THE MUSICALS OF FRANK LOESSER

by

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To Joyce, for her

love and blue pencil

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Between 1948, with the appearance of Where's Charley?, and his death in 1969, Frank Loesser contributed five musicals to the American theatre. These musicals are Where's Charley? (1948), Guys and Dolls (1950), The Most Happy Fella (1956), Greenwillow (1960), and How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying (1961). With the exception of Greenwillow, each of these musicals enjoyed runs of well over 650 performances.

In his musicals for the Broadway stage, Frank Loesser strove to achieve integration of book, score, and dance. Using the term score to refer to both the words and the music of a song, integration of book, score, and dance means the fusing of the elements of composition so that the contributions of any one of the collaborators cannot be separated from its context without doing harm to the whole. In this way the transitions between the dialogue, the score, and the dances are so smooth that the musical numbers are not intrusions into the narrative but function as an extension of plot, character, and mood.

Many American musicals are of no real artistic worth but do supply an entertainment commodity to the public; on the other hand, there are also musical theatre works which, while entertaining, strive to rise above that level to make an artistic statement. Among the former there are, to be sure, occasional theatrical disasters that occur because authors and composers are unable to follow the established formulas successfully. Among the latter group of musicals are those which are immediately recognized as worthy by the critics and which are accepted by the public. Others fail deservedly, but some achieve success only after critical reappraisal or, more commonly, a successful revival. The creators of such musicals usually explore the possibilities of the form and consciously attempt to integrate all the musical theatre elements. It is possible for a "commodity" musical to attempt integration, of course, but usually so many concessions are made to popularize the product that the artistic intent is thwarted.

Frank Loesser's musicals attempt to be more than entertainment. In Where's Charley?, with a book by George Abbott, Loesser helped adapt a standard farce into a musical by using songs which delineated character. Guys and Dolls achieved integration of book and score in that dialogue passages led logically and naturally into songs, and the songs enhanced and continued the dialogue. This integration was accomplished by reversing the usual order of creation, because the Abe Burrows book was written for an already existing Loesser score.

The Most Happy Fella and Greenwillow were works in which both book and score were written by Loesser. How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying was a return to collaboration for Loesser, but the collaborators were the same long-standing friends, namely Abe Burrows, Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin, who had teamed up to make Guys and Dolls a popular and artistic success.

Before examining the musicals of Frank Loesser to see how they were conceived, written, cast, rehearsed, and received, one should first inspect the musicals of the decades in which Loesser grew up and wrote, and Loesser's biographical background in order to ascertain what had influenced him. In such a survey, one should differentiate between the "formula musicals" and those that aimed to make their statements with a unified artistic point of view. Among the latter, it will be useful to emphasize those musicals which were not at first critically successful but which later achieved success in revival, as well as those musicals that were well received in their original productions. This examination is needed to demonstrate that innovation in theatrical form and audience acceptance does not always occur simultaneously.

During the 1920's, the most popular musical entertainments in the legitimate theatre were the great revues such as the Follies, the Scandals, the Passing Shows, and the Vanities, as well as the smaller shows--the Garrick Gaieties, Charlot's Revues, and the Grand Street Follies. Paul Meyers states that the revues became popular because the pre-World

War I musicals were opulent stereotyped "Girlie" shows, and the public was ready for a change. Meyers writes:

> The revolution was brought about through the young experimental groups in the theatre. Two of the most energetic of these organizations had been operating in New York since just after the war years. One was the Neighborhood Playhouse, which held forth in a theatre on Grand Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan; the other was the Theatre Guild, which had started as the Washington Square Players in Greenwich Village and had graduated to the Garrick Theatre nearer the theatrical center of town.[1]

In addition to the revues, the most popular musicals of the decade were starring vehicles such as The Perfect Fool (1921) written for Ed Wynn, and Sally (1924) and Sunny (1925), designed for Marilyn Miller. Other musical entertainments not necessarily written for a particular star were Sally, Irene and Mary (1922), Gershwin's Lady be Good (1923) and Oh, Kay (1926), Rodgers and Hart's Dearest Enemy (1925) and No, No Nanette (1925). All these shows contained songs that remain popular but whose books are nothing more than excuses for the inclusion of catchy melodies. The book of Lady be Good has a typical plot for a 1920's musical. On the liner notes for a recent reissue of the original British cast album, Peter Orchard writes:

> "Lady Be Good" was typical of its time in having a nonsensical plot which involved Fred & Adele [Astaire] as an impoverished brother and sister who have been turned out of their home for non-payment of rent and chronicling the various comic vissistudes [sic] they undergo before the final curtain finds each in the arms of a suitably wealthy partner. If the plot was trite [sic] it at least provided a peg on which to hang plenty of amusing comedy

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[1]Paul Meyers, "Musical Theatre in U.S.A.," Dramatics, XXI, #6 (March, 1950), p. 5.

> some excellent dance routines . . . and a scintillating score by George & Ira Gershwin.[2]

Then, in 1927, along with Ziegfeld's production of Rio Rita, De Sylva, Brown and Henderson's Good News, Gershwin's Funny Face, and Rodgers and Hart's A Connecticut Yankee, there appeared Jerome Kern's Show Boat, with a book by Oscar Hammerstein II.

The plot of Show Boat followed a standard melodramatic formula but the characters spoke a realistic dialogue. Cecil Smith, in Musical Comedy in America, says, ". . . Show Boat in its day was perhaps the only musical to achieve a dramatic verisimilitude that seemed comparable to that of the speaking stage."[3] Referring to Show Boat, in 1950, Marc Blitzstein wrote, "Authentic reality and seriousness have invaded musical comedy."[4] In a 1956 article in The New York Times Magazine, Gilbert Millstein quoted Frank Loesser who said:

> 'Showboat . . . may have been the turning point in this country where the superficialities of musical comedy got lost a little and you could feel something deeper, they found a way to have a girl cry and still make a big hit out of a musical comedy, where you were supposed to laugh. They managed to find a profound and serious drama, musically, in miscegenation for example. They treated sociology seriously, but without any big overall social message.'[5]

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[2]Peter Orchard, "Record liner notes for Lady Be Good," Monmouth Evergreen, MES/ 7036.

[3]Cecil Smith, Musical Comedy in America (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1950), p. 275.

[4]Marc Blitzstein, "Notes on the Musical Theatre," Theatre Arts, XXXIV (June, 1950), p. 30.

[5]Frank Loesser, as quoted by Gilbert Millstein, "The Greater Loesser," The New York Times Magazine (May 20, 1956), p. 20.

Show Boat's main plot treats the romantic involvement of Magnolia and Ravenal. Magnolia, daughter of a show boat captain, meets and against her parent's wishes marries the gambler Ravenal. She is left stranded with a small child in Chicago by her husband. In order to survive she strives for and succeeds in achieving a career as a popular singer. The subplot of the musical concerns Julie and her problems because of her trace of Negro blood, her drinking and her secret sacrifice for her old friend Magnolia. Yet, as Loesser has suggested, the story was treated with a seriousness unusual for the musical stage. While the problem of racial prejudice wasn't the musical's major theme, as it was to be later in Rodgers and Hammerstein's South Pacific, it was treated seriously and with delicacy. The main plot ended happily, with a reconciliation of the lovers, but the secondary plot was not resolved, and Julie's fate remained unknown.

Circumstance and accident, standard elements of melodrama, play a large part in creating the plot's complexity, yet the musical does not employ another of melodrama's devices, heightened diction, for the dialogue or the lyrics. Thus Magnolia and Ravenal sing the romantic "You Are Love" and "Make Believe," Ellie, a show business trouper sings "Life Upon the Wicked Stage," and Joe sings "Ol' Man River"; the songs use language in such a way as to individualize the characters who are singing.

The Twenties ended with such old-fashioned productions as Present Arms, Whoopee, and Rosalie in 1928; and in 1929, Fifty Million Frenchmen

(Cole Porter's first success) and Gershwin's Strike Up the Band. The controversy between the proponents of the integrated musical and those who believed in tying hit songs together with an inconsequential book began to surface. The latter approach was summed up by Herbert Fields who wrote:

> the story is the least important part of the librettist's work. Nor does he spend anxious days and nights in searching for new ones. Rather, his work is so to handle his story that its freshness and adroitness will serve as a thin network over which to spread the laughs.[6]

Lawrence Schwab, in an article, "How to Write a Successful Musical Comedy," said that, although the songs and dances should flow from the story, the musical should not have too much sophistication, "as only comedy which is written and played in broad strokes is successful."[7] Schwab went on to say:

> Always remember that musical comedy is the entertainment for the masses. It should not be too dignified: it should be universally appealing. It is the voice of the people expressed in gay entertainment.[8]

Perhaps, because of the very nature of the collaborative form of the musical, it was feared that cohesion would be an impossible task to achieve. In the Theatre Guild Magazine, Newman Levy wrote:

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[6]Herbert Fields, "The Laugh is On the Author," Theatre Magazine, 41 (March, 1930), p. 41.

[7]Lawrence Schwab, "How to Write a Successful Musical Comedy," Theatre Magazine, 41 (February, 1929), p. 37.

[8]Ibid.

> A musical is a synthetic product. What was once a form of authorship has become a feat of cabinet making in which the gag man, the dance director, the stage manager and twenty others combine to turn out the finished product. The comedian is more important than the librettist and the specialty dance team is more important than the composer.[9]

Yet one month later in The Dance Magazine, Paul R. Milton wrote, "The libretto comes first and everything is subjugated to it. That makes for unity. The cast fits the action and the character of the piece. The music fits with the proper spirit."[10]

The 1930's were, of course, a decade of social unrest so that escapist fare was central to any theatrical season. In 1931, The Band Wagon appeared. Cecil Smith called it, "one of the most perfect revues in the history of Broadway."[11] Jerome Kern's The Cat and the Fiddle and the first Pulitzer Prize winning musical, Of Thee I Sing, a musical not to be considered escapist fare, were also produced in 1931. Although George Gershwin, who composed the songs and incidental music for the production, was not mentioned in the citation, Cecil Smith noted:

> to a degree unknown in the musical comedy theatre, the mood, pace, and placing of the musical numbers was an integral part of the play as a whole. If the music were removed the structure would collapse.[12]

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[9]Newman Levy, "The Musical Comedy Business," Theatre Guild Magazine or The Stage, 6 (April, 1929), p. 15.

[10]Paul R. Milton, "Are Musical Comedies Easy to Produce?," Dance Magazine, 12 (May, 1929), p. 15.

[11]Smith, op. cit., p. 259.

[12]Ibid., pp. 282-283.

David Ewen quotes from the Pulitzer citation itself:

> 'This award may seem unusual, but the play is unusual . . . . Its effect on the stage promises to be considerable, because musical plays are always popular and by injecting satire and point into them, a very large public is reached.[13]

The subject of Of Thee I Sing was politics. The story concerned a presidential campaign, with Wintergreen and Throttlebottom running for President and Vice-President on a "love" platform. All aspects of the American government were satirized--not only the campaign itself but the Senate, the Supreme Court, and the Vice Presidency. Of Thee I Sing ran 411 performances. It also was the first text of a musical comedy to be published in book form.

In the 1935 season, both Jumbo and Porgy and Bess were presented. The former, a circus spectacular involving an elephant, ran 233 performances, while the latter, an attempt to write an opera in an American idiom ran 124 performances. It had to wait until the 1950's to achieve the status of an American classic. Porgy and Bess is a good example of the musical in which the composer tries to write more than just popular entertainment but for which recognition must wait until the years pass. Through the vehicle of a successful revival, the public comes to appreciate its uniqueness.

On the cover notes to RCA's recording of the show, Edward Jablonski writes:

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[13]David Ewen, Complete Book of the American Musical Theatre, revised (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1959), p. 132.

Porgy and Bess was produced in Boston and New York by the Theatre Guild. "The reason I did not submit this work to the usual sponsor's of opera in America was that I hoped to have developed something in American music that would appeal to the many rather than the cultured few," wrote Gershwin.

"It is not the few knowing ones whose opinions make any work of art great," he states, "it is the judgment of the great mass that finally decides." Gershwin proved to be his own best prophet. The few "knowing ones," the critics, did not approve of Porgy and Bess in 1935, and it closed after only 124 performances, and a $70,000 financial loss.[14]

David Ewen notes that its 1942 revival was the beginning of its present fame.[15] The revival ran eight months achieving a longer run than the original. A decade later a company headed by Leontyne Price toured for several years throughout the world, winning critical accolades. Ewen says of the opera, "there is no feeling of contradiction, no sense of incongruity, in this mingling of the serious and popular, for the popular is as basic to Gershwin's design as the serious with its own specific artistic function."[16]

Porgy and Bess was criticized because it attempted to combine classical and popular traditions in order to achieve a musical unity that would be admired by both the critics and the public. The criticism that Gershwin received for Porgy and Bess, interestingly enough, was echoed in 1956 when Frank Loesser's musical The Most Happy Fella opened in New York. Unity was further achieved when dance began to become integrated

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[14]Edward Jablonski, "Record liner notes for Porgy and Bess," RCA, LM 2679.

[15]Ewen, op. cit., p. 137. [16]Ibid., p. 138.

into the musical theatre with the 1936 production of Rodgers and Hart's On Your Toes. The dances created by the famed choreographer George Balanchine, who again worked with the show's star Ray Bolger in Where's Charley?, were integral to the plot. The "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" ballet in On Your Toes is another example.

