Tiré à part

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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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]

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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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DEUXIÈME PARTIE

From subversion to self-reflexivity

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HARMONY AT HARMONIA?
GLAMOR AND FARCE IN *HELLO, DOLLY!*, FROM WILDER TO KELLY

Julie Vatain-Corfdir & Émilie Rault

When *Hello, Dolly!* opened on Broadway in January 1964, immediately to be hailed as "a musical shot through with enchantment,"[1] New York audiences were by no means greeting Dolly for the first time. Through a process of recycling which probably owed as much to the potential of the original story as it did to a logic of commercial security, the story of Mrs. Dolly Levi – the meddling matchmaker who sorts out everyone's love lives and contrives to marry her biggest client herself – had been prosperous on stage and screen for the previous ten years, and would continue to attract audiences to this day.[2] Not unlike *My Fair Lady*, which previously held the record for longest-running Broadway musical, *Hello, Dolly!* trod on the "surer road to success,"[3] with a book based on a popular play by an acclaimed playwright – Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker* –, and one which had already been famously adapted to the screen with a cast starring, among others, Shirley Booth and Shirley MacLane. The final consecration, in this back-and-forth journey of Dolly's story between Broadway and Hollywood, would be that of a big-budget, star-led musical film in 1969 – "a humdinger of a show"[4] directed by a legend of the silver screen, Gene Kelly, in a production so lavish it has more than once invoked the adjective "elephantine".[5]

1 Howard Taubman, "Review of *Hello, Dolly !*", *The New York Times*, January 16th, 1964.

2 As Thornton Wilder's literary executor attests, *The Matchmaker* is still widely performed in the 20th century: "In 2011, a representative year, *The Matchmaker* was produced on the amateur stage in this country and Canada once every ten days", and among the productions based on Wilder's work, "None can rival *Hello, Dolly!*" (Tappan Wilder, "Thornton Wilder for the Twenty-First Century, in *Thornton Wilder: New Perspectives*, Evanston, Northwestern UP, 2013, p. 7). We might add that, in the Fall of 2016, the advance sale of tickets to the 2017 revival with Bette Midler hit an all-time Broadway high.

3 "Beginning with someone else's play, poem, short story or biography seems to be the surer road to success." (Thomas L. Riis and Ann Sears, "The successors of Rodgers and Hammerstein from the 1940s to the 1960s," in William A. Everett and Paul Laird (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the American Musical*, 2nd ed., 2009, p. 189).

4 Clive Hirschhorn, *The Hollywood Musical*, New York, Crown, 1981.

5 The adjective recurs in various reviews and commentaries. See Vincent Canby's review for *The New York Times*, December 18th, 1969; or Tom Santopietro, *The Importance of Being Barbra*, New York, St. Martin's, 2006, p. 68.

As Anne Davis Basting writes, "*Hello, Dolly!* has always been a show that knows it is a show."[6] Indeed, the optimistic musical does not hold back on cheeriness, nor does it deny its farcical roots. The inspiration for *Hello, Dolly!* dates back to a 19th-century one-act farce by John Oxenford (*A Day Well Spent*, 1835), promptly rewritten into a full-length Viennese comedy by Johann Nestroy (*Einen Jux will er sich Machen*, 1842), which Thornton Wilder later reinvented for a New York setting with added characters; first, unsuccessfully, as *The Merchant of Yonkers* (1938) and then, after extensive revision, as *The Matchmaker* (1954), a West End and Broadway hit starring Ruth Gordon. The changing focus of the successive titles reveals a telling shift from the general setting, "a day", to the comedy, "*einen jux*" (a joke), then on to the male lead, the "merchant", and finally to the female lead, the "matchmaker". The play only seems to find its ideal balance, its pace and its greater success once it has placed Mrs. Levi squarely at the dramatic and emotional center of its construction. The title of the musical takes this one step further, switching from a statement of her social role as matchmaker to a breezy salute to her nickname, thus placing the audience on a footing of intimacy with her from the word go. This easy informality proves efficient in terms of characterization, foregrounding the idea that Dolly knows everyone, and simultaneously harbors meta-theatrical echoes. When, in the most iconic scene of the show, the chorus sings "it's so nice to have you back where you belong," their hospitality could be construed as the spectators', literally welcoming the character back to Broadway in musical form.

Paradoxically enough, this most emblematic scene of the musical – the one which brought down the house on opening night and routinely features on publicity material – is nowhere to be found in the original play. If *Hello, Dolly!* was riding on the success of *The Matchmaker,* it instantly became famous for the precise point at which it diverged from the play, blowing up the proportions of Wilder's intimate story to the glittering dimensions of the musical stage, translating private monologue into public song, and physical comedy into choreography. This article will therefore focus on the unfolding and rewriting of those glamorous restaurant scenes, taking into account the three diverging versions presented by Wilder's original dialogue, the musical composed by Jerry Herman and historically embodied on stage by Carol Channing, and the 20th Century Fox film starring Barbra Streisand. This will allow us to examine the shifts in scale, tone and rhythm involved in turning a musical of thirteen actors and an ensemble into a twenty-four-million-dollar movie featuring thousands of extras,

6 Anne Davis Basting, "Dolly Descending a Staircase", in Kathleen Woodward (ed.), *Figuring Age*, Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1999, p. 251.

while keeping in mind the relationship of both the stage and the screen musicals to the original play. We will try to outline the ways in which the tone of the piece is gradually altered, and the relationship between the audience and the show redefined, through the analysis of a few key elements. Beginning with the overall arrangement of the sequence and progressively narrowing our focus around the "showstopper," we will look at the representative shifts revealed by the handling of the scenes in terms of scale, virtuosity, and the balance between comedy and sentiment.

