeldon]'s work as a director and choreographer is all solely original. We took what we all love in this movie and looked at it through new eyes, from every standpoint. Even from the standpoint of the music: we have used a lot of the orchestral work of George Gershwin that wasn't in the film.

We got this idea because a member of the Gershwin family approached us and said that for almost twenty years people had been trying to get *An American in Paris* to the stage without succeeding. We had a meeting, discussed the possibilities, but at first we couldn't figure out what about this particular movie would resonate today. That's really what got us talking, and eventually what got us excited about the possibility of bringing this film to the stage.

Stuart Oken — When we first were approached, we actually were a bit reticent. We know that this "movie-to-theater" thing happens a lot. Musicals have often – always – been based on previously existing material, but movies turning into Broadway shows have sort of become the norm, and in a way you want to resist that – you want to have a real reason to do it, not just because it's a famous title and people will buy tickets; you need an authentic, central reason. When we sat down and watched the movie, we certainly admired what it was but we had very mixed feelings about how such a "Hollywood backlot" movie, written in 1950 and seemingly set in 1950 (though it dealt with a period that seemed to be very 1944-45), might work today. Really, what changed things was when we started talking with Craig, who was the first creative person to join Van and I. We discovered that just by telescoping the show back, all of a sudden every relationship, every emotion – all the stakes were raised so dramatically by placing them just after the end of the war. Immediately, we felt that this was a lens through which we could look at this show. While not trying to replicate the movie, we could make a new piece that faithfully borrowed the characters, story direction, ideas, style – and gave it all a new reason for existing. That was reason one.

Reason two had to do with dance. You don't run away from dance as the critical factor when you're doing *An American in Paris*; you can't pretend: "oh, we'll just fake the ballet". This is an Academy Award winning movie – how audacious is it to even think that you could go into the gut of that and come out on the other side? To be honest, we told the Gershwins yes only after Christopher agreed to direct and choreograph. Rob Fisher, our musical supervisor, was also a very important member of the team – he always said "my job is to represent George and Ira" – he did a lot of the vocal arrangements, incidental music, helped us build the book with the existing Gershwin music, adding, subtracting... We all participated in that, but he was our "author-representative" in terms of the music. That's the team that conceived this show, and now it's truly become Christopher's show. We're all doing it, in a sense, to help him fulfill his vision.

Anne Martina — From a practical point of view, how did you work on this production from both sides of the Atlantic?

Van Kaplan — We've all been collaborating together to make this new piece. Châtelet has done a fantastic job of building a beautiful and stunning physical production. They have an incredible team, there, and Jean-Luc [Choplin] has been a partner in that sense. We also look to beyond Paris, to New York and the life of this piece – hopefully this will become part of the canon of American musical theater and be performed twenty, fifty years from now.

Stuart Oken — Jean-Luc was part of the producing team. As Van said, they built the sets, they made the costumes, and gave the show its artistic home, its base. It's very common in America for independent producers to develop ideas and, when it gets to that magical place where the show wants to find a home, to open in what we call a regional theater. But this production was so unique, because nobody had ever come to Paris. We really couldn't have worked on this material in a foreign language because we wouldn't have been able to work on it ourselves with the necessary intricacies. But the fact that Châtelet had built an audience for English-language American musicals was extremely fortuitous; so really Châtelet has made history! The show is completely sold out; we're doing forty performances, so it's been a win-win for everybody. And for our company to be in Paris, in the real place – look at the authenticity that it helps to create!

Anne Martina — As you said, this show is a creation, striking a perfect balance between paying homage to the film and creating something totally new. It is set in 1945 (instead of 1950 in the movie), which makes for a much more somber atmosphere, especially at the beginning. Can you tell us where this idea came from?

Craig Lucas — When Stuart and Van called and told me they wanted to adapt this movie I watched it (I'd seen it as a child) and I had an intuition. Alan J. Lerner was, in the Forties, extremely experimental in his interests in musical theater (he'd written a show with Kurt Weil, *Love Life*, that was really a game-changer), and he was a savvy guy. I had a fantasy that he had written a movie about American soldiers in Paris at the end of the war, that he had given this movie to the studio and they had said: "the girl can't be Jewish, we can't see the swastikas all over town, there can be no mention of the war" – and that the studio agreed to make it under certain circumstances – which were probably appropriate to 1949 given that people were happy to put the war behind them. My father fought in the war, most of his friends too – I knew them and knew what had happened; my mother was a French Jew. And looking at *An American in Paris*, I realized that if you take all the characters, treat the circumstances seriously and move the movie up four or five years, *it's all there* – that's what made me think Lerner had actually written something that was not permitted to be made.

So they made a delightful entertainment, a kind of valentine that people loved (and which has about as much to do with France as my German car!) It was shot on a lot and it's a picture-postcard idea of Paris. One of the wonderful things about Jean-Luc was that he asked me to come here last summer and go to the archives to look at what had happened in the years of Occupation and in the years directly after the Liberation – and there was so much information that suited our story.