In the same season with this musical that used dance seriously as a vehicle for integration of book and score there also appeared a musical by Cole Porter called Red, Hot and Blue, whose mindless plot dealt with identifying a young lady because she had sat on a hot waffle iron. Counter to this frivolity in that same year, the anti-war musical Johnny Johnson opened and ran 68 performances. In 1937, the Labor-oriented revue Pins and Needles began its 1,108 performance run, and Babes In Arms with a Richard Rodgers score and Lorenz Hart lyrics, totalled a respectable 289 performances.

The decade neared its close with the musical theatre still showing evidence of the gulf between the serious and the trivial; in the 1938 season, Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill's Knickerbocker Holiday opened, as well as Ole Olsen and Chick Johnson's revue, Hellzapoppin'. In this same season the Marc Blizstein-Mercury Theatre production of The Cradle Will Rock opened. It had become a cause célèbre after it had been shut out of its theatre in 1937 by the WPA.

Hellzapoppin' achieved an impressive 1,404 performances, starting on September 22, 1938, with its revue formula of skits, songs, and satire. In describing the production, David Ewen writes:

> What the program did not suggest--and what made this show one of the most successful in Broadway history, with the longest run of any Broadway play up to that time--was the endless parade of improvisational, scatterbrained stunts, unexpected bits of tomfoolery, and schoolboy pranks. These made a shambles of the formal program and sometimes turned the theatre into bedlam.[17]

This revue, which had its origins in vaudeville, appeared in the same season with Knickerbocker Holiday for which Maxwell Anderson, then one of America's leading playwrights, contributed the book and lyrics. Commenting on the America of 1938, Anderson set his story in the New Amsterdam of 1647, using Peter Stuyvesant as his protagonist. The musical, now best remembered for Walter Huston's performance as Stuyvesant and for the beautiful "September Song," contains much "political and social thinking."[18]

The Cradle Will Rock deals with the efforts of steel workers to create a union. The work's intent was serious propaganda. As Cecil Smith states:

> In The Cradle Will Rock . . . Blitzstein (who wrote music, book, and lyrics) created another of those in-between pieces which, like Porgy and Bess, defies pigeonholing. The material--songs, ensembles, and dialogue--were essentially those of any light-hearted musical comedy. But the composer's treatment of them was wholly serious, employing advanced devices of dissonace and instrumentation to give them a sardonic edge. These two works [its 1941 companion piece No For an Answer] moved one step farther in the direction of a conciliation between Broadway and the soberer reaches of the Lyric theatre.[19]

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[17] Ibid., p. 109.

[18] Ibid., p. 332.

[19] Smith, op. cit., p. 295.

The Thirties were indeed a time of eclecticism in the musical theatre. Popular tastes were fed by Girl Crazy, The Gay Divorcee, Anything Goes, Leave It to Me, DuBarry Was A Lady, et al. Serious exploratory musicals of the era included the satiric Of Thee I Sing and I'd Rather Be Right and the expressionistic Johnny Johnson and The Cradle Will Rock. There were also Gershwin's popular opera Porgy and Bess and the dance-oriented On Your Toes. The musical was beginning to develop.

In 1940, Brooks Atkinson wrote of Pal Joey, "If it is possible to make an entertaining musical comedy out of an odious story, Pal Joey is it. . . . Although Pal Joey is expertly done, can you draw sweet water from a foul well?" Rodgers and Hart's musical was not successful in its first incarnation and ran only 374 performances. A decade later the revival ran 542 performances, and the musical was accepted even by Atkinson himself as a landmark in the development of the musical comedy book.[20]

Pal Joey was based on John O'Hara's sketches, first published in the New Yorker, and dealt with Joey Evans who involved himself with a wealthy but married socialite, in order to procure a nightclub business for himself. The milieu was that of a run-down, seedy nightclub. Most of the characters were disreputable. The hero, Joey, quickly gives up the poor girl he loves for the wealthy sybarite, Vera Simpson, who is willing to pay for Joey's love. Joey loses both girls at the end and is

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[20]Ewen, op. cit., p. 255.

left broke. Louis Kronenberger disagreed with Atkinson, for he felt that the musical was the most unhackneyed he had ever seen. Twelve years later, reviewing the Broadway revival of the musical, Atkinson reversed his original review and praised the show.[21]

Unlike the Harrigan and Hart farces of the 1870's and 80's, the Broadway musical had finally dealt with the city's low-life in both a realistic and serious fashion. Closely akin to Gay's The Beggar's Opera in its milieu, Pal Joey was a forerunner of another big-city musical--Guys and Dolls. Though the moods are dissimilar, owing to Guys and Dolls' being called a "fable," the musicals have the same basic conception, since they are both related to The Beggar's Opera and its descendent, The Three-Penny Opera.

Innovative structure and new themes appeared in the 1941 Lady In the Dark which dealt with the protagonist's psychoanalysis. Shifting from a psychiatrist's office to the heroine's dream world, the musical combined a realistic play with fantasy mini-operas.

In 1943, the newly-teamed Rodgers and Hammerstein furthered the evolution of the musical with Oklahoma! Although it was basically an old-fashioned melodrama with musical numbers integrated, Oklahoma! based on Lynn Rigg's Green Grow the Lilacs, seemed new and different enough to the critics to be considered by them to be a turning point in the development of the form. The revolutionary techniques in Oklahoma!

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[21] Ibid., p. 255.

were: the show opened with a lone figure on stage and not a chorus line; the first song, a solo number, was begun off stage; a murder occurred on stage in the second act. The dances by Agnes DeMille, particularly the ballet "Laurey Makes Up Her Mind," a choreographic summation of the play's first act and a foreshadowing of the action of the second act, began a trend in theatre dance that was imitated over and over again.

The musical's mineteenth-century melodramatic traditions are evident in the ending which occurs after the hero and heroine's wedding. Prior to their departure for their honeymoon, the villain, during a fight with the hero, falls on his own knife and dies; the hero, tried for murder, exonerated and released by a kangaroo court, is then free to leave with his new bride. Thus, after many a plot turn and reversal, all ends happily.

Oklahoma!, was considered to be an artistic breakthrough in musical comedy for its use of new techniques employed to tell a story in music and dance which integrated the production. It was also a popular success in that it ran for 2,248 performances and was the first musical to be recorded with an original cast album.

Rodgers and Hammerstein's Carousel, based on Molnar's Liliom, followed in 1945. It too was basically a melodrama with a fine score. During its run of 890 performances, it offered its audiences an unusual love story in that the hero dies and is separated from his love well

before the final curtain. The reconciliation occurs when his spirit urges his widow to believe in their love.

In 1947, Rodgers and Hammerstein brought Allegro, with an original book, into New York to generally mixed reviews. Looking back on it in 1960, Arthur Todd reflected on Agnes DeMille's choreographic contribution:

> [Allegro] is . . . a historic theatre work primarily because of the way dancers and singers were intermingled and used as a unit, in the manner of a Greek chorus, to interpret and comment upon the mental and emotional reactions of the chief characters. In a real sense, what de [sic,] Mille accomplished here was lyric theatre: a synthesis of the spoken word, music, movement, dance, costumes, decor, and lighting.[22]

By now the musical was acquiring the status of a popular art that did more than entertain, but a critic as distinguished as George Jean Nathan could still write in 1947, "a strong book is unimportant in a musical," and "the musical needs absurd fancy and all the wonderful illogic of a wonderful world that never was," and that "no one thinks in musical comedy and [they] would be incapable of thought if there were need of it. . . ."[23] Nathan went on to say that critics who wanted realism did not want musical comedy "but bastard drama embroidered with tunes. . . . They want, in short, not a holiday from prosaicism but a return to it, the fools."[24]

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[22]Arthur Todd, "What Makes a Musical Move," Theatre Arts, 44 (November, 1960), p. 67.

[23]George Jean Nathan, "The Theatre: A View of Musical Comedy," American Mercury, 64 (February, 1947), p. 194.

[24]Ibid., p. 195.

Nathan continued in this vein in May 1949, after the successful 1948 opening of Where's Charley? and Kiss Me Kate and the April 1949 opening of South Pacific. Nathan stated:

> What is wrong with so much musical comedy is not its alleged minimum of humor but its tendency to encroach upon the field of drama at the expense of losing its old gaiety and free-for-all-flavor. It seems, indeed, as if our musical comedy is becoming more and more dramatic as our drama becomes more and more musical comedy.[25]

Nathan was finally admitting to the transmutation of musical comedy. While he decried the seeming bastardization of the form, he had to concede that a change was occurring. Thus the dichotomy between the creation of pleasant entertainment and the attempts at creating an art form continued. It was in this milieu, two years after Where's Charley? that Guys and Dolls started its 1,200 performance run.

The Fifties saw such works as the serious The King and I (1951) and the raucous Top Banana (1951), whose burlesque background was the kind Mike Todd referred to in an interview entitled "Last of the Girl-Show Czars." Todd is quoted by Maurice Zolotow as saying, "'High dames and low comedy--that's my message. . . .'"[26] Leonard Bernstein wrote his second Broadway score for Wonderful Town in 1952, while in 1954, such disparate musicals as The Pajama Game, Fanny, The Boy Friend, and The Saint of Bleeker Street opened on Broadway.

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[25]George Jean Nathan, "The Theatre: Musical Comedy and Laughter," American Mercury, 68 (May, 1949), p. 552.

[26]Maurice Zolotow, "Last of the Girl-Show Czars," The Saturday Evening Post, 223 (June 9, 1951), p. 32.

In 1956, Broadway could choose from the traditional Bells are Ringing, Leonard Bernstein's musically ambitious Candide, the record-breaking My Fair Lady, and The Most Happy Fella, Frank Loesser's musical whose form most resembles Gershwin's Porgy and Bess.

Bells are Ringing, a musical built around the love life of a telephone answering-service operator, was written for and tailored to the talents of Judy Holliday of whom Brooks Atkinson said, "'She sings, dances, clowns--and also carries on her shoulders one of the most antiquated plots of the season.'"[27] This star vehicle, with a tenuous and often silly plot, quickly became a popular success. Its impact was heightened by the direction of Jerome Robbins and a bright score by Comden and Green and Jule Styne, which included "Just in Time" and "The Party's Over." The popular theatre was slickly served.

Leonard Bernstein's Candide ran only 73 performances but the score was musically sophisticated. As David Ewen says, "The spacious score . . . embraced duets, trios, quartets, choral numbers; a mazurka, waltz, serenade, ballad, gavotte, and tango; operatic music, music-hall ditties, folk music, jazz."[28]

My Fair Lady, the longest running musical until Hello, Dolly! and Fiddler on the Roof, opened on March 15, 1956. Based on George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion, the musical has become a classic in its field. Using passages from Shaw in both script and song lyrics, the

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[27] Ewen, op. cit., p. 323. [28] Ibid., p. 63.

production remained more or less faithful to its source, adding the ballroom scene which was only discussed in Shaw's play and also a scene in Doolittle's neighborhood. Mrs. Higgins' tea party in the original script was transplanted to Ascot, and the ending was left a little more ambiguous than Shaw might have liked. Brooks Atkinson called it , "'one of the best musicals of the century. . . . It gets close to the genius of creation.'"[29] William Hawkins, critic for the New York World Telegram and the Sun, said, "'This is a legendary evening. . . .'"[30]

Almost as if he could foretell the outpouring of 1956 musicals, George Abbott wrote in 1954, "It is the musicals that are growing, experimenting, expanding, searching for more valid presentation. It is the straight plays that have settled into a conventional form which holds them in a groove."[31] In Center magazine, James Hinton, Jr., discussed the Broadway musical. He wrote:

> The defining thing about the Broadway type as it has developed is not the basic form nor the particular stories that are told, but the tone, the pace, the characteristic inflection of the telling, the increasing mastery of the theatre crafts whereby the joints have been made to work more and more smoothly. The most American thing about the Broadway musical show is the unsurpassed efficiency with which words and music and movement and the crafts of design are worked together into entertainment that is fast, smooth-running, that within the frame of conventions common to all kinds of musical theatre has developed a

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[29] Ibid., p. 213. [30] Ibid.

[31] George Abbott, "The Musicals Take Over," Theatre Arts, 38 (July, 1954), p. 95.

> characteristic pattern and tone in its treatment of the problems of keeping an audience interested while setting it no problems with which it is not prepared to cope.[32]

The musical was again being praised for its professionalism and damned for its supposed artistic merit. Yet a few years later in 1958, Leonard Bernstein wrote ". . . the musical theatre in America is one of the aspects of American art . . . which is forging ahead faster than almost any other aspect of American art--at least performance art. And because of that it strikes out in all kinds of new directions."[33]

In the years between Hinton's and Bernstein's articles, there appeared My Fair Lady, The Most Happy Fella, and Candide. In 1957, West Side Story caused a revolution of sorts, in that choreographer Jerome Robbins integrated the dance ideas of Balanchine and DeMille to form a musical in which dance becomes the main method of relating mood and plot. West Side Story tells its Romeo-and-Juliet story using a New York slum setting and inter-racial romance. The introduction of the rival gang in the "Prologue," the meeting of the lovers in "The Dance at the Gym," the catastrophic fight of "The Rumble" and the yearning for a better life in the "Somewhere Ballet" are all communicated through the medium of dance. The musical is realized, John Martin said:

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[32]James Hinton, Jr., "Musical Comedy: A Review to Raise a Question," Center, II, 3 (June, 1955), p. 9.