VEERING TOWARDS ROMANCE

Exploring a popular format for the comic genre, and one which had previously proved its worth on Broadway with such successes as *A Trip to Chinatown* or *On the Town*, *Hello Dolly!* revolves around the intersecting stories of a series of ordinary characters who all spend an adventure-filled day in New York City, and end up having dinner at the same upscale restaurant, musically named "The Harmonia Gardens". The restaurant scenes constitute the climax of the plot, crystallizing young love, showing the matchmaker openly embarking on her plans to marry the wealthy Mr. Vandergelder, and whipping the misunderstandings into a frenzy of loud voices and physical comedy that ends the sequence on an enjoyably catastrophic note, set to rousing polka music. Though all the versions of the sequence – spoken or sung, on stage or on screen – aim to stress the rising tension and sense of impending farcical chaos, the ways in which structure and tone combine to build up anticipation vary quite tellingly.

When placed opposite the more experimental and philosophical bulk of Wilder's work for the stage, *The Matchmaker* may well seem out of character for the Pulitzer-winning author of *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*, who, in the words of Marc Robinson, "seeks Puritan clarity with eyes wide open to modernist ambiguity, and asserts the simplicities of presence against a culture of increasing illegibility."[7] One way to solve this apparent contradiction is to point to the fact that, for all its levity, *The Matchmaker* proves consistent with Wilder's other plays as defending, above all else, the worth of the here and now. Another is to underline the fact that Wilder's foray into conventional comedy was entirely deliberate: "One way to shake off the nonsense of nineteenth-century staging is to make fun of it," he wrote. "This play parodies the stock-company plays that I used to see at Ye Liberty Theatre, Oakland,

7 Marc Robinson, *The American Play*, New Haven, Yale UP, 2009, p. 203.

California, when I was a boy."[8] In this case, parodic intentions provide an excuse to celebrate the staples of the genre, and the third act of the play accordingly opens with a generous display of coincidences, overheard conversations, lost objects and characters pulling each other by their coats as they order food and lay traps for the upcoming dinner. Expectations are raised through the weaving of intricate plot trends, while the audience's laughter is sustained through abundant comedy of character, supplied by a memorably superior "tall 'snob' waiter [with a] German accent" and a moralizing "enormous cabman in a high hat."[9]

By contrast, Michael Stewart and Jerry Herman's book for the musical foregoes all knockabout stage business for the time being, choosing instead to open the act with a single, lightly satirical number, "Elegance," sung by two of the younger couples on their way to dinner. Shifting from inside the restaurant to the street outside, the scene paradoxically becomes more intimate, as the lyrics and choreography offer an amusing way to delve into the characters' aspirations and misgivings. Lacking the money for a cab, the young people are singing as they *walk* to the restaurant, thus giving the lie to the very words they sing:

Cornelius and Barnaby —	Silver spoons were used for feeding us
	We got elegance
	If you ain't got elegance
All —	You can never ever carry it off!
	Middle class… don't speak of it
	Savoir faire… we reek of it
	Some were born with rags and patches but
	We use dollar bills for matches and
	[…][10]

The vernacular syntax of the lyrics, with its elisions and missing verbs, further undermines the copious antiphrastic allusions to aristocracy, dandyism – or indeed colossal fortunes, since the singers go on to mention Diamond Jim, J.P. Morgan and Vanderbilt. The humor of this contrast between wealthy aspirations and small-time reality is heightened by the music which, instead of echoing the high life through the rhythms of a waltz or society dance, develops as a march, punctuated

8 Thornton Wilder, "Preface to three plays" [1957], in *Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, New York, Library of America, 2007, pp. 686-687.

9 Thornton Wilder, *The Matchmaker*, in *Ibid.*, pp. 330, 333.

10 Jerry Herman and Michael Stewart, *Hello, Dolly!* libretto, manuscript available from Tams-Witmark Music Library, Inc., p. 212.

with a heavy, brassy trombone glissando. Gower Champion, original director and choreographer of the show, used the glissando as a comical opportunity for the actors to take exaggeratedly long and exhausted steps and, more generally, choreographed the piece around a series of off-center steps, in a "charmingly mannered routine" complete with a prancing horse, as Eileen Brennan recalls: "We all walked with our hands out as the horse danced behind us."[11] And when Michael Kidd choreographed the movie, he followed suit by arranging "Elegance" as a parody of refined attitudes, with such unlikely accessories as pretzels used for opera glasses. We may note that even in the film, with the more sophisticated possibilities for orchestration opened up by a Hollywood symphonic orchestra, the comical trombone glissando recurs, infusing the choreography with screwball elements. The physical comedy that animates Wilder's dialogue is thus translated into dance on the musical stage and screen, blending humor with gracefulness as the characters prepare for the evening' festivities.