But it all began the day that Stuart and Van drove to my house, with all these questions about the movie: "Why is Lise in hiding? Why is Henri not the best husband for her? Why doesn't Jerry want to go home to New York? And how do we do a dance musical?" They said they were interested in Christopher Wheeldon and I practically burst into tears. I came to New York when Balanchine was still living and Jerry Robbins was still choreographing for the New York City Ballet. And when I saw Chris's ballets I thought: "This is the future of dance in America." I'm only interested in making musicals if you can do something that hasn't been done before. I don't understand taking a movie that is perfect for what it is and moving it directly to the stage – what's wrong with watching the movie? These wise gentlemen wanted to create a new musical loosely based on *An American in Paris*, and they wanted to do it for Chris Wheeldon, and I said: "Sign me up." And it turned out to be the best experience I've ever had.

Anne Martina — Art is an important theme in *An American in Paris*, both in the film and in your show. It also seems to be a major source of inspiration. But again, there are striking differences with the original movie. Minnelli drew upon the artwork of French impressionists, so his Paris has a late nineteenth-century feel. Yours, on the contrary, is modern. When seeing your show, I also thought that the reflection upon art was more fully developed, and the final ballet therefore more smoothly integrated than in Minnelli's movie.

Christopher Wheeldon — When you boil it down, the show is really about two things: it's about love, and it's about art. And it has these five young people, in Paris, at a time when they discover who they are. The idea was to incorporate the creation of the ballet's score in the story, but also to track the development of Jerry as an artist – track his influences and his being guided by Milo, who is much more of a Peggy Guggenheim-type character in our show than she was in the movie. When Bob Crowley and I sat down to talk about design, we looked at the great artists that were working in Paris during the war and decided that the design of the show should incorporate these artistic styles, and that the final ballet should be a sort of crashing together of these young people's talents – Lise as a dancer, Jerry as an artist and a designer, and of course Adam's score. The idea for Jerry to become the designer of the ballet came quite late in the process: we started to play around with it just before we went into rehearsal in New York. When we did the workshop a year earlier he was just simply an artist who decided to stay on in Paris and had nothing to do with the final ballet; so that was an exciting discovery. Even though the ballet itself is somewhat abstract, it also feels very much like a piece of narrative dance, because not only is it

the moment when we see Lise and Jerry coming together romantically in a satisfying way, but we can now also track all the different art forms coming together.

Anne Martina — It also allows for visual motifs to be scattered throughout the production. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I felt that perhaps it all originated with the Alexander Calder mobile hanging in Milo's apartment, and all those bright touches of color – red, yellow and blue – that are disseminated in different ways until finally Jerry finds a way to put all those pieces together?

Brad Haak — You were really paying attention!

Christopher Wheeldon — Yes. We looked at works by Delauney, Matisse, Calder, Picasso… We also used these artists as ways to define the interiors. Originally there was a very distinct painting that we used to define the Borel home, and the idea for the framed walls that you see throughout the show came from a very famous photograph of the Louvre with all the paintings removed – with just the frames hanging on the walls. All of those inspirations contributed to the overall look of the show. Color can be so emotional, and there's so much color in the music of Gershwin. There's so much story already, even though he didn't write *An American in Paris* with a specific story in mind – or the *Second Rhapsody*, or the *Rhapsody in Blue*. I can't help but think of characters and situations when I hear that music, so we talked about: "what colors do we hear in *An American in Paris*? How do we use the combinations of color to heighten the emotion in the story?"

Anne Martina — Minnelli was very interested in visual arts, especially paintings. But I thought you choosing to use a mobile – three dimensions instead of two, a moving and dancing sculpture – was a stroke of genius. And it summed up another aspect of the show, which is that this is very much a dance musical, in a long lineage of Jerome Robbins shows and others. Did you have that in mind – dancing all the time? Even in the transitions, which makes for such fluidity in your production?

Christopher Wheeldon — I think these guys hired me because they wanted some substantial dances in the show! And I was very excited, though I was nervous about saying yes to directing, because I'd never directed actors before, and it's a very different language, working with actors or working with dancers. Stuart and Van were insistent in such a wonderful way that they persuaded me to have a go and have been, since, incredibly supportive – as indeed everyone else has been. We really have operated as a

team. Some of the best days that we had were the days that Craig and Rob Fisher and I sat around Rob's kitchen on the Upper West Side, throwing ideas back and forth, first developing a basic synopsis, and then discussing how we would use various pieces of the Gershwin canon. We were very lucky in that the Gershwin estate allowed us the use of pretty much any of the music. We had the enormous task (it did feel enormous at the beginning) of finding the right song for the right situation, and making it feel like George and Ira had written this music specifically for our show.

Craig Lucas — (You're so easy to work with – they agreed to everything!)