[33]Leonard Bernstein, "A Conversation with Leonard Bernstein: The Notes--That's What I Mean by Musical Meaning," by Henry Brandon, The New Republic, 138 (June 9, 1958), p. 13.

> "not in talked plot but in moving bodies. The muscles of trained dancers are tensed and untensed and tensed again, stimulated by emotional tensions and stimulating them still further in return. . . . The cast acts and reacts in terms of movement, and that is the most direct medium that exists for the conveying of inner states of feeling."[34]

Jerome Robbins created Gypsy for the stage in 1959. This was another unique blending of dance with musical theatre. In the late 1960's he went back to choreographing classical ballets for the New York City Ballet. The effortless crossing of Robbins from one dance form to another, shows that the musical theatre was becoming more and more sophisticated.

While there seemed to be a break-through in the art of the musical comedy, the musical melodramas of Rodgers and Hammerstein remained popular. The Sound of Music's plot revolves around first the wooing, winning, and wedding of the novice nun, Maria, by the Baron von Trapp and then their escape from the Nazis. This last collaboration of Rodgers and Hammerstein disappointed Brooks Atkinson, who said he saw in it "the American musical stage succumbing to the cliches of operetta,"[35] and Walter Kerr found it, "moving entertainment . . . admired by people who have always found Sir James M. Barrie pretty rough stuff."[36]

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[34]Ewen, op. cit., p. 64.

[35]Brooks Atkinson, "The Theatre: 'The Sound of Music,'" The New York Times (November 17, 1959) in Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1959 (New York: Theatre Critics' Reviews, Inc., 1959), p. 229.

[36]Walter Kerr, "First Night Report," Ibid., p. 228.

Using the musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein and West Side Story as his examples, Guy Bolton said in 1960 that the only notable change in the musical since the 1930's was ". . . the use of ballet and trained ballet dancers."[37] Two years earlier, Gene Kelly, dancer and choreographer-director, felt that the musical form had a plot ". . . and is, in fact, a contemporary combination of ballet and opera." He also thought that it is viewed as an art form by the creative people who contribute to it, though not necessarily by the public. And that, "By combining these accepted art forms and adding a reality that is beyond opera and ballet, musical comedy has become that miracle of miracles--an indigenous art form created right before our eyes."[38]

During the decade of the 1960's there appeared the two longest running musicals in the American theatre; both Hello, Dolly! which achieved a 2,844 performance run and Fiddler on the Roof Broadway's longest running production with 3,242 performances opened in the same 1964 season. Hello, Dolly!, based on Thornton Wilder's The Matchmaker, was a bright, fast-moving entertainment which achieved its long run in part by delighting its audiences with a constantly changing cast of leading ladies. Fiddler on the Roof became America's longest running musical in 1972. Dealing with the breakdown of traditions and

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[37]Guy Bolton, "Musicals, Too, Were Memorable," Theatre Arts, 44 (September, 1960), p. 26.

[38]Gene Kelly, "Musical Comedy is Serious Business," Theatre Arts, 42 (December, 1955), p. 71.

the dispersion of some Jews from their Russian village in 1905, the musical adapted Sholem Aleichem's Tevya stories into a theatre piece which has played successfully all over the world. Robert Brustein called the musical, " . . . slick, colorful, and energetic. The only person it is likely to offend, in fact, is the serious Yiddishist, for it exerts its wide appeal by falsifying the world of Sholem Aleichem, not to mention the character of the East European Jew."[39] Brustein labelled this so-called serious musical "easy nostalgia."[40]

In 1968, Hair opened on Broadway after having played off-Broadway in a quite different production and brought rock-and-roll music onto the Broadway stage. Before its opening, rock-and-roll had appeared only in several specialty numbers in conventional Broadway shows like Bye, Bye, Birdie and Sweet Charity. Using a unit setting, Hair had little or no discernable plot, being merely a series of musical turns relating to a particular life style, a feeling, or a milieu.

Strangely enough, even in the 1960's the attempts of the musical theatre's practitioners to integrate their materials into an artistic unity was still being questioned. The quest for integration, beginning before Show Boat and gaining critical recognition with the phenomenally popular Oklahoma! was still not won. As late as 1967, a critic for a mass

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[39]Robert Brustein, "Fiddling While Talent Burns," in Seasons of Discontent (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), p. 169.

[40]Ibid.

circulation magazine, Life, decried the attempts at integration, much as George Jean Nathan did in 1949 when he lamented the musical's growing seriousness.[41] Life's Tom Prideaux said:

> Another disrupting thing is the new emphasis on plot songs, songs that are dutifully tooled to fit a specific bit of action. . . . Songs should never sound as if they were written for duty; it's against the very principle of song.[42]

The dichotomy between the artist's strivings for artistic unity and the desire to supply mass entertainment that could be immediately accepted is evident in the works of the creators of musical theatre throughout the last half century of the American theatre. It is in this atmosphere of change that Frank Loesser created his works.

With Where's Charley, Guys and Dolls, The Most Happy Fella, Greenwillow, and How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, Frank Loesser added an impressive legacy to the musical theatre of the last twenty-five years. His shows won prizes, and Guys and Dolls has even been anthologized in a volume of modern American drama.[43] In the works of Frank Loesser we have an amalgam of artfulness and art: the kind of musical comedy Norris Houghton meant when he said:

> It is the most completely theatrical form of theatre. Its colors are brighter, its language is heightened through verses added to

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[41] vide, p. 20.

[42] Tom Prideaux, "Trouble in Musical Paradise," Life, 62 (January 13, 1967), p. 16.

[43] See Eric Bentley, From the American Drama (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956).

> prose; it has music to lift it still higher, and heightened movement through dance.[44]

In this work the Frank Loesser musicals will be studied in order to learn how they were created so that we may examine the methods by which their integration was achieved. Through the use of contemporary articles and reviews, interviews, and letters from the people who helped to create them, it may be possible to learn how the productions were put together. Since the musical is an integral part of our American Theatre, in that it comprises more than half of Broadway's twenty-five longest running productions, it is of value for American theatre historians to understand how this native art form is created.

Frank Loesser's contributions to American musical theatre might have been small in terms of output but not in terms of the goal he hoped to achieve--an integrated art form. As Harold Prince said of Frank Loesser: "I think he was a precursor of everything we're using now . . . . He was the best."[45]

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[44]Norris Houghton, "Musical Comedy Today," The Theatre, I, 8 (August, 1959), p. 36.

[45]Interview with Harold Prince, producer-director, May 2, 1972.

CHAPTER II

BEFORE BROADWAY

Frank Loesser's career was cut short, for he died almost one month after his fifty-ninth birthday, on July 28, 1969. He was born in 1910, and in his lifetime he wrote hundreds of songs for the movies, the popular market, and the Broadway stage.

Frank Loesser's parents, Henry and Julia Ehrlich Loesser, named their third child Francis Henry; he subsequently shortened it to Frank. The Loesser home atmosphere was an intellectual one, léd by a father who was a well educated German immigrant. Arthur Loesser, the eldest child, recalls, "The atmosphere of our modest home was acutely intellectual. . . . In our household, German was the vehicle of culture and the loftier thought, English was the suitable medium of buying vegetables."[1] Arthur and his sister Grace reacted positively to this environment but Frank, "a sweet-natured boy [was] hopelessly beset by irritable and pretentious elders who could hardly help discouraging him even while

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[1]Arthur Loesser, "My Brother Frank," Notes: Music Library Association, ser. 2,7,#2 (March, 1950), p. 217.

they loved him."[2] Unlike the rest of his high-tempered family, Frank had an amiable disposition which helped him make friends and which perhaps enabled him to react more calmly to his environment.

Reacting negatively to the formally trained musicians in his family (Arthur was to become a pianist and conductor) the youngest Loesser never learned how to read music properly even though attempts at formal training were made. Frank Loesser was quoted in The New York Times as saying, "'I didn't have the patience to concentrate.'"[3] Yet at six years he could sit at the piano and improvise a song to which he would add his own lyrics. Arthur Loesser recalls a song called "The May Party," ". . . which [was] a strain of onomatopoetic program music, allied in spirit to the 'Storm' and 'Battle' pieces of the early 19th [sic] century. I recall there was a lot of drum sound in it."[4]

In his teens, Frank began picking out on the piano the current popular songs of the day complete with their harmonies. Loesser's father, who taught classical piano and who accompanied Lilli Lehmann, barely tolerated the musical leanings of his youngest offspring. But music influenced the young boy. Even at the age of seven he was fitting words to the rhythmic click of the elevated train that passed his window.

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[2]Ibid., p. 218.

[3]Albin Krebs, "Frank Loesser, Composer, Dead," The New York Times, (July 29, 1969), p. 34.

[4]Athur Loesser, op. cit., p. 34.

> (He had one set of lyrics for the locals and another for the expresses, which clicked over the rails at a different beat.) When he was about 10 he became aware of the fact that in a chorus of crickets, some chirp three chirps the beat while others chirp twice.[5]

Loesser's rebellion against his family then took the form of an avid interest in popular music. He took up the mouth organ, for which he won third prize in the Greater New York harmonica contest, thereby styling himself "Champion of Manhattan"--since the first and second prize went to Bronx or Brooklyn boys. He engaged in youthful pranks upon which his family must have frowned. In a newspaper interview Loesser recalled:

> 'When we [Loesser and William Schuman, former head of the Juilliard School of Music] were about fifteen or sixteen, Bill wangled an invitation to a party for us, from people we didn't even know. It was a very dull evening, so we snuck off to the kitchen where we discovered a beautiful chocolate cake. We were both disposed toward practical jokes. Give Bill the credit for this one--he picked up the cake, and with all those strangers watching, pushed it into my face. Milton Berle couldn't have done it any better. Imagine what those people thought. . . . People who had never seen us before. . . . Oh, yes. . . . the cake had too much vanilla in it.'[6]

Although he was obviously bright, Frank did not do well in school. This too might be considered a rebellion against the intellectualism at home. Arthur Loesser recalls:

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[5]Ernest Haveman, "The Fine Art of the Hit Tune," Life (December 8, 1952), p. 163.

[6]Tex McCrary and Jinx Falkenberg, "New York Close-Up," New York Herald Tribune (February 19, 1951), [n.p.].

> He did stumble and pant his way through high school, but I think the only satisfaction he got from it came when he made the school swimming team, a position of honor from which, alas, his inadequate scholastic standing presently disqualified him. We bullied him into trying a year at the College of the City of New York, but he was a total casualty after the battle of the first semester.[7]

Frank recalled that his leaving resulted from his love of practical jokes. He said: "'After a year at C.C.N.Y. I was invited not to return. . . . had something to do with greasing the noses of a lot of bronze statues.'"[8]

After leaving college, Loesser worked at a variety of jobs including: running errands for a jewelry concern, selling newspaper ad space, reporting fashions for Women's Wear Daily, about which he said: "'Please don't remind me. It is the least pleasant memory of my life. I rose to dizzying heights as knit-goods editor of Women's Wear Daily . . . . and then I quit.'"[9], screwing bottle caps on an insecticide product, being a process server, being city editor of a short-lived New Rochelle newspaper, writing acts for the Keith vaudeville circuit, and checking the food and service in a chain restaurant where his complaints were usually so general that no one could be fired because of them.

Throughout this time he was haunted by words. His brother recalls Frank's first literary interest was Stephen Leacock's Nonsense Novels. Thus during his adolescence, Loesser first came to appreciate "the power and the pleasure that comes from well-chosen words. It was near

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[7]Arthur Loesser, op. cit., p. 219.

[8]McCrary, op. cit., [n.p.]. [9]Ibid.

this period that Frank's own verbal genius began to be evident."[10] Arthur Loesser then goes on to give some hint of the way the family accepted the young man.

> He took to entertaining us lavishly, if not always opportunely, with spoken jests. I regret to say that we tended to deplore this propensity, for to our narrow minds his cracks often sounded less wise than silly. We ought to have understood that he was expanding his resources of vocabulary, of allusion, and of wit.[11]

Even functioning as a process server affected his facility with words. Loesser said of that job, that the divorce cases were the worst. He was quoted as saying:

> 'You have to make a little recitation, and when you were notifying some woman that her old man was giving her the legal brushoff, it was automantic--just as you said the last magic words, she'd hit you with an umbrella.[12]

During his reporting days, he was asked to cover a Tuckahoe, New York, Lions Club dinner for which he had been asked to write some rhymed verses lampooning the various members. These verses were to be sung to tunes popular at the time. One couplet remains:

> Secretary Albert Vincent
> Reading those minutes right this instant;

All one needs for the perfection of this rhyme is a friendly, lenient, New York accent. Frank's metrical personal remarks were duly intoned, with outstanding success, and with acclaim for their author. Right there, I believe is where the future bard of Praise the Lord and Pass the Amunition was born. . . . Now after a few hours' worth of pleasant foolery, he became a great man to

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[10]Arthur Loesser, op. cit., p. 219. [11]Ibid.

[12]Robert M. Yoder, "He Put That Tune In Your Head," The Saturday Evening Post (May 21, 1949), p. 57.

> a group of estimable, solid Tuckahoe citizens. The idea of whittling popular songs as a pathway to gain and glory must have gleamed within.[13]

Arthur Loesser suggests that becoming a lyricist might have been Frank's way to win praise, rather than striving to reach the high musical standards set by his father and older brother.