The following transition, however, displays a major aesthetic divergence between the Broadway show and the film. In Champion's staging, once the young people reached the end of their song and the entrance to the restaurant, the set revolved to reveal the inside of the splendiferous Harmonia Gardens. But in the movie, Jerry Herman and Gene Kelly inserted an extra song for Barbra Streisand – a romantic one which considerably alters our conception of her character. Entitled "Love is Only Love," this ballad had originally been written for *Mame* (1966), another one of Herman's hit shows, and was adapted to *Hello Dolly!* through the expedient means of adding some introductory lyrics. The whole sequence is shot as a moment of stolen intimacy. As the young couples reach the restaurant door, the camera travels over the rooftops of New York to Dolly's window and enters her bedroom. The framing is close and the room dark, creating a chiaroscuro effect through which Dolly is discovered brushing her hair, in the pictorial tradition of the woman at her dressing-table.

11 Both quotes are from John Anthony Gilvey, *Before the Parade Passes By*, New York, St Martin's, 2005, p. 142.

The sensuality of her low-cut négligé, flowing hair and abandoned, dreamy attitude provides a stark contrast to her previous scenes, in which she appeared highly corseted and fully in control. Here she is not playing a part, as is made clear by the very personal nature of the singing, so free in its rhythm it almost takes on a spoken quality, and so pure in its tones that the orchestra strings grow barely audible in order to let the voice resonate.

This image of a womanly, lovelorn Dolly corresponds to a strong shift towards sentimentality in the screen adaptation. On stage, Dolly squarely declared "I am marrying Horace Vandergelder for his money"[12] and hugged the cash register,[13] while on screen, she says nothing so direct, but is revealed as a beautiful young widow looking for a second chance at love. This tendency is mirrored in the casting of the supporting roles. To accompany his leading couple composed of Carol Channing and David Burns, "a Gilded Age version of Harlequin and Pantelone,"[14] Gower Champion had broken with tradition in his choices for the younger couples and cast comedians rather than romantic types: as John Anthony Gilvey writes, "Champion was content to have farceurs who would complement the leading players rather than the colorless lovers common to farce."[15] Gene Kelly's actors, by contrast, are decidedly more on the tender side. This is especially true of Michael Crawford and Marianne McAndrew – a gangly, affectionate Cornelius to his fair, gentle Irene – whose acting emphasizes the awkward adorableness of budding romance. To underline the innocence of their love affair, Irene who was a widow in the play and in the stage musical, is simply turned by

12 The sentence is straight out of Wilder's script, *The Matchmaker, op. cit.*, p. 363.

13 The cover of *Life* magazine, April 3rd, 1964, famously advertises the show by featuring Channing squeezing the cash register tight, with a huge smile on her face.

14 John Anthony Gilvey, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

the movie script into an unmarried young woman. And while Dolly herself remains a widow, she is suddenly portrayed in a reverie, and in the full bloom of youth, unlike her previous incarnations, since Gordon played Dolly at fifty-eight and Channing from the age of forty-two to her seventies,[16] while Streisand was barely twenty-seven by the time the movie was released. Thus, what was comical and even cynical on Broadway strives to become romantic in Hollywood, moving further away from Wilder's money-driven farce in an effort to create a more conventional love story for the screen. While this intention is clear, its success is, by all accounts, marred by the unsatisfactory chemistry between Barbra Streisand and Walter Matthau – one of the points of criticism most commonly leveled at the movie.

STAGING AND FILMING VIRTUOSO CHOREOGRAPHY

Once the threshold of the Harmonia Gardens is crossed, we enter the realm of the spectacular. It is easy to see how the fashionable restaurant imagined by Wilder readily captured the imagination of the musical's creators as a pretext for glamorous sets and sensational performances. The *New York Times* reviewer of the *Hello, Dolly!* stage premiere pointed out that the liveliness of the musical originated in the play's exuberance: "As a play Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker* vibrated with unheard melodies and unseen dances. Michael Stewart, Jerry Herman and Gower Champion apparently heard and saw them, and they have conspired ingeniously to bring them to shining life."[17] In the case of the waiters, as we mentioned earlier, Wilder's scenes mostly give occasion for slapstick comedy – with tables repeatedly laid and knocked over – and character acting, since the first waiter is written as patronizingly pretentious, and the second as young and insecure to the point of constantly bursting into tears. Blown up to the proportions of the musical stage, these two characters turn into an army of waiters, whose comic potential is translated into dance through sensational acrobatics, as they embark on a "wild, vertiginous rout"[18] known as the "Waiter's

16 On this subject, a thought-provoking analysis of Channing's performance at seventy-four can be found in Basting's account of her impressions as a member of the audience : "I had expected a courageous display of wrinkles. I had expected sentimentality. What I had not expected was the audience's frenzied approval of Channing's morphed body in what seemed a confusing display of yesterday and today – a face fallen and lifted, a body revealed, time frozen and flowing. I had made a pilgrimage to – and was participating in – a theatricalized display of Channing's simultaneously aged and un-aged body." Anne Davis Basting, "Dolly Descending a Staircase", *op. cit.*, p. 250.