Christopher Wheeldon — Dance on Broadway has been made a "distant cousin" in many of the new productions. Not many directors really favor dance as a narrative force. This was a great opportunity for me to take dance and make it a primary narrative force, creating a musical where all the elements – the music, the design, the book and the dance – all go hand in hand.

Van Kaplan — George Gershwin had been dead for twelve years before the movie was made, so it always was a sort of compilation "jukebox" musical, if you will. There never was a cohesive score to it. So it actually gave us a lot of artistic licence to be able to use any piece of music. Rob and the team here have done an incredible job selecting songs that advance the story along.

Anne Martina — Did you pick the songs first, or did you look for a certain topic in each song, in order to make it fit with the story?

Christopher Wheeldon — Craig started out by creating a narrative. He had some ideas about pre-existing songs from the movie and how they would fit in. And then we spent time with Rob with the giant songbook of George and Ira, flicking through it and finding songs that fit the situations. And then if we thought a song was right for the show but the situation wasn't right, Craig would go away and think about how we might make the story then fit around the piece of music.

Stuart Oken — For the film itself, they wanted lots of songs in it, so they kept building story opportunities to make room for more. Craig looked at this and said, for instance, that "By Strauss" had no place in this show, so we took it out. There was even a time when we wondered about "I Got Rhythm." I remember saying: "How can we do 'I Got Rhythm' so early on in the show? It's too happy, it's too upbeat, we're coming

out of this dark period." But they figured out a way to tell the story by reinterpreting "I Got Rhythm" quite brilliantly, so that it actually accomplished the very thing that we wanted to focus on. And after all the readings, workshops, putting the script apart and putting it back together – the songs that are in the show today are the same songs that were at our first reading two and a half years ago. They nailed the story and the structure from the first day.

Craig Lucas — The Gershwins wrote a lot of music, particularly for a man who died at 37. However, they were for a lot of very silly Broadway musicals in the 1920s. So there are about five hundred songs saying "I'm really happy I just fell in love," and then there's another four hundred that go "I'll never get the person I want – I'm sad." And then there are whole bunches of satires about psychoanalysis and all the silly things they were making fun of in these very light-hearted shows. Because, to our great misfortune, George Gershwin wrote a short opera at the age of 16 or 17 – and he was told that he was very talented and he was never to do that again! So he spent the next twenty-some years writing silly Broadway musicals and becoming the richest composer in the world. It was only in the last few years of his life that he set out to write his one full-length opera, which all the critics said was very bad. And that's *Porgy and Bess* – which is not so bad.

Anne Martina — All the songs in the show are fantastic and it's a real pleasure to discover them anew. I've also noticed some instrumental versions of well-known Gershwin songs, which make for very smooth transitions. Along with the beautifully fluid scenery, of course. I thought it was all very poetic.

Christopher Wheeldon — Bob Crowley, the show's designer, is an extraordinary man with a great deal of taste, style and knowledge about the history of fashion. But the thing I love most about Bob is his excitement at finding – particularly on this project – the poetry of the city. What color should Paris be, in our production? How do we make a space for all these moving pieces to live in? We came up with this beautiful, pale bluey grey box. So we started with the blue grey box, knowing that it was going to be a show that would dance in every aspect – the scenery as well as the dancers themselves. We started putting pieces inside our grey box and talking about the light of the city. We came here in the summer, we came here in the winter, we walked the streets, thinking about perspective – how do the banks of the Seine look from down here, looking up at the bridge, or from the bridge looking down? We were finding ways to have a light touch, to keep an open space, to allow the dancers to tell the story. That's

not to say it's not a huge show – if you could see what there is in the air you would be amazed. The bars are all within inches of each other, and as for that fabulous moment when Radio City Music Hall appears on the stage… it's a very technically complex show, but the look of it remains light and airy.

Anne Martina — I think that will be all. Thank you very much for coming and sharing your thoughts with us.

Stuart Oken — I just want to say this is the first time that, as a group, we've ever sat down together and talked to people this way.

Anne Martina — Thank you, thank you very much!

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E-THEATRUM MUNDI

La collection « e-Theatrum Mundi » considère le théâtre sous tous ses angles et dans tous ses états. Dans la continuité de la collection papier à laquelle elle est adossée, elle se veut un lieu de réflexion sur les diverses manifestations d'expression théâtrale à travers le monde, et rassemble des travaux de recherche sur l'écriture, le jeu, les pratiques et les formes scéniques, la mise en scène et le spectateur. Sa particularité est de proposer uniquement des volumes interdisciplinaires, en lien avec le Programme de recherches interdisciplinaires sur le théâtre et les pratiques scéniques de l'université Paris-Sorbonne (PRITEPS), dont elle reflète les activités. En croisant les angles d'approche, la collection vise à provoquer des confrontations fructueuses entre les scènes, les langues et les méthodologies, dans le domaine des études théâtrales.

DÉJÀ PARUS

La Scène en version originale
Julie Vatain-Corfdir (dir.)

La Haine de Shakespeare
Élisabeth Angel-Perez & François Lecercle (dir.)