Abe Burrows was asked whether Frank Loesser might have felt frustration from his older brother's accomplishments, but Burrows replied: "Not frustration, just drive. His brother Arthur was a good friend of mine and was a great musicologist. Christ, Arthur would sit at the piano and talk and he was fantastic. A good pianist, brilliant. And Frank had that as a goal; in other words what that gave him, I wouldn't call it frustration, I'd say drive. He was striving to emulate, striving to surpass perhaps. But he was a brilliant guy in that way."[14]

Loesser, unsure about any songwriting ability he might have had, started to write lyrics for other songwriters now that the New Rochelle newspaper had folded. He sold songs for perhaps fifteen dollars to some vaudeville hoofer. These songs were never published, and there is no trace of how many there were or how good they were.

In 1934, Loesser tried to write low-brow songs in a high-brow manner. Some years later he was quoted as saying:

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[13]Arthur Loesser, op. cit., p. 220.

[14]Interview with Abe Burrows, author-director, October 25, 1972.

> "A girl who's got a mink coat will make a point of wearing it unless the weather is so hot it actually smothers her. I had known a little bit about Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven since I was seven, and I made a point of showing it. I was a big snot. I liked popular music and wanted to create it, but I wanted to be a big show writer without ever stooping over and hitting the public in the belly."[15]

In that same year, he met Carey Morgan, who was a producer and a song writer. Loesser recollects:

> "I used to sit in his studio and listen to him play opera on the piano, with running comments as he went along. I'll never forget the day he was playing the opera Tosca for me. When he got to the crucial part he said, 'Now listen carefully here. This is where they kill the S.O.B.'" [Ernest Haveman added] "This low-brow appreciation of high-brow art unlocked Loesser's talent."[16]

In December 1931, he teamed up with William Schumann and wrote the words to "In Love With The Memory of You," Loesser's first published song, and later on he joined with Irving Actman to sing their own songs at the Back Drop, an East 52nd Street nightclub. The experience led Loesser to write some of the songs for the Illustrators Show "which was a 1936 flop on Broadway, but nevertheless propelled him to Hollywood."[17]

Before Loesser went to Hollywood, Jule Styne, the composer, recalls meeting him in New York. Styne recalled that when he was a young vocal coach in New York, the girls he was training were singing one of Loesser's early songs written with Irving Actman. The song was

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[15]Haveman, op. cit., p. 166. [16]Ibid.

[17]Peter Hann, "Frank Loesser Dies of Cancer at 59," New York Post (July 29, 1969), p. 24.

"Bang the Bell Rang" and "it showed an invention without trying to be inventive. It showed a natural instinct for originality."[18] Later on in Hollywood, Styne and Loesser were to become good friends.

The 1936 move to Hollywood was, in actuality, Loesser's second one, for, in 1930, he had been under a year's contract at RKO's music outlet, Radio Music Company, to write songs for the movies. Loesser and his partner Joseph Brandfon wrote industriously for a year but got nothing published. Yet Arthur Loesser recalls his brother and his first paycheck. He writes:

> He burst into the door shouting, "Here comes Santa Claus." His first two weeks' pay had been cashed and changed into smaller bills which he proceeded to scatter over the rooms of his mother's apartment. He also brought gifts; I remember, that one of them was an illustrated edition of A. A. Milne's verse.[19]

The 1936 trip to Hollywood was more successful. Loesser and Actman supplied songs for many "B" movies made by Universal Pictures, but their contract was not renewed.

In 1936, he also married his first wife, Lynn Garland, a singer whose real name was Mary Alice Blankenbaker, from whom he was divorced 21 years later. But this time Loesser's move to Hollywood was permanent, for Paramount Pictures hired him as a lyricist, and, in 1937, he wrote with Alfred Newman, "The Moon of Manakoora" for a Dorothy Lamour-Jon Hall opus, The Hurricane. In 1938, he teamed with Hoagy

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[18]Interview with Jule Styne, songwriter, May 11, 1972.

[19]Arthur Loesser, op. cit., p. 223.

Carmichael to write "Small Fry," "Heart and Soul," and "Two Sleepy People." In 1939, with Fred Hollander, he wrote "(See What) The Boys in the Backroom (Will Have)," which was followed by hundreds of other songs.

One of Loesser's many collaborators in Hollywood was Jule Styne, then vocal coach at Twentieth Century-Fox. Styne was loaned out to Paramount for a few pictures and worked with Loesser frequently. Styne explained Loesser's success as a Hollywood composer when he noted:

> The Frank Loesser that I know is a man who had a kind of ingenious way of putting words to music. Name composers never impressed him. It was who had the right tune. He had a tremendous ear for a popular song--that is the melody--as in the case of "Jingle Jangle" [written in 1942 with Joseph J. Lilley for The Forest Rangers]. That was an insignificant vocal arrangement on the Paramount Lot. He heard this tune [wrote lyrics for it] . . . and the song sold, of course, millions of copies and was the number one song in America at the time. . . . He never cared who wrote the tune. He would have fit into the world of today because names never impressed him. . . .[20]

In 1941, because of Loesser's help, Jule Styne became an important composer. Styne recalled that episode by saying that it was Loesser who made a songwriter out of him. Styne was working at Republic Studios and the studio wanted to make a musical. Because Styne wanted to work with Loesser, Republic had to loan to Paramount a young cowboy actor named John Wayne. The picture that resulted was the famous Stage Coach. Loesser, Styne said, was insulted for having to work at Republic. He felt demeaned, but Styne's calling him a great lyric writer

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[20]Jule Styne, op. cit.

placated Loesser who then decided that the three weeks of work could be done in four days. Styne continued:

> [Frank said] ". . . all right, we are going to finish this whole job in four days, but I'm supposed to be here three weeks. We will say it took me three weeks, and we won't hand the stuff in until the third week." He said, "play me something," and I played him a tune, and he heard the tune and said "'ssh' we won't write that here. I'm borrowing you to Paramount and we'll write it over there." Frank was very, very cute that way. The song turned out to be one of the biggest standards I ever had, the old song (it was my debut as a songwriter), called "I Don't Want To Walk Without You Baby" [which appeared in Paramount's 1941 movie, Sweater Girl]. So we took it and wrote it at Paramount in a "B" picture, a "Z" picture, and of course I must give Frank credit, he's responsible for my success, all of a sudden, overnight.[21]

This story of Jule Styne's echoes the future, when, as President of Frank Music, Loesser fostered the careers of Adler and Ross and of Meredith Willson, to show that he was interested in finding new talent for his business, and to help fellow musical artists.

Another friend from the Hollywood years was Abe Burrows, who went on to collaborate with Loesser on Guys and Dolls and How to Succeed. Burrows remembered:

> I met Frank in 1941. We met in Hollywood; we were friends. We spent a lot of time together. His wife brought him to my house. It was through "The Revuers," Betty Comden, Judy Holliday and Adolph Green. They all kind of knew each other, and one day they came over. Lynn came over to the house with Betty Comden, I think, and I was sitting at the piano making up some of my songs that I used to do and make fun of all the songwriters. Lynn loved it and said, "you have to hear this guy." And he said, "Christ, I don't want to hear no guy play a piano"--but one day he dropped over, so I played a couple of things, and he started

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[21] Ibid. [n.p.].

> to laugh, and we had fun together and we became friends to the end. We spent a lot of time together. And all my songs, my crazy songs that I used to write and do in cafes--Frank published them in a book--it really started his publishing firm. He was my publisher but nobody bought the damn things. He published the "Girl With The Three Blue Eyes" and he used to write them down when I'd sing them at a party. The next morning he'd remind me. I used to ad lib them a lot. We were very close friends. . . .[22]

Burrows continued:

> I first met him as a happily married man, in an army uniform. I'll never forget, he came to my house--he was a private and he stayed a private--very cannily, he liked the idea of being a private, Frank Loesser, and he wouldn't even take First Class. That was very important. But he wore a uniform that was tailored for him, it must have cost a couple of hundred bucks. I remember he came to my house once and I had a friend, a Captain, who walked in looking sloppy in a GI's captain uniform, and Frank walked in. The guy said, "look at this guy (the Captain had a sense of humor), he wears this beautifully tailored uniform as a private."[23]

Jule Styne did not feel that Loesser was really appreciated in Hollywood.

He said:

> Frank was an underestimated talent. In his early years he was fighting to be as good as Johnny Mercer, so to speak, on the Paramount Lot. They were both under contract. But Johnny got all the "A" pictures. Yet Frank had all the hits, most all the hits. He was writing with Burton Lane, with Newman the conductor, and Freddy Hollander who was a German fellow with a great musical talent, and this boy Joe Lilley who wrote "Jingle Jangle" [which came in 1942] and anybody who had a song. He lived very, very modestly, no glamour in the heart of Hollywood, not Beverly Hills. . . . He was dedicated and the only thing that counted to him was that he could be alone and write his lyrics. . . . Of course every word he ever wrote is a pearl. He has never written a wasted word in any lyric. He's never done throwaway lyrics. . . . If you go through you'll find things that, well he just didn't write enough, he didn't write enough. Because remember that his Hollywood period was probably his most productive period.[24]

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[22]Abe Burrows, op. cit. [23]Ibid. 24 Jule Styne, op. cit.

Jule Styne also remembered how clever a lyricist Loesser was. Styne recalled:

> I played him a tune which he was crazy about, and he wrote the lyric to it, which is the most unusual form of lyric writing I ever heard in my life. The name of the song is, "You're in Love With Someone Else but I'm in Love With You" [Priorities on Parade, 1942]. He put it in quotes. . . . When he recited it to me I didn't notice it, but when he gave it to me, it had quotes on the title. . . . But what the lyric really implied, the reason he had quotes there, is that. . . . one day you'll find out how it is to be in my situation and then you'll sing a torch song entitled "You're in Love With Someone Else and I'm in Love With You." He made it the name of the song that she's going to sing. . . . one day. It's unique, . . . It was the last song I ever wrote with Frank before he decided to go by himself. The tune--he finally put a lyric to it and nothing ever happened with the tune, and I reused that theme in Sugar--and the song was eventually taken out of the show because the girl was incapable of singing it. It was a powerful, ballad, a big, juicy thing. But I bet Frank would have had it in the show whether she could sing it or not because it had a lot to say. I used to play him a phrase every-day, he'd insist on it. Then maybe two weeks later he'd tell me, "hey, I like that; I wrote it up, how do you like it?" . . . I tell you everything was finished, he knew no other way; there was never a throwaway; he was going to have his name on it . . . he was a perfectionist. He never perfected it on your time because when you heard it it was already perfected. He didn't say I'll change the word later; that was it. . . . The first time he put it down, he put it down and then he recited it to you because it was finished.[25]

Jule Styne remembered another incident when he and Frank Loesser joined forces to write. It was during World War II:

> We teamed up and then he went into the army we wrote a lot of songs together. . . . All of a sudden he is in special service in the army in Hollywood writing films and stuff like that. One day I see an Army film and it's a march and one of the biggest ballads we ever wrote together. I wrote him a letter and said "How dare you take that thing." He said, "Look, you're out of the war,

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[25] Ibid.

> it's for Uncle Sam, forget about it, we'll take it back later if we need it." So to get even with him when I wrote High Button Shoes (he was my guest opening night), I had taken a little party song that we always used to sing together, it was part of a ballet, musically it was part of a Jerome Robbins ballet and he couldn't wait until the first act was over so he came and said, "We're even."[26]

In 1942, Frank Loesser wrote the first song hit for which he was responsible for both music and lyrics. Its enormous success and the success a few years later of "The Ballad of Rodger Young" seems to have encouraged Loesser to write both words and music from then on. Jerome Kern once told Loesser, "'Your lyrics make the writing of a melody a cinch. You're a sucker to let others do it!'"[27] while director Edmund Goulding told him, "'You don't have to divide your royalties with anybody. Besides, if a song is a success, the other fellow doesn't always get the credit.'"[28]

"Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" was based on a newspaper clipping about a Navy Chaplain (the Navy's official credit goes to Chaplain Howell E. Forgy, while the clipping mentioned a Chaplain McGuire) who made the remark on the lower deck of a heavy cruiser being overhauled at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The comment was made because the power on the ammunition hoist had been cut and

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[26] Ibid.

[27] David Ewen, "He Passes the Ammunition for Hits," Theatre Arts (May, 1956), p. 91.

[28] Ibid.

the ammunition was being passed manually. "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" sold 2 1/2 million records and sold 750,000 copies of sheet music. Radio stations were asked not play it more than once every four hours, and Robert Yoder of the Saturday Evening Post estimated that in the last three months of 1942 it was played 20,999 times; including juke boxes and dance halls the total went up to 400,000 times or about 4,500 times per day.[29] Yet the royalties for this song and his other army songs like the gripe song "What do You Do In the Infantry?" went to philanthropic and war agencies.[30] Commenting on his brother's first published music, Arthur Loesser writes:

> The nature of the tune, too, reveals a great canniness. It refrains from modern, urban, musical slang; it avoids any suggestion that anyone might consider disreputable, anything Negroid, jazzy, Jewish, Broadwayish, or night-clubby. Instead the melody has an affinity for that of the Battle Hymn of the Republic; it tastes like school, church, grandma, and biscuits: a master-stroke of diplomacy, aptness, and good business.[31]

Interestingly enough "Praise the Lord's" music came about almost by accident. David Ewen tells the story of its origin this way:

> Before turning over the lyric to one of his composers, Loesser created a dummy tune to test the singableness of his words. It was a melody that just happened to spring to his mind as he wrote the lyric, and he put it down on paper without revising it. When he tried out the lyric with its dummy tune on his friends, they insisted that nobody could write a melody more suitable for those words than Loesser's. In his haphazard and casual way, Loesser had created a song that had an American hymnlike character, rich with folk flavor. It was not the kind of melody that a Tin Pan Alley troubadour was likely to regard as commercial,

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[29]Yoder, op. cit., p. 50. [30]Ewen, op. cit., p. 50.