17 Howard Taubman, "Review of *Hello, Dolly !*", art. cit.

18 *Ibid.*

Gallop," intended by Champion as an extravagant moment of pure entertainment, and a cornerstone of the show:

> The first two weeks of the five-week rehearsal period covering October 6 to November 10, 1963, were devoted to "The Waiter's Gallop" and "Hello, Dolly!" – two major second act production numbers that together would form the foundation of the show. This musical diptych would be created and connected by means of the principle of the topper, "the climax no one believes can be surpassed ('The Waiters' Gallop') until the next wonder – the next topper ('Hello, Dolly!') – leaves the audience cheering and the performers gasping for breath."[19]

A dazzling dance in its own right, the "Waiter's Gallop" can be seen as a preparation for the "Hello, Dolly!" number both in terms of composition and from a thematic point of view, since it answers an order from the maître d' to make "our usual lightning service [...] twice as lightning,"[20] in honor of Dolly's return. Thus the ensemble of waiters leaps and bounds across the stage, occasionally interrupting their antics to let us hear snatches of conversations between the various diners. In the original staging, the protagonists ordered their dinners from the privacy of two curtain-enclosed booths on either side of the stage, so that whenever the actors opened the curtains to speak, the waiters disappeared or froze. "Held" or "frozen" attitudes were, in fact, an integral part of Champion's dance vocabulary for *Hello, Dolly!*, meant to evoke old rotogravures of turn-of-the-century New York through a series of "dance snapshots" – used to particularly striking effect in the opening number, "Call on Dolly". On film, however, the use of cross-cutting and camera movements enables Gene Kelly to create a more seamless alternation between the intimate spaces of the characters' dinners and the waitressing frenzy in the open spaces of the restaurant.

On stage, the music chosen to support the gallop is an original circus-like tune, accentuating the impression of a show within the show, whereas the movie uses an instrumental reprise of "Just leave everything to me," a melody written for Barbra Streisand to replace the stage opening number. The screen version therefore links the gallop to Dolly in a deeper manner, building up on the frenetic impression given by this "catalogue song" which seems to be going in breathless circles – previously *listing* all the things Dolly can do in a complex string of text, and now *showing* all the things the waiters can do in an intricate series of steps. The music keeps playing throughout

19 John Anthony Gilvey, *op. cit.*, p. 130. The inserted quote is from Glenn Litton, *Musical Comedy in America*, New York, Theatre Arts Books, p. 272.
20 *Hello Dolly* libretto, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

the entire film sequence, including during the dialogue, which reinforces the feeling of a fast-paced narration as even the young men, Cornelius and Barnaby, find themselves momentarily caught up in the waiter's dance in an attempt to escape paying their bill. This intention to tie the gallop to the storyline is further illustrated in the chain of miniature stories which makes up the screen version, with waiters facing challenges and accidents, such as a dropped dish or a client's impatience: Michael Kidd seems to make it a point of honor to make his choreography narrative. We may note that this tendency to further integrate music and dance to the plot could also explain, elsewhere in the film, the disappearance of elements which had been successful on stage such as the Act I "Motherhood March," essentially a vaudeville number whose interest lay in its clockwork comedy and enjoyable nods to a time-honored art form rather than in the advancement of the plot.

The stage gallop, by contrast, displays no keen concern to become narrative and remains more playful as well as more demonstrative of the dancers' talents. They fence with skewers, discarding the meat and vegetables as scabbards, create facetious visions by wiggling their legs from behind large round trays, turn bewildering four-legged cartwheels, and repeatedly jump up and down on the spot in perfect synchronization, in an astonishing display of endurance. The sheer virtuosity required by these steps fosters a sense of tension in the theatre, as the spectators witness the risks taken by the performers. Champion's staging called for a specific feature to be added to the stage: "a 'pasarelle,' a ramp built out from the apron of the stage around the orchestra pit, ringed with footlights to give a turn-of-the-century feel to the scenery."[21] This ramp gave the setting a new sense of depth and opened up spectacular possibilities in terms of movement. While it made for breathtaking acrobatics as the waiters leapt over the musicians, it also meant that a net, visible to the audience, had to be placed over the pit in case the dancers fell in. Even though the set of the movie included a ringed red carpet around the restaurant's floor to echo Champion's ramp, such tension and risk-taking are *de facto* gone from the movie, where everything is pre-recorded, and perhaps this provides an explanation as to why Kidd's choreography insists on showing us the waiters avoiding impending catastrophes – in order to be recreated on screen, the sense of danger and intensity had to be transferred from the performers to the performance.

21 David Payne-Carter, *Gower Champion*, Westport, CT, Greenwood, 1999, p. 93.

The TOFT archive video recording of the *Hello, Dolly!* revival at the Lunt-Fontanne theater proves that, by 1996, the title number of the show was famous enough for applause to break out as soon as the set of the staircase was revealed, and long before Channing even set foot on it. Dolly's celebrated entrance down the stairs – so well-known that it went "round the world" with Mary Martin[22] – is a typical case of ever-growing amplification, from play to musical and from stage to screen. Wilder's stage direction for the Harmonia Gardens' veranda calls for an "informal and rustic" room on the Battery, whose right-side entrance is "perhaps up a few steps and flanked by potted palms."[23] In the hands of Broadway and Hollywood set designers, these hypothetical steps were magnified into spectacular red-carpeted staircases lined with railings of wrought iron (on stage) or marble (on screen). Both the original stage production and the film won awards for set design,[24] proving that *Hello, Dolly!* fully conformed to a purpose identified by Raymond Knapp as central to the American musical – that is, "to achieve great effects from mechanical spectacle."[25] The costume design took a similar direction, and actresses playing Dolly on stage, from Ginger Rogers to Bette Midler, have followed Channing's lead in sporting dazzling feather headpieces and striking red full-length dresses, though none so extravagant as Barbra Streisand's shimmering golden gown, one of the most expensive garments ever made for a film, designed by Irene Sharaff using solid gold thread and beadwork as well as countless gemstones and crystals. Although the stage direction that introduces Thornton Wilder's Dolly defines her style as a case of "impoverished elegance,"[26] the technical realities of the lighting on a movie set apparently required the use of pure gold material as the only way to achieve the desired iridescent effect. This provides rather a compelling symbol of Hollywood megalomania – when real gold must be used to create the illusion of a gilded dress. It also brings to mind Susan Sontag's definition of camp sensibility as the love of artifice and exaggeration – "Camp is

22 Mary Martin, who had originally turned down the role, played Dolly in the West End premiere of the show, as well as in a US and foreign tour which went to Japan, Korea and Vietnam. The NBC documentary "*Hello Dolly*: Round the World" shows her altering the well-known lyrics to "Hello, Tokyo!"

23 Thornton Wilder, *The Matchmaker, op. cit.*, p. 330.

24 Oliver Smith won a Tony award for scenic design in 1964, while Walter M. Scott, George James Hopkins and Raphael Bretton won an Oscar for set decoration in 1970.

25 Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 2006, p. 16.

26 Thornton Wilder, *The Matchmaker, op. cit.*, p. 296.

a woman walking around in a dress made of three million feathers"[27] – and could certainly warrant looking at the film as unwittingly conforming to camp aesthetics in more than one way.

Dolly's entrance is striking melodically as well as visually, thanks to the optimistic song of welcome she shares with the waiters, celebrating her decision to reintegrate the world after years of isolated widowhood[28]. It begins with a burlesque-like introduction, a brassy march whose binary rhythm mimics Dolly's descent down the stairs. While such racy music adds a humorous dimension to her appearance, it also thematically echoes the parade march of the Act I number "Before the Parade Passes By"; only this time, instead of watching it go by, Dolly is taking the parade's lead. Accordingly, Champion's choreography for the rest of the number is arranged laterally, with the chorus marching and kicking in intertwining lines, always providing tableaux in which Dolly is framed by the waiters, or using them as counterpoint as she walks in a direction opposite to theirs. The logic of the movie adaptation, for this most iconic of scenes, tends towards preservation rather than innovation, substantiating the *New York Times* reviewer's claim according to which: "Gene Kelly […] acts like a caretaker of a big, valuable property."[29] Thus, in an explicit homage to the Broadway show, Kidd's

27 Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp" [1964], in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967, p. 283.

28 In *The Matchmaker*, this idea is brought forward through a monologue, just before Mr. Vandergelder's proposal in act IV. This long exposé of Dolly's past and current situation and feelings, addressed to her late husband and to the audience, has given trouble to directors and screenwriters, who have tended to move it – as is the case in the Joseph Anthony movie – or rewrite it. In the stage version of *Hello, Dolly!*, the monologue is cut up in three parts scattered through the first and second acts. In the movie version, only a short monologue leading to "Before the Parade Passes By" remains.

29 Vincent Canby, review for *The New York Times*, December 18th, 1969.

choreography is built around sideways movements, in unison or with counterpoint. Any novelty in the film is to be found in the media itself rather than in the originality of the steps: the widescreen, Todd-AO frame enhances the sense of an endless stream of waiters following Dolly from side to side, while the camera moves which follow the march increase the impression of swiftness and fluidity. Champion's work has a cinematographic quality which, in many ways, probably facilitated the transition of his vision into film; this is also true of his use of "close-up" effects to create moments of intimacy. When, midway through "Hello, Dolly," Dolly breaks into a more personal verse section to allude to her years in the shadows, Champion highlighted this by placing Channing alone in the middle of the ramp, and focusing the intensity on her by dimming the lights and slowing down the movements all around. This was easily transposed on screen thanks to a close framing of Streisand's face and arms in a beam of light against a blurry background. While Champion recreated a cinematographic close-up on stage, Kelly returned the allusion by placing a theater spotlight in front of his camera.