[31]Arthur Loesser, op. cit., p. 225.

> and that was its inherent strength; for it was the only kind of melody demanded by the unusual lyric.[32]

Loesser won the 1948 Oscar for his song to an Esther Williams film: the song was "Baby, It's Cold Outside." Perhaps this award winning song was the beginning of Loesser's explorations into the song that tells a complete story. It certainly can be viewed as a forerunner to "Make a Miracle" in Where's Charley? and perhaps "Adelaide's Lament" in Guys and Dolls in its exploration of situation and character. "Baby, It's Cold Outside" is a girl-fleeing-from-boy song but it is rich in character and has its own plot in which the girl finally stays with the boy.

Talking about his army songs and the songs he had to write for the movies, Loesser gave Robert Yoder of the Saturday Evening Post an insight into the creation of a song for a specific situation. That ability served him well in later years, when he was integrating songs into musical comedies. Talking of his army days he said:

> "They would tell the song writer, 'Now in this scene, our star Letitia Schwartz is taking a bubble bath. But we don't want a song about bubble bathing, because she is reading a letter from her Aunt Martha. But we can't have a song about dear old Aunt Martha because just then the doorbell rings. So let's have a bell-ringing song, and let's have it Tuesday.'
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> "Compared to that, it wasn't bad, writing for the Army. If a General comes up to you and says, 'I've got some port troops. They're working hard so come up with a morale song for them,' there's certain logic to that. Especially if you are a private."[33]

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[32]Ewen, op. cit., pp. 74-75.

[33]Yoder, op. cit., p. 52.

Loesser, in another article, dealt with the same topic--tailor making a song for the individual movie star. The flexibility that was inherent in his writing and his understanding of the needs of his actors and the characters they play explains how his later songs fit into the plays so well. One thinks of Rudy Vallee's "Grand Old Ivy" and Danny Kaye's songs in Hans Christian Andersen to see this ability at work. Of writing songs for the movies, Loesser stated:

> Hollywood song writers are the custom tailors of the music business. Their songs are made to order--and to fit the requirements of individual stars. You may not realize it but each time your favorite screen singer starts tossing notes around he is handling a song written especially for him.
>
> Screen singers are specialists. Each has some strong points--and most of them have serious weaknesses. Unless the composer keeps these special factors in mind, he finds himself with the right song for the wrong singer--and no cash in his pockets. Even the lyric writers must, in many cases, slant their work to the screen personality, or "Character" of the performer.
>
> I've been writing songs for Hollywood stars for a long time, and I've come to know many of their odd traits and special needs. It may interest you to learn about these and then notice, when you see your next musical, how pretty every number covers each star's special traits. Some of the traits are not common to any other vocalist.[34]

Loesser's attitude towards song writing can be seen in part as a reaction to his upbringing in the city and in part as a reaction against his family. He developed a brusque big city manner to compensate for his genteel and cultured background. He would deride all music by

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[34]Frank Loesser, "Singing Secrets: Tailor-Made Tunes are Slanted to Individual Needs of Some Stars," a clipping in the Lincoln Center Library Theatre Collection.

saying, "'How can a fellow get excited about putting little words on big sheets of paper. . . . When other fellows are inventing things like penicillin?'"[35] He would say song writing is a trade for a lazy man and that after you write the standard chorus of 32 bars you can knock off and go down to the poolroom.[36]

Yet no matter what the facade he showed the world, Loesser was a man passionately committed to writing the best songs he could. "On a Slow Boat to China" was two years in the making and went through ten different revisions. The inspiration was basically from the gambling world.

> Some who sang it dreamily may be surprised to know that what Loesser turned into a love song was an old gambling phrase. It's what Smith says to Brown when Brown is holding a steady run of losing cards or is playing like a dope. "If I could get you on a slow boat to China," says Smith, "I'd get rich."[37]

A 1947 novelty song "Bloop, Bleep!" resulted from a man in a reverie who cannot sleep. "What might keep him awake?" was the logical question. Loesser decided that a typical night sound was the sound of a leaky faucet which sounded like two notes that were slightly syncopated with a pause, making you wait for the second note.[38]

"Two Sleepy People" resulted from a chance remark Lynn Loesser made one night when Loesser and Hoagy Carmichael were having trouble writing the song. Lynn said, "'Two sleepy people like you

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[35]Haveman, op. cit., p. 164. [36]Yoder, op. cit., p. 43.

[37]Ibid., p. 54. [38]Ibid., p. 52.

. . . should call it quits.'"[39] The lyric that resulted from this chance remark deals with people whose love is suggested within the discussion of those daily trivialities which ultimately have great personal importance. The imagery of lingering in the hall, the irate father, and the marriage which coincides with the renting of a small apartment is decidedly urban and there is a definite sense of rebellion against more traditional love lyrics.

> "Look. . . . You can't love a babe for thirty-two bars. Nobody sits around thinking that long just because he loves the girl. He thinks she's pretty nice, maybe I even love her, hell, here it is twelve o'clock. I got to meet her at twelve-thirty, twenty blocks down-town, I'd better touch somebody for a couple of bucks, in case the kid is hungry. The girl's got a pretty face and a beautiful figure and charming personality, but not for thirty-two bars."[40]

Loesser's tough-guy facade is reflected in his attitude towards "lagoon type" songs of which his "The Moon of Mankoora" was very popular. "'A hundred and fifty million people in this country . . . and how many of them have a lagoon?'"[41] or the tough yet humble declaration of why he wrote both words and music, "'that way, you preserve exclusive possession of the failure.'"[42]

His ability to write came easily. He said songs, "just pop into my head. . . . Of course your head has to be arranged to receive them. Some people's heads are arranged so that they keep getting colds. I keep getting songs.'"[43] Almost in apology for this talent, he tried to

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[39] Haveman, op. cit., p. 163. [40] Yoder, op. cit., pp. 43, 49.

[41] Ibid., p. 49. [42] Ibid. [43] Haveman, op. cit., pp. 163-4.

pretend that all music writers--popular and classical--were basically the same. Perhaps he always felt the need to compete with his father and brother and the only way of competing was to equalize them. He said:

> "Now you take Bach. . . . when Bach auditioned for a job as a church organist, what did the boss guy say? Naturally he said, in whatever was the popular jargon of the day, 'Okay, sit down and play me some licks.' Or you take Mozart. Mozart was a hustler like anybody else."[44]

Loesser felt music was for everybody and drove himself so that he could "please a hundred forty million people and all their kids."[45] To do this Loesser would get up early and dig into his own thoughts, according to Lynn Loesser.[46] By digging he would remember sounds he had heard. The sounds went beyond the elevated train and crickets chirping. Loesser himself said:

> "I always liked to collect Americanisms, like the nursery rhymes we used to rattle off in the streets. You remember. . . .
>
> 'Old Man Daisy, you're driving me crazy,
> Up the ladder, down the ladder,
> One-two-three.
> Pepper-Salt-Cider,
> H-O-T.'"
>
> "The same kind of little tune and phrasing gave me the biggest hit in 'Guys and Dolls.' I heard it first in the Southwest, where its very common: 'I love you, a bushel and a peck, and a hug around the neck' . . . and that's how a hit was born."[47]

His early rising was legendary. Jule Styne remembered:

> Frank did his best work at five in the morning because nobody was up then; he couldn't be disturbed by phone. He was busy calling

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[44] Ibid., p. 164.

[45] Yoder, op. cit., p. 57.

[46] Ibid., p. 43.

[47] McCrary, op. cit., [n.p.].

> fellows--when he lived in California he was up cause [in New York] it was 8:30 . . . so he was up 5:30 making calls there. His only disturbance living here [New York] was he couldn't call fellows cause it was too early out there. . . . The world was sleeping while he was working.[48]

Loesser must have begun to feel ultimately constricted by the regulation 32-bar song and perhaps by the anonymity of being a popular song writer. Perhaps he wanted his name to be known and not just the songs; or more likely the constriction of one song at a time in a plot for a movie with which he had nothing to do bothered him. Whatever his motivation, he left Hollywood. When asked why he felt Loesser left Hollywood in order to do Where's Charley? on Broadway, Jule Styne said:

> Well he was bored with the Hollywood pictures. Way back. . . . he had written a few revue songs in New York, that's how he came out to California. In the old days, eight writers wrote a show, it wasn't like one fellow wrote a score. So, the Frank Loesser I knew . . . was a good dramatist, incidentally a marvelous dramatist. . . . Even those crummy "Z" pictures we were doing he'd have big fights with the writers and tell them you don't want a song that doesn't fit . . . what are you tellin' . . . where are you?[49]

Abe Burrows suggested something else that might have given Loesser impetus to leave his successful career in Hollywood. Burrows said:

> Well Broadway's the only place. If you go out to Hollywood--have you ever spent any time out there--the guys make fun of Broadway, they put it down, they talk about how hard it is but there is not one of them, writers, actors, anything wouldn't give their arms to do it. Now a lot of them, the actors, make too much money in television and pictures to give it up. . . . But the writers all dream of a theatre thing, even if it's a flop, they dream of it. That's a fact, that's where it is, and a guy writes the way Frank did he has to dream of going where Dick Rodgers was and

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[48]Jule Styne, op. cit. [49]Ibid.

> Irving Berlin and Cole Porter. That was where it was, that's the major leagues. In song writing, that's the major leagues. . . . Also for a composer, a hit show makes him more money than anyone else connected with the show, more than the librettist or anybody. He gets publishing rights, the royalties on the hit songs that come out of a hit show, all that stuff.[50]

Loesser returned to Hollywood only once more, in 1952 to write the score for the Samuel Goldwyn film Hans Christian Andersen. When asked what he thought had prompted Loesser to go back to Hollywood, Abe Burrows replied:

> He liked the idea. He liked Moss [Hart, the writer of the screen play] and he liked the idea of doing it. He did some good things and he got a lot of money. . . . first of all he wanted the dough and he was in between things at the time and a couple of months on the coast, he liked the idea; he had some ideas for songs for Hans Christian Andersen. He admired him and he said fine and then he said but this is to be a Frank Loesser score and there will be no interpolations of any other music, etc., etc., etc. So he took care of the ego thing. Sure he liked that, but he was in a position then to dictate the terms. But all people, it seems to me in literary criticism in examining a guy's works, why he did something, always leave out the aspect that he was a professional writer and this is what he did for a living. . . . Of course he wouldn't do anything he hated for money, nor would I. But he liked the idea and it was a chance to make a big bundle and he published the songs himself which took a long time for a writer to arrange in Hollywood, usually MGM had its own music company, Warner Brothers had its own music company and Paramount had its own. He even published the songs himself; so he made a fortune out of it. And the rights and everything, Sam [Goldwyn] gave him everything.[51]

From that time on Loesser concentrated on writing for the Broadway stage, where he was able to explore the musical possibilities of a large number of songs written for different actors and/or characters in a play, yet needing to be tied together within the style of the work.

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[50]Burrows, op. cit. [51]Ibid.

Once one knows something of Loesser's life, it is easy to recognize the sources of the material for Guys and Dolls and How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying. The city, the underworld, and the corporate world had always been an integral part of the life of this man. The delicacy of the selections from Where's Charley? and the romantic fabric of The Most Happy Fella score came from this same gruff man who knew and could also express basic human emotions he deliberately kept hidden. The folk quality of Greenwillow shows how the man wished to expand his talents, while his ability to deal with a dramatic situation is evident in his songs for Danny Kaye, as Hans Christian Andersen, as well as his songs for Sarah Brown, Nicely-Nicely Johnson, Tony Esposito and J. Pierrepont Finch. Frank Loesser was alive to the influences of the popular song world and the serious music of his intellectual family and used them to create a body of songs that reflect a man of great artistic creativity who also possessed an impressive dramatic sense.

CHAPTER III

WHERE'S CHARLEY?

Frank Loesser returned to Broadway to write both the words and music for Where's Charley? in 1948. He had not contributed anything to the Broadway stage since 1936, when The Illustrator's Show, a musical revue, opened in New York at the 48th Street Theatre where it played for only five performances.[1] Where's Charley? opened at the St. James Theatre on October 11, 1948. The musical, based on Brandon Thomas' popular farce Charley's Aunt, achieved a total of 792 performances and scored two big popular successes with the songs "My Darling, My Darling" and "Once in Love With Amy."

Where's Charley?, which starred Ray Bolger, was produced by Cy Feuer and Ernie Martin in association with Gwen Rickard (Mrs. Ray Bolger). The idea of doing a musical version of Charley's Aunt did not begin with Loesser, who at that time had had no Broadway reputation. Loesser was brought in some time after the project had been initiated. Remembering the formative days of the musical, Cy Feuer recalled:

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[1] See Appendices

> Well, Where's Charley? dates back to the old Hollywood days. Frank at that time was really a lyricist; he had done some tune writing in the war. He had written "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" and "Rodger Young." I was a musical director and knew him, having worked with him in films. . . . But first we decided to do it with Frank and Harold Arlen. For some reason Arlen dropped out of the project and when I told Frank about it he said, "Well, what about my doing both?" And so I sold everybody on it because I knew what he could do. . . . So that's how he started writing words and music for Broadway. I think it was in his mind to write words and music anyway, whether for Broadway or Hollywood. But that was the evolution of the Where's Charley? thing. We had gotten the property and we interested Bolger in it first, it was kind of all done at the same time and Frank was enthusiastic about it. After, we went to London and got the rights and decided on Frank. . . . Bolger was involved with it from the very beginning. We were looking for an idea for Bolger--this is how it started. Then we took the whole package to George Abbott and made him the Captain; he wrote it and directed it and off they went.[2]

Conversely, Ray Bolger takes the credit himself for initiating the project that ultimately included Loesser. In a phone interview Bolger recalled those days. He said:

> Well, we discovered Frank practically, Mrs. Bolger and I. . . . Let me give you a run down on the show. I met Ernie Martin in Sardi's Restaurant. He was working at CBS at the time. I said to him that I thought he was a bright young man and . . . we might like to have somebody come in with us in the production line. . . . So Cy Feuer and Ernie Martin and my wife produced Where's Charley? It was the first show that Frank Loesser had ever done on Broadway. In other words, that is why I said we discovered him for Broadway.[3]

Feuer explained that the first thing he had to do to secure the rights to Charley's Aunt as a musical was to write a scenario for the Brandon Thomas estate because:

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[2]Interview with Cy Feuer, producer, June 20, 1972.

[3]Interview with Ray Bolger, actor, August, 1972.

> in order to get the property, they wanted to know how we were going to do it. The property was very valuable. It [had] brought the estate $50,000 a year in stock and amateur rights since 1898. They didn't want anybody to upset that. So I had the idea of making Charley his own aunt. . . . so he could get out of that dress. In the original the guy [Charley's friend Fancourt Babberley] puts the dress on and never gets out of it until the third act. But then we would lose the value of Bolger and that is where the title came from. When the girl [Amy] was upset with the Aunt she wanted to know where Charley was. . . . then he had to run and take the dress off and put on Charley's suit and come back again, and then she would want the aunt and he'd have to go and become the aunt again. The estate bought it and that was part of the contract that it had to be done that way. So I gave [Abbott] that treatment and he started to type; it was a pretty easy job now . . . but we got the benefit of Abbott; we got off the ground because of his name. So that was kind of written conventionally and Loesser wrote along.[4]

Roy Bolger suggested though, that it was he who came up with the idea of having Charley play his own aunt, combining the roles of Charley and Fancourt Babberley. It is Babberley who helps his friends Charley and Jack by masquerading as Charley's aunt. By combining their roles, the play was simplified, while Bolger's comic role was strengthened. Babbs and his true love Ela were eliminated, thus simplifying the combinations and confusions, while Charley had to appear as both himself and his aunt in quick succession, leaving the audience wondering if he would get caught. Bolger said:

> Well, we were trying to figure out how we could do it and I said, well what is the name of the play? Somebody said Charley's Aunt so I said why doesn't Charley play his own aunt? Plain and simple. They said, well what will happen? I said, he just gets his costume on and gets caught in it. This is the way it happened. . . . in the process of writing the show. We all worked together

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[4]Feuer, op. cit.

> in the beginning; Mrs. Bolger . . . and Cy Feuer and Ernie Martin and myself and George Abbott; and [then] George went home and wrote the book, and we kept changing it.[5]

Regardless of whose idea it was, Loesser now had his first chance to write a Broadway musical. A pre-opening comment about the show suggests what he felt might be at stake. He said, "'If the show's a hit . . . it'll be the first time a songwriter with a completely Hollywood reputation will have managed to land solidly on Broadway.'"[6] And land solidly he did. Loesser finally, after his Hollywood years, had the chance to grow as a composer by exploring various musical forms which had to be related to plot and character. Loesser's Hollywood career, of course, had prepared him for this writing songs to fit character, and perhaps even story. Recollecting the Hollywood days, Jule Styne called Loesser a great "fashioner" of songs for screen personalities.[7] Roy Bolger recalled:

> It being his first show, of course, he had to learn some things that we were able to pass on to him, you know. . . . the difference between doing a pop tune and a Broadway show tune. For instance, "The New Ashmolean Marching Society and Students' Conservatory Band;" you don't just go put that out for the pop tune. . . . Frank, as you know, had a great knack for lyrics. Working with him was, for us, a treat.[8]

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[5]Bolger, op. cit.

[6]Harry Harris, "Song Hits are his Business," a clipping from the Lincoln Center Library Theatre Collection.

[7]Styne, op. cit.

[8]Bolger, op. cit.

The book for which Loesser wrote his score deals with Charley Wykeham's having to masquerade as his own wealthy Brazilian aunt in order to supply his and his roommate's young ladies with a chaperone. Because of his aunt's great wealth, the disguised Charley is chased by two men, Sir Francis Chesney, his roommate's father, and by Amy and Kitty's guardian, Spettigue. Thus Charley is always missing when Amy, his true love, wants him. The real aunt, having given her maiden name, watches the ensuing confusion with great amusement, then finally unravels all the complications.

The musical opens in the rooms of Oxford students Charley Wykeham and Jack Chesney. While their manservant Brassett is tidying up the room, there is heard from offstage the sentimental school song "The Years Before Us" which quickly sets both the university locale and the sentimental mood. The audience soon discovers that Jack and Charley are waiting for Charley's aunt to arrive so that she may chaperone the visit of Amy and Kitty. When the young ladies discover that Donna Lucia has not yet arrived, they sing the song "Better Get Out of Here." This song is performed with a light accompaniment, as Kitty and Amy sing in close harmony of their mutual fears.

"Better Get Out of Here" is theoretically close to "Baby, It's Cold Outside," the 1948 Oscar winning song written for Neptune's Daughter, in that the two girls, Kitty and Amy, ponder what would become of their virtue if they stayed in Jack and Charley's rooms. In "Better Get Out of

Here" they leave; in "Baby, It's Cold Outside" the young girl stays. The question of whether they are going to be kissed is settled with the lines:

> They wouldn't dream of trying to kiss us,
> For after all they're civilized, too,
> But Amy, just to be on the safe side,
> We'd better get out of here before they do![9]

The ambivalence between desire and propriety is echoed by Jack and Charley; then Loesser, with great skill, reminds us of the reason the girls cannot stay--because of the absence of the aunt-chaperone. The girls sing:

> AMY: He wouldn't dream of singing those rude songs,
> The sort of things all college boys chant.
>
> KITTY: He wouldn't dream of telling me stories,
> That he could not repeat to his aunt.[10]

Jack and Charley concur with the girls' fears and the girls exit, willing to return only if the aunt appears.

Wilkinson, an undergraduate in charge of theatricals, then urges Charley to check to see whether Charley's costume for a campus production is complete. At this point we discover Jack's father is in financial straights which will spoil Jack's chances of winning the favor of Kitty's guardian, Spettigue. Charley, in the costume of an elderly lady, now discovers his aunt is not coming but will surprise him at a later time.

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[9]George Abbott and Frank Loesser, Where's Charley? (London: Samuel French, 1948), p. 5.

[10]Ibid., p. 6.

As Jack tries to convince Charley to masquerade as the missing aunt, Amy and Kitty reappear catching Charley in costume and are delighted to find that their chaperone has finally arrived. At this point Amy is given the first of many excuses for Charley's recurring absences. Both Spettigue and Sir Francis Chesney show their attentions to the disguised Charley. Just as Spettigue and Sir Francis begin quarreling over the favors of the fabulously wealthy aunt, band music is heard from off stage. The martial music breaks the tension and the young people run off to listen.

The song "The New Ashmolean Marching Society and Students' Conservatory Band" in no way advances the plot of the musical, but it does serve as a tension-reliever, and it lightens the mood, with its bright, brassy march tempo.

"The New Ashmolean . . . " came to Loesser after he discovered, while doing research on Oxford, that there was a museum on campus called the Ashmolean; "the word struck a bell in his head and he sat down to compose . . . a title peculiar not only for its length but also for the fact that it sounds like music even when read as prose."[11] Loesser did a similar thing later, in Guys and Dolls, by turning an Abe Burrows line about "the oldest established permanent floating crap game in New York" into a song. "Ashmolean" has an integral rhythmic drive as well as a tongue-in-cheek description of the enthusiastic, but not

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[11]Haveman, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

always coordinated, band. After writing about lumps in the throat and tears in the eye, Loesser turns the lyrics around with:

> Yes, the New Ashmolean could have whipped Napolean
> With all those deadly instruments in hand.

and

> If you're analytical, sensitive, or critical,
> You'll like it more the further back you stand
> But to me it's bully, it satisfied me fully,
> When I hear that thunder close at hand,
> From the New Ashmolean Marching Society and Students'
> Conservatory Band.[12]

Sometime later, when Jack and Kitty find themselves alone, they sing their love song "My Darling, My Darling," a song that manages to help the couple make a transition between polite concern for one another to admission of love. The song says:

> Till a moment ago we were "Mister" and "Miss,"
> Discussing the weather, avoiding each other's eye.
> Till a moment ago when we happened to kiss,
> And we kissed the "mister" and "miss" good-bye.
> Now at last I can sigh,
> My darling, my darling.[13]

This love song with its lush violin accompaniment suggests the blossoming love of the couple.

Soon after this song, Charley, now in male attire, finds Amy and sings a song about their future together. In contrast to the romantic ballad "My Darling, My Darling," Charley and Amy, the comic lovers, sing a song called "Make A Miracle" which is not about their present, but about the future of the world.

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[12]Abbott and Loesser, op. cit., pp. 14-15. [13]Ibid., p. 16.

It is the most complex song in the show, because although it is set in the England of 1892, "Make A Miracle" deals with the future, which is actually Loesser's present. Thus Charley, in asking Amy to marry him, perceives the future in terms of lie-detecting machines, horseless carriages that fly, exploding breakfast cereals, "stereopticons that move" and a cure for the common cold; all this prognostication is done in terms of a love song in which Charley begs Amy to make a miracle by marrying him.[14] As Ernest Haveman wrote:

> In short, Loesser has created a little gem of stage setting, characterization, narrative, historical and social commentary, with some anthropology thrown in for good measure, and all without straying from the beat of the music or resorting to a single impure rhyme.[15]

Spettigue next tries to separate Amy and Charley, so Charley tells Spettigue that his aunt is attracted to the old man. While Charley is getting back into costume, Spettigue sings a "Serenade With Asides" stating that although Lucia has a "face like a hatchet, a voice like a duck and a figure to match it," he is in love with her "cool twenty million in cash."[16] This comic song serves the purpose of an old-fashioned aside, while sprightly music contradicts the venal lyrics.

Next Sir Francis protests his love for the disguised Charley. Just as he is declaring his intentions, the real Donna Lucia arrives and quickly sizing up the situation, tells everyone that she is Mrs. Beverly-Smythe.

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[14] Ibid., pp. 18-21. [15] Haveman, op. cit., p. 166.

[16] Abbott and Loesser, op. cit., p. 22.

The real aunt and Sir Francis had known each other some twenty years previously, before her marriage to the South American millionaire, and in a lovely waltz number, "Lovelier than Ever," their love is rekindled. This song is neither effusively romantic like "My Darling, My Darling," nor comic like "Make A Miracle." The lyrics of the haunting waltz obliquely refer to springtime as being "Lovelier than Ever," which seems appropriately sentimental since the singers have not seen one another for twenty years. Since Sir Francis doesn't know that Mrs. Beverly-Smythe is in fact the real wealthy aunt, the song also manages to communicate a true, rather than a mercenary emotion.

Meanwhile Amy is searching for Charley, who is missing again. Her song "The Woman in His Room" betrays her love, her frustration, and finally her anger over Charley's constant disappearances. She starts her soliloquy by reassuring herself that Charley is sweet and good, but then remembers a picture of an undraped lady on the piano in his room. Slowly, as her frustration and jealously mount, the woman becomes more and more a threat, until Amy imagines Charley with the woman and, turning the lyric around she sings, "I'm sure he's with that woman on the piano in his room,"[17] finishing the song with tears of anger and helplessness. The wild fluctuations in Amy's attitude, because of her sincere love for Charley, are incisively yet humorously pointed out.

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[17] Ibid., p. 31.

Abbott and Loesser ended the musical's first act with a ballet, "Pernambuco," in which the disguised Charley, responding to the real aunt's good humored questions about South America, tells his guests about going to Brazil as a young girl. This Latin-flavored number, staged by the choreographer George Balanchine, had Ray Bolger and Allyn Ann McLerie dancing the roles of Donna Lucia and her soon-to-become husband Senor d'Alvadorez. The number coincidentally cements Charley and Amy's romance, since they symbolically dance the roles of Charley's aunt and uncle. It also serves as ". . . the standard complete-ensemble number closing the first act. It's the kind of big Latin hoedown number without which no Broadway show of its era was complete."[18] The humor, in part, comes from the musical accompaniment, which uses jungle bird calls in juxtaposition to a sophisticated, brassy Latin rhythm.

Act II of the musical opens with the title song sung while the class is preparing to have its picture taken but must wait for the always absent Charley. The number has a bright and lively tempo suggesting the high spirits of the undergraduate singers. Once the photograph has been taken, Charley is left alone to voice his feelings of love for Amy, in a song entitled "Once In Love With Amy," that isn't really needed for either plot or characterization purposes.