Both on stage and screen, the relative simplicity of the "Hello, Dolly" choreography echoes that of Herman's popular melody. As the show first went into rehearsal, the creators of the musical were struck by how easy the tune was to memorize, even by Champion's young son: "We all felt that if a two-year-old could sing it, it was a sure sign of a hit."[30] Indeed, when Dolly begins to sing the first words of the song, she does so with a mere vocal arpeggio of a tonic triad. The tonic triad, or tonic chord, of a musical piece is one of the most elementary and vital chords one might think of, as it is based on the first (some say principal) tone of the scale – the tonic: most songs begin and end with a tonic chord, and when Dolly utters her first "Hello, Harry," she is merely singing the tones of the tonic triad one after the other. In fact, out of the first twenty written notes of the melody, which constitute the first sentence of the song, only five are not part of the tonic triad – five notes that are actually the repetition of only three tones, as is highlighted in the example below:

30 Jess Greg interview, in John Anthony Gilvey, *op. cit.*, 128.

These three "foreign tones" to the tonic triad are gradually introduced in the melody in an ascending pattern, making for growing excitement as the melody unfolds. The first sentence ends on the dominant of the key, a common manner to keep the tension going. Indeed, the dominant is next in importance to the tonic in a scale: composers infallibly use it to bring the necessary sense of suspense to a musical piece, before resolving the created tension by returning to the tonic or a tonic substitute of the key. This is, rather unadventurously, exactly what Herman does in this instance, when he begins the second sentence of the song:

The second sentence recreates the same musical pattern as the first, only one tone higher. Indeed, Herman leads us to the next sentence with a slight twist: he introduces yet another short ascension thanks to a chromatic bridge, which also carries its load of musical excitement, as it contains several tones foreign to the original key the melody was set in. He then proceeds to reiterate, one tone higher, a recurring motif emphasized in the first sentence (see both examples above), creating a pattern which will be found throughout the song. It consists in an arpeggio of a simple fifth chord, rocking the melody downwards and upwards from third interval to third interval (one of the most basic intervals in musical composition, a tonic triad being composed of two thirds) in an easily remembered motion. When composing the "Hello Dolly" melody, Herman seems to have found that delicate balance between familiarity and excitement, which might explain that, generations later, children are still humming the "Hello Dolly" tune.

Another feature that makes this song one of the catchiest in the Broadway repertoire is the use of "Dolly" as a refrain-like punctuation. This may well have been inspired by Wilder's dialogue, where names can be repeated a dozen times a scene, as forms of address or as exclamations, lending the text an emphatic sense of rhythm. As the melody of "Hello, Dolly" unfolds, its protagonist's name practically becomes the exclamation point we can read in the title of the show. The straightforwardness of the song enables improvisation and gives space to the performer. It had originally been written for Ethel Merman, known for her immense voice and straightforward personality, miles away from the "cartoon-like quality"[31] of Carol Channing, who had previously captured the attention of New York as a radiant Lorelei Lee, "looking out on a confused world through big, wide, starry eyes."[32] Herman was hesitant when Merman turned down the part and Channing was suggested in her stead, since "Channing's contra-bass was no replacement for Merman's baroque trumpet."[33] Yet Channing managed to make the song all her own and put her stamp on it for decades to come. Befitting her contralto voice, she sings the melody in a lower key than later performers such as Streisand, giving it a sense of weight and gravity. Channing's Dolly pushes the notes longer than the writing calls for, takes rhythmical risks, and is often on the verge of skipping a beat, sometimes forcing the orchestra to slow down and wait for the woman whom they have no choice but to "leave everything to". By comparison, the voice of Streisand's Dolly strikes us as lighter in pitch and consistency, using her agile tones to create a versatile counterpoint to her co-performers as well as the orchestra. This lends an improvised quality to her rendering, and enables her to embody a more intimate Dolly, embroidering upon the well-known melody to reinvent a song that had apparently been set in stone by Channing's version.

This divergence in singing styles finds an echo in the individual treatment of comic timing and line-delivery. While the quiet lyricism of Wilder's monologues has often been pointed out as an inspiration for musical adaptations,[34] the ironic rhythms and humorous repetitions of *The Matchmaker*'s dialogue also support a fruitful dynamic between text and song – and call for skilled verbal acting from the performers. This is notably true of the long-winded final exchange of Act III, the scene "of Dolly fast-talking Vandergelder, steamrolling him toward betrothal with double-talk and

31 David Payne-Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

32 Brooks Atkinson, review of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, New York Times, December 8th, 1949.

33 David Payne-Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

34 Gilvey quotes Herman saying "Thornton Wilder was so filled with lyric ideas for me" (John Anthony Gilvey, *op. cit.*, p. 134). We may also note that other Wilder plays have given rise to musical adaptations, most recently the *Long Christmas Dinner* and *Our Town* operas.

misdirection,"[35] while pretending to refuse his non-existent proposal of marriage. This comical climax of the sequence undergoes very little change from Wilder's play to Stewart's book or to Lehman's screenplay, perhaps because its very wordiness lends it a melodic quality, with Dolly's hypocritical catchphrase acting as a tantalizingly antiphrastic chorus – "You go your way, and I'll go mine."[36] The delivery of the lines, however, differs according to the version and on this point, it seems safe to say that Streisand's choices of pace and intonation are as close to Wilder's writing as possible. While Channing's delivery is slower and more articulate, Streisand, building up on her previous success as Fanny Brice, applies to the dialogue all the standard features of the "New York Jewish conversational style" as defined by linguist Deborah Tannen; that is, a persistence on reintroducing the same topic, a faster rate of speech with a tendency to overlapping, and an abundant use of "expressive paralinguistics" such as pitch and amplitude shifts.[37] The medium shots and close-ups as well as the precision of the sound recording enable Barbra Streisand to maintain a dizzying pace which could not be achieved on stage without rendering half the lines incomprehensible. This does perfect justice to Wilder's text, which is intended as a sweeping monologue with occasional interruptions rather than as dialogue. Surprisingly enough, this is one aspect in which the film, rather than moving further away from the source text, offers a thoroughly authentic interpretation of it, thanks to technical means and to marked choices in the actress' delivery.

HELLO, DOLLY, HELLO, LOUIS: SELF-REFLEXIVITY

While the insertion of the "Hello Dolly" number in the structure of Thornton Wilder's plot answers a romantic necessity by turning Dolly into a desirable woman in the eyes of Mr. Vandergelder, it also modifies the relationship between spectator and spectacle. As Raymond Knapp notes, musical numbers, through their conventional artificiality as well as through the virtuosity they display, call attention to "the performer behind the persona:"

> [...] music notoriously does not unfold in "real time", but rather imposes a kind of suspended animation so as to intensify selected emotional moments, and through

35 Gary Konas, "A Walk on the Wilder Side with Dolly Levi," in *Thornton Wilder: New Essays*, ed. Martin Blank, Dalma Hunyadi Brunauer, David Garrett Izzo, West Cornwall, CT, Locust Hill Press, 1999, p. 467.

36 Thornton Wilder, *The Matchaker*, *op. cit.*, p. 347 sq.

37 Deborah Tannen, "New York Jewish Conversational Style", in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 30 (1981), pp. 133-149.

this dramatic hiatus directs us all the more urgently to see behind the mask/makeup/costume of the performer – even as he or she embodies the role being played even more fully through the enactment of song.[38]

Recordings of the musical's revivals, which show Channing practically waving to the audience, attest to this metatheatrical heightening of the performance during the "showstopper" – a process through which the open artificiality of the spectacle, rather than break the suspension of disbelief, invites an even more deliberate and enthusiastic adhesion from the admiring spectator. On screen, the absence of the live performer lessens the potential for collective and demonstrative approval from the audience, and seems to call for a different approach to self-reflexive celebration. The directors of 20th Century Fox opted in favor of added star-power – and publicity – through the presence of Louis Armstrong, whose world-famous interpretation of "Hello Dolly," released as the musical first opened, had contributed to the show's original popularity. Thus, after dancing with the waiters, Streisand stops and curtseys behind the conductor of the Harmonia Gardens' band, who turns round and is revealed to be Armstrong. As she greets him openly and humorously – "Look who's here!" "Hello, Louis," "I am so glad to be back!" – and they launch into a duet, we are presented with a picture of the entertainment industry congratulating itself on its success. Rather than Dolly and the bandleader, what we are clearly given to see is a legendary jazz singer welcoming a young star poised to replace Julie Andrews as the darling of musicals, and of whom the *New Yorker* was already writing: "There's no telling what she *can't* do."[39] Two icons from very different musical worlds meet in front of Gene Kelly's camera, and although Streisand does not alter her light and impeccable technique to merge into Armstrong's unpolished and throaty style, she pays due homage by winking at his musical idiosyncrasies such as scat, using spoken words in the middle of a song, or his famous "yeeeees." Meanwhile, *his* mere presence reads as an effort to legitimate Streisand's casting in the film – rather than Channing's, for instance. Armstrong had been singing about Dolly since the musical's genesis – therefore his addressing Streisand as "Dolly" becomes a way to consecrate her as the ultimate incarnation of the role.

38 Raymond Knapp, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

39 Pauline Kale, review of the *Hello, dolly!* film for *The New Yorker*, quoted in James Spada, *Barbra: the First Decade*, New York, Carol, 1974, p. 173.