It would be easy to believe that "Amy" was written with Bolger in mind since it ultimately became so strongly identified with him. Yet the

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[18]Feuer, op. cit.

song was taken from the songwriter's proverbial "trunk." Cy Feuer said:

> "Amy" also was not written [specifically for the show] . . . it was called something else, it wasn't Amy. It was Margie or Mary or Alice or whatever--some two syllable name. But . . . Amy was the name of the character in Charley's Aunt, so he changed it to "Once In Love With Amy."[19]

Ray Bolger remembered:

> Well I think Frank had a song called "Once In Love With Mary" and so it got to fit Amy . . . what are we going to do about that love situation with Amy?[20]

Thus Mary or Alice became Amy, and a song still associated with the career of Ray Bolger was introduced into the score of Where's Charley? When "Amy" was performed, the audience was asked to sing along with Charley. When asked whose idea this had been, Bolger replied:

> The audience themselves, as a matter of fact. I think it was Cy Feuer's son at the first matinee that said "la la la da da da 'Once In Love With Amy.'" Once again to show you the value of the sort of thing that Frank was able to give us, "Once In Love With Amy" was rather more an emotion than an expression of his [Charley's] inner feelings at the time. It had a natural development with the audience and I never once said that I'm so happy I want you to sing. I put that [in] later on, in the record; in the audience participation I never once asked them. So in other words, there was never a formal invitation to say I want you to sing along with me.[21]

In the next scene, the other female dates of the young men at Oxford are dressing for the University Cotillion and, at the same time gossiping about the plight of Amy and Kitty. The song "The Gossips" recapitualtes the action of the muscal interweaving musical themes from "Serenade With Asides," "My Darling, My Darling," and "Make A Miracle." The motifs that had been previously heard are here musically

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[19] Feuer, op. cit. [20] Bolger, op. cit. [21] Ibid.

satirized for comic effect. Loesser employs in this satire, a fugue form for the mundane words "unchaperoned" and "Who's Charley's Aunt?"[22] which helps to heighten the comedy.

Charley, in costume, enters and is at first discomfitted by being among the half-clad ladies, but then begins enjoying the situation. Charley tells Spettigue that he may announce their engagement if Spettigue writes a letter giving his consent for Amy and Kitty to marry Charley and Jack.

On the way to the ball, Jack and Kitty sing a lovely waltz, "At the Red Rose Cotillion," that segues into the ballroom scene where the entire chorus waltzes and sings the song that suggests that love is in the air for all the young men and women, and especially for the three couples whom the audience knows are in love.

Dressed as himself, Charley hears Spettigue announce the engagements of the two young couples, then dashes off and returns as his aunt. Spettigue then announces the engagement of Donna Lucia and himself, and asks to speak with Charley. The disguised young man starts to dash off stage, but Jack has unknowingly stepped on the hem of Charley's skirt, and suddenly the masquerade is over. Spettigue says that since the letter allowing his niece and his ward to marry is addressed to Donna Lucia, the weddings are off. At that moment, the real aunt reveals her

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[22]Abbott and Loesser, op. cit., p. 42.

identity, making the letter valid. Spettigue exits in a fury, and the entire cast, led by the three engaged couples, sings a reprise of "My Darling, My Darling."

Virtually the entire score of Where's Charley? works to develop both plot and character. The songs are written in a variety of styles and moods, both to reveal the emotions of the characters who sing them, and to express them in a manner befitting the personalities of the singers. Thus, while the three couples are all in love, each sings a love song in an appropriate style. They range from Jack and Kitty's romantic "My Darling, My Darling," to Charley and Amy's comic "Make A Miracle," to Sir Francis and Lucia's oblique and old-fashioned waltz, "Lovelier than Ever." Even while working within the established framework of the ballad, the waltz, and the Latin number, Frank Loesser was able to integrate the score with George Abbott's book so that one merged with the other without appreciable effort.

The production took shape relatively easily. Asked about his collaboration with Loesser, George Abbott responded:

> There was one unusual thing: the songs which we planned, that is the songs outlined in the book before any music was written, were the ones that were used. And even after the tryout, there were no alterations. . . . He was, as you know, an alert and imaginative fellow and it was great fun to work with him.[23]

When Ray Bolger was asked if any new songs or new lyrics had to be written quickly, he responded:

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[23]Letter from George Abbott, dated June 5, 1972.

> Well yeah, that always happens in a show. You go out to Philadelphia and have a whole song that we worked on and worked on and put new lyrics in every night and he's come up with a whole set of new lyrics and every night they would lay the bomb. Well, what's wrong was it was a forced situation.[24]

While the show was out of town, twenty minutes were cut, including "Culture and Breeding," a song for Charley, and "Saunter Away," a song for the real aunt. Other songs that were written for the show but that didn't make it to New York were: "Don't Introduce Me To That Angel," "The Bee," and "The Train That Brought You to Town (Here's to Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez)."[25] The marching song, "The New Ashmolean Marching Society and Students' Conservatory Band" replaced another song called "Your Own College Band."[26] "More I Cannot Wish You," according to Cy Feuer, "was originally written for a movie for Samuel Goldwyn. . . ."[27] Roy Bolger remembers "More I Cannot Wish You," and said "I think it was the song between the boy and the girl [probably Jack and Kitty] and 'My Darling' turned out to be the one. . . ."[28] The deleted song later reappeared in Guys and Dolls, and has always been a puzzling one to have been included in that score, both because of its refined imagery and diction, and because it is sung well into the second

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[24]Bolger, op. cit.

[25]"Show-Doctors Go To Work on Two Musicals Here," Philadelphia Bulletin (September 26, 1948) [n.p.].

[26]Arthur Loesser, op. cit., p. 239.

[27]Feuer, op. cit.

[28]Bolger, op. cit.

act by an up-to-then non-singing secondary character. It is conceivable that the lyrics, which include references to velvet collars and silver trays with calling cards, were not altered in the transition from Where's Charley? to Guys and Dolls.

Either the song could have been sung by Jack when he feared his family's poverty would prevent him from marrying Kitty, or by Sir Francis himself. The father, a non-singing role except for "Lovelier Than Ever," might conceivably have sung "More I Cannot Wish you," which deals with the simple pleasures obtainable with little money; the idea of finding a true love someday would be more appropriate for a father singing to a son, than for a young man singing to his girl.

According to Cy Feuer, another song that was cut out of town:

> was a marvelous song for Jack and his father. I don't remember the title but Frank and I used to sing it together in recent years before he died. I can remember the tune, but I can't remember the title. It was about two poverty stricken gentlemen walking around London pretending to be wealthy and participating in it all but actually being hungry. It was funny. It was done to an old English sound like hunting horns.[29]

Ray Bolger remembers another song deleted from the show while it was out of town. He recalled:

> "An Elegant Pair" or something like that, I don't remember exactly what the title was, that the old man [Spettigue] and I did. It was based on the Gilbert and Sullivan thing, sort of that kind of a lyrical argument with him. And this is one of the things that just didn't fit. It was too strong in one respect for the characters. . . . When you're playing farce like that you have to play it straight. Once you start to kid it and get too far away from it, you lose values. These are the things that you find out.[30]

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[29]Feuer, op. cit. [30]Bolger, op. cit.

While Where's Charley? is now best known for its songs, which "are the chief reason the musical continues to enjoy repeated revivals,"[31] the score was not initially received with great enthusiasm. Richard Watts, Jr. wrote in the New York Post, "Mr. Loesser's score has several pleasant numbers, but it is, in general, both commonplace and unexhilirating and it lacks the touch that had been expected of him."[32]

Brooks Atkinson was somewhat more enthusiastic in the New York Times. He wrote: "Mr. Loesser combines song-writing with composing, which is a most acceptable notion."[33] In 1966, after a New York City Center revival of the musical, Vincent Canby wrote a critique of Frank Loesser's score. Canby said:

> If memory does not deceive, Mr. Loesser's contributions to the show were originally taken rather lightly. However, in the context of this City Center season, it's possible to listen to the . . . score with new appreciation. . . . In "Where's Charley?" Mr. Loesser was working within the prescribed limits of formula musical comedy. But even within such limits he was exhibiting the wit, perception and lyricism that later were to be so highly praised.[34]

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[31]Stanley Green, "Record liner notes for 'Where's Charley?,'" Original London Cast Recording, Monmouth Evergreen, MES/7029.

[32]Richard Watts, Jr., "Ray Bolger Tries Nobly in 'Where's Charley,'" New York Post (October 12, 1948) in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1948 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1948), p. 197.

[33]Brooks Atkinson, "At the Theatre," New York Times (October 12, 1948) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1948 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1948), p. 197.

[34]Vincent Canby, op. cit.

These qualities, along with the way the songs integrated subtly with the book, lends support to Canby's feeling that itwas necessary for eighteen years to pass before the score could be recognized for its musical achievements.

Richard Watts, Jr., changed his mind about the score at the time of the 1966 revival. He wrote:

> There is still agreeably elementary fun to be found in the vintage farce, but it is those songs, with their continued fresh tunefulness and charm, that give the evening its atmosphere of winning festivity.[35]

"At the time of its closing," the original production of Where's Charley?, with "its 792 performances, made it the tenth longest-running musical in Broadway history."[36]

Perhaps the critics' more positive reevaluation can be related to the continuous work and changes made on the original production even after it opened. Ray Bolger commented:

> When you're doing comedy it is all timing and it changes every day--almost every day that you play it, from the beginning. In the first place you find out that you work into the character more, so that almost every performance we had more laughs, and the reviewers that saw the show after a year's run said that now it is a real polished vehicle. When you get settled into it, you don't change it again.[37]

Bolger is suggesting that the changes were subtle performance ones, not ones relating to the book or the score. But by changing and polishing

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[35]Richard Watts, Jr., quoted on Stanley Green's liner notes.

[36]Stanley Green, op. cit.

[37]Bolger, op. cit.

the timing, perhaps it was possible to show the score off to the best possible advantage.

With Where's Charley?, Frank Loesser proved to audiences and to the Broadway practitioners that a Hollywood songwriter could write a full Broadway score. When asked if Loesser was happy with the show, Abe Burrows responded:

> In degree. Frank was a perfectionist--a true one. He always wanted it to be better and he thought some things in Where's Charley? were good and some things were square. You're always limited by the performers. Ray Bolger wasn't really a singer and not really an actor.[38]

Yet, dialogue, character, and song all flow from one another so effortlessly that it seems as if one hand fashioned the musical. Two years later, Loesser collaborated with Abe Burrows to write the highly popular Guys and Dolls.

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[38]Burrows, op. cit.

CHAPTER IV

GUYS AND DOLLS

Guys and Dolls began its 1,200 performance run at the Forty-Sixth Street Theatre on November 24, 1950. Subtitled "A Musical Fable of Broadway," its principal source was a Damon Runyon short story "The Idylls of Sarah Brown"; additional characters in Guys and Dolls were taken from other Runyon tales. The book for Guys and Dolls is not really a collaboration between Abe Burrows and Jo Swerling, although they both are given credit. Abe Burrows wrote the book for a score Frank Loesser had created for a previously discarded libretto based on the Runyon short stories. The discarded work was written by Jo Swerling. Abe Burrows commented about his supposed co-author:

> That was a matter of billing. . . . that's a cross I have to bear and I don't mind. . . . Jo Swerling was one of seven guys. He had a contractual thing; when he was dropped, they couldn't drop his billing because he had a certain stature in Hollywood, so he retained the billing, he insisted on it. And that is that.[1]

Henri Caubisens, the production's stage manager, remembered that the original Swerling book had a "low comedy" quality to it that was not

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[1]Burrows, op. cit.

acceptable to Burrows, George S. Kaufman, the director, or Loesser. Caubisens remarked:

> For instance, there was one scene where one of the characters came in carrying a grand piano, you know, things like that. Then Mr. Kaufman came into the picture. . . . Mr. Kaufman . . . was a very level-headed, thinking, delving kind of a man . . . even Loesser didn't like the idea of the low comedy. . . . And I think it [the disgarding of the original book] was due greatly to both Loesser and Kaufman working together. . . . Now Burrows came in and he also lived and was raised in New York--a great New York man. I think the three of them contributed to throwing out all that low comedy and just sticking to the characters that . . . [Runyon] wrote. They just stuck to a main story. . . . Mr. Loesser . . . integrated those songs so much into the story that those songs became part of the story. . . . There is not one song in it that was put in that way, the thumb, as we call it. . . .[2]

Cy Feuer, one of the musical's co-producers, recalled that Burrows had written the book for an already existing twelve or fifteen songs which Loesser had created for the Swerling version. Burrows used none of the Swerling dialogue, and it was primarily in the central plot that the greatest change took place. Feuer said:

> If it was a gambler as a leading man, we wanted the plot to revolve around the making of a bet, but he [Swerling] didn't want to do that because he thought it was a lift from Sailor Beware and a dozen other old hat musical comedies where a guy would bet that he could get the girl. It was a stale device, but we thought it could be done without being stale. Nobody ever noticed it, subsequently; we were never called on that. Consequently, that aspect of the book [i.e., the low comedy] didn't exist so it gave the book a different flavor in terms of plot. But as the characters were the same, Frank Loesser's expression of who they were was not changed in the rewrite.[3]

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[2]Interview with Henri Caubisens, stage manager, May 20, 1972.

[3]Feuer, op. cit.

In an interview, Abe Burrows discussed at great length the inspiration for the musical that now exists and what he and Loesser were trying to achieve. Burrows said:

> Where's Charley? . . . his first one, was more in a conventional vein. In Guys and Dolls, we tried for a different kind of musical, a funny one, which was very rare. Where's Charley? had fun in it but this was intrinsically funny. The songs in Guys and Dolls are hilarious and the book matched them. So he was striving there for a thing where the numbers were not just pure entertainment. There's a word called integration that they use, but that means where a number advances the plot and stuff like that. . . . I believe, curiously enough, in Brecht's thing--Three-Penny Opera was a good example. Those numbers were not integrated as being about the plot, but they curiously enough advance the character--gave you an insight each time. You see Brecht knew about that. Three-Penny was on my mind. It had never been done in America then, but I knew it and I read translation of it; then Marc Blitzstein did his great adaptation of it. Guys and Dolls was in spirit, even though God knows, it wasn't as courageous or as raffish, but it was bums, raffish people acting like ladies and gentlemen.
>
> The essence of Guys and Dolls, if anybody asks me what's the secret of it was, that these bums act like they are written by Noel Coward. That's what Dreigroschenoper was, that was what The Beggar's Opera was really; and the politeness of it constantly, but treating the actors as though they were dukes and counts. That was the spirit of it. . . . He [Loesser] knew what I meant. We talked about it. I mean so many songs in Three-Penny Opera could have fit in Guys and Dolls. . . . "Pirate Jenny" . . . could be in spirit very much like "Adelaide's Lament," in that it was a women's lib song. You know, you think about it, men, I'll shoot them all. Which one should we kill. . . . "alles."
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> There . . . [had been] about six writers who tried various versions and then I came in after Frank had already written fourteen songs, and I just didn't look at anything else until I was through with mine. I started from scratch and wrote a whole new one. We talked it over and we worked very closely. . . . The libretto is the most important part of the show; in other words its the spine. If it's no good, there is nothing to hang on to. A good libretto sort of blends in. . . .[4]

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[4]Burrows, op. cit.

The excellence of the Loesser contribution allowed this unorthodox method of integration to be employed. It is interesting to note that in subsequent productions Loesser took more of an active role in the forging of the books that went with his score. In The Most Happy Fella, his next musical, Loesser wrote the book himself.

An interesting sidelight into how Loesser became interested in the race track parlance which served him well in this production, comes from Jule Styne. Styne was a horse-lover and told Loesser in Hollywood that he, Loesser, was working too hard and needed a hobby. He finally was able to get Loesser to agree to go to the races once a week with him. Styne continued:

> So I took him to the races. He said, "Well what'll I bet on?" "You buy a newspaper, Frank," I said, "it's a guessing game for you." So he looked at the paper. He said, "Well this is funny, from top to bottom this man says every horse can win. Look at the top one. It says: comes from Smart Bart, worked out well, be careful of the odds, can do"--can do was used about three times on horses. Little did I ever know that he would write Guys and Dolls at that time and the thing would be called "Can Do" [i.e., Fugue for Tinhorns]. But he told me and everybody how he got the vernacular. 'Cause after I came to New York and he still stayed in California, he never went to the races--he never took it up; he had just gone to accommodate me.[5]

Guys and Dolls opened with "Runyonland Music." The number had a variety of Broadway types, sightseers, prize fighters, streetwalkers, policemen and gamblers which set the "New York" mood for the show. Three horse players enter into the action and sing the first song, "Fugue for Tinhorns," a humorous juxtaposition of music and lyrics.

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[5]Styne, op. cit.

A formal fugue arrangement is contrasted with the betting parlance of Broadway gamblers Nicely-Nicely, Benny and Charlie.

Interestingly, the opening song, "Fugue for Tinhorns," was written for no particular spot. Loesser felt it was expressive of the characters and very much in the Damon Runyon tradition,[6] so a place had to be found for the song "because it was so good." So said Cy Feuer, and after it was tried in a couple of different places, it was used in the opening.[7]

The song leads right into the Save-A-Soul Mission hymn "Follow the Fold," in which the mission people plead with the Broadway characters not to stray. This number introduces us to one of the musical's protagonists, Sarah Brown, who with her uncle Arvide, is trying to convert the Broadway denizens to the way of God. Sarah and the band exit and we learn about gambler Nathan Detroit's inability to find a location for his floating crap game. The game cannot take place unless he can acquire one thousand dollars for rental of a location.

The next song, dealing with the floating crap game, is a "cantata for male voices, sung with Handelian dignity, hat in hand, held over hearts."[8] "The Oldest Established Permanent Floating Crap Game in New York" according to Abe Burrows, "was a piece of dialogue. That line exactly. . . . We were stuck for a song. I said take that and he

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[6]Feuer, op. cit. [7]Ibid.

[8]Goddard Lieberson, "Guys, Dolls and Frank Loesser," Saturday Review (December 30, 1950), p. 45.

took it and like a genius he turned it into a college song."[9] Irving Drutman said in the Herald Tribune that the song "was written as a fraternity song, ten days before the opening, because Loesser felt it was necessary to emphasize that to their way of thinking, the 'Guys and Dolls' males aren't loafers, but are in a business; crap-shooting is the thing they do, just as selling is the thing a bond salesman does."[10]

Nathan then tells the boys that the town is filled with big gamblers, including Sky Masterson, who will bet on just about anything. While Nathan is trying to figure out a "no chance of losing" bet to make with Sky, in order to acquire the thousand dollars, Adelaide, a nightclub singer and Nathan's fiancee of fourteen years, enters. Adelaide's fears that Nathan is still running the crap game are assuaged by her fiance, and as she leaves, Sky enters.

Sky tells Nathan that he's flying to Havana for dinner alone, and Nathan bets Sky the one thousand dollars that Sky will not be able to take the girl of Nathan's choice to Cuba. The girl he names is Sarah Brown.

Sky, pretending to be a sinner in search of salvation, seeks Sarah out at the Mission and impresses her with his knowledge of the Bible: Sky has spent so many nights in strange hotels with only the Gideon Bible for company, that he has become something of an expert. After Sarah agrees to have dinner with Sky in exchange for Sky's delivering of one dozen genuine sinners to the failing mission, Sky tells her dinner

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[9]Burrows, op. cit. [10]Drutman, op. cit.

will be in Havana. While Sarah protests Sky's duplicity, he asks her what kind of a man might appeal to her. The dawning of love between the gambler Sky and the mission girl Sarah is embodied in the song "I'll Know," in which Sarah has envisioned her perfect man--strong moral fiber, wisdom and a pipe, whom Sky calls a "Scarsdale Galahad, The breakfast-eating, Brooks Brothers type."[11] Both set up desired qualities for their love, and we see that the two basically want the same things. The audience knows that they will fall in love before they themselves do.

"A Bushel and A Peck," a satirical nightclub song, follows. It uses a farm setting and lyrics in juxtaposition to the Hot Box Girls' raucous singing and dancing. The song, according to Goddard Lieberson, is not the standard 32 bar song, but one of 20 bars opening with a dissonant chord which "musically amounts to a slapstick comedian slapping a partner with a floured powder puff . . . "[12] After Adelaide hears that the crap game is on, she sings "Adelaide's Lament," a number which deals with the singer's upper respiratory tract and her resultant psychosomatic cold. At one point she sings:

> You can spray her wherever you figure the streptococci lurk
> You can give her a shot for whatever she's got but it just won't work
> If she's tired of getting the fish-eye from the hotel clerk
> A person . . . can develop a cold[13]

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[11]Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows and Frank Loesser, Guys and Dolls in From the American Drama, ed. Eric Bentley (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 288.

[12]Lieberson, op. cit., pp. 38, 45. [13]Swerling, op. cit., p. 320.

She follows this rhymed catalogue of troubles with her interpretation of a textbook definition of a psychosomatic illness. The song concludes with Adelaide's supreme dejection.

This famous character song has an interesting history. It was part of the original score presented to Burrows after Swerling had left. Abe Burrows said that even before he became officially involved with the project, he and Loesser would discuss the score.

Originally Adelaide was to have been a stripper who was constantly catching cold because of all the draughts in the clubs she worked in but:

> Loesser suggested that the profession of the character be changed to singer, arguing that no performer of any stature would really strip in front of a Broadway audience, and anyway, if she did, it might offend the women customers. He also pointed out that if Adelaide's cold were made a disease with an emotional basis, relating to her love life and thereby becoming a story point, the comedy could be carried along for more than just one joke. The psychosomatic terms used in the number were supplied by Abe Burrows, to whom Loesser took the idea six months before Burrows was hired to rewrite the show's book.[14]

Jule Styne felt that Loesser's songs, particularly "Adelaide's Lament," were done with great compassion. Loesser never demeaned his characters. Although he had fun with them, he never laughed at them. According to Styne, Loesser cared about Adelaide and felt that she was not just another "soubrette."[15]

Burrows remarked that Loesser considered himself a dramatist and would frequently suggest stage business to be performed with his songs.[16]

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[14]Irving Drutman, op. cit. [15]Styne, op. cit.

[16]Burrows, op. cit.

In the next scene Benny and Nicely muse over the latest turn of events. Sarah seems to detest Sky and Adelaide is angry with Nathan. The boys sing the musical's title song, Guys and Dolls, in which they catalogue all the idiocies a man undergoes for the love of his woman.

Following this song, Sarah is told by the Mission General that her mission will be closed due to a lack of business. Sarah promises to produce one dozen genuine sinners.

All the gamblers are assembled. They are wearing red carnations in order to gain admittance to the crap game. Benny tells the police lieutenant that they are going to a bachelor party for Nathan, who is going to marry Adelaide at last. Adelaide hears this, forgives Nathan, and says "yes."

Meanwhile, in Cuba, Sarah gets drunk on a Bacardi and milk concoction. During a wild Latin number, she causes a riot by dancing with a Cuban man in order to make his girl, who has been flirting with Sky, jealous. Sky and Sarah leave. The still tipsy Sarah sings "If I Were A Bell," a drunken profession of love. It is made conditional much like Oscar Hammerstein's lyric to "If I Loved You." Loesser explains the use of the conditional with, "'Now here . . . we have this quiet, conservative mission broad falling for a gambler when she gets a snoot full. But what she's saying is something she can take back. She's not committing herself. She wants to be able to change her mind.'"[17]

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[17]Murray Schuman, "Frank Loesser--Hit Parade Habitue," New York Times (December 17, 1950).

Sky and Sarah return to New York at four o'clock in the morning. Sky sings to Sarah, "My Time of Day," "considered a poetical, Delius-like idyll; which is filled with 'intensity and rough passion.'"[18] It is followed by "I've Never Been In Love Before," a song which "is made up of only one phrase, which is diversified through harmonic or slight melodic mutation but always in the same rhythmic pattern. . . ."[19] The lyrics of the first song function as a lyrical ode to the small hours of the morning. Sky's poetic musings employ city imagery to establish the mood of the song. A plaintive melody orchestrated with an oboe completes the mood of the song, whose simple yet beautiful lyric is:

> My time of day is the dark time
> A couple of deals before dawn
> When the street belongs to the cop
> And the janitor with the mop
> And the grocery store clerks are all gone
> When the smell of the rain-washed pavement
> Comes up clean and fresh and cold
> And the street lamp light fills the gutter with gold
> That's my time of day
> And you're the only doll I've ever wanted to share it with me.[20]

The first act closes with Sarah telling Sky that though she might love him she is still a "mission doll" and their worlds can never coexist.

The mock moralistic "Take Back Your Mink," performed by the Hot Box Girls, opens Act II. It begins with outrage, progresses to petulence (along with a striptease), and ends with a tacit acceptance by the woman

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[18]Lieberson, op. cit., p. 45.

[19]Ibid., p. 38.

[20]Swerling, op. cit., p. 339.

of a man's illicit proposition. Adelaide soon discovers that she has been "stood up" on her elopement day.

The touching "More I Cannot Wish You," in which Uncle Arvide wishes Sarah happiness in love, provides a sharp contrast to the former song. "More I Cannot Wish You" had been written orginally for a Hollywood movie, was then tried in Where's Charley? and finally was employed in Guys and Dolls.

The site of the crap game is then discovered to be a sewer. Sky, because he loves Sarah and still feels an obligation to make good his "marker," bets each of the gamblers a thousand dollars against their showing up at the Mission's midnight meeting. "Luck Be A Lady," Sky's love song to a pair of dice, begging them to help him win, ends the scene in the sewer.

In the following scene, Nathan tries to make up with Adelaide, and almost succeeds, when he is called off to the mission. Adelaide is sure he is returning to his crap game, and the song "Sue Me" follows. Written in Verdian 6/8 rhythm,[21] this song captures Nathan's New York speech rhythms. For example:

> All right already I'm just a no goodnik
> All right already, it's true, so nu
> So sue me, sue me
> What can you do me
> I love you

ending with:

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[21]Lieberson, op. cit., p. 45.

Sue me, sue me
Shoot bullets through me
I love you![22]

Loesser combines both the mission and low-life milieu in the mock salvation song "Sit Down, You're Rockin' The Boat," in which Nicely-Nicely confesses his sins, of which the assembled mission workers and gamblers cleanse him. After this rousing spiritual, Sarah is told by Nathan that Sky said he lost his bet, and that the mission girl didn't go to Cuba. Sarah goes off looking for Sky and meets Adelaide. In their duet, "Marry the