Inferring from the emblematic restaurant sequence, we can therefore say that the transfer of *Hello Dolly!* from stage to screen seems to be pulling in two opposite directions. In terms of scale, the logic of the movie is that of amplification, as is made clear by the hyperbolic label "the supermusical" plastered over the poster. Rather than reinventing the show for a new medium, the screen adaptation mostly makes everything bigger, earning itself a reputation as "a case of too much,"[40] or as a film which "added nothing to the heritage of the musical screen except statistics."[41] The downside of this ambition is nowhere more evident than in the parade scene, where the scale is so grand that, in strict contradiction to the lyrics, we actually do seem to lose Dolly in the gigantic parade of endless extras. By contrast, in terms of characterization, the tendency of the screen transfer is to foreground intimacy. The plot is made more sentimental, more compliant to Hollywood love stories thanks to deeper glimpses into the protagonist's emotions. This emerges as completely at odds with the first ambition – that of amplification –, resulting in an overall impression of imbalance. It also detracts from what was arguably the core of the stage musical's success, rooted in Wilder's skillful farce: an ensemble dynamic of festive behavior which, as Gary Konas points out, illustrates the Bakhtinian spirit of carnival as a celebration of life. "[T]he essence of adventure is to jump into the unknown with an impractical vision, and the essence of carnival is to participate fully, heedless of expense, laws or inhibitions,"[42] Konas writes of Wilder and Herman's work. Such qualities of freedom and experimentation are no longer vibrant in a film which, perhaps, tries to comply

40 Torn Santopietro, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
41 Vincent Canby, art. cit.
42 Gary Konas, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

to too many demands – such as preserving Champion's legacy while attempting to outshine it, or honoring the comic mechanisms of the plot while making Dolly younger and toning down her mercenary zeal. It is therefore no surprise that the most recent revival of *Hello, Dolly!* – the one directed by Jerry Zaks at the Schubert theater in 2017 – should decidedly side with Champion's original vision, not using any of the songs written for Barbra Streisand but choosing, instead, to reinstate Vandergelder's comic number "Penny in My Pocket," in line with a performance that unequivocally revels in physical and verbal comedy – Bette Midler, latest in a long and distinguished line of Dollys, excelling in both.

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NOTICE

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Émilie Rault holds an MA in Music and Musicology (Paris-Sorbonne) and has received performance training in Paris and London. She has directed pieces from various composers (Monteverdi, Debussy, Gluck, Gounod, Paisiello), and been assistant-director to Philippe Arlaud, Kirsten Dehlholm, Galin Stoev, Gustav Kuhn, Alexander Polzin and Summer Ulrickson, on French national stages or internationally (das Zentrum, Bayreuth; Seoul National Arts Center; La Monnaie; Sankt Margarethen Festival; Tyrol Festival). She is currently working with Raphaël Navarro and Valentine Losseau on their productions of Goethe's *Faust I* (Comédie Française) and Weber's *Der Freischütz* (French/German tour). She is also to direct a staged concert version of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* for the Opéra National du Rhin.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the stage-to-screen reinventions of style, comedy and spectacular effects in *Hello, Dolly!*, taking into account three diverging versions of the same narrative: Thornton Wilder's play *The Matchmaker* (1954), the Broadway show *Hello, Dolly!* created by Jerry Herman, Michael Stuart and Gower Champion (1964), and its Hollywood adaptation directed by Gene Kelly (1969). As may be expected, the transfer to the musical stage implies shifts in scale and structure, translating physical comedy into choreography; but the screen transposition further introduces alterations in tone, sentimentality and narrative intention which create a greater distance with Wilder's original farce. Hesitating between a spirit of preservation, a logic of amplification and a "Hollywoodized" romantic intent, Kelly's film creates an impression of imbalance – without, however, diminishing the value of Barbra Streisand's vocal and verbal contribution to the role of Dolly.

Keywords

Hello, Dolly!; *The Matchmaker*; Thornton Wilder; Jerry Herman; Gower Champion; Michael Kidd; Carol Channing; Barbra Streisand; farce; choreography

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article explore les réinventions stylistiques, comiques et spectaculaires qu'implique le passage de la scène à l'écran dans *Hello, Dolly !*, à partir de trois versions divergentes d'une même séquence : la pièce de Thornton Wilder *The Matchmaker* (1954), la comédie musicale *Hello, Dolly !* créée à Broadway par Jerry Herman, Michael Stuart et Gower Champion (1964), et son adaptation hollywoodienne réalisée par Gene Kelly (1969). Si le passage à la scène musicale occasionne des modifications attendues en termes d'échelle et de structure, traduisant en chorégraphie la physicalité du comique, la transposition à l'écran introduit des modifications de ton, de sentiment et d'intention narrative qui éloignent l'œuvre de la farce originelle de Wilder. Hésitant entre préservation, amplification et visée romantique hollywoodienne, le film de Kelly donne une impression de déséquilibre – sans diminuer pour autant la contribution verbale et vocale de Barbra Streisand au rôle de Dolly.

Mots-clés

Hello, Dolly! ; *The Matchmaker* ; Thornton Wilder ; Jerry Herman ; Gower Champion ; Michael Kidd ; Carol Channing ; Barbra Streisand ; farce ; chorégraphie

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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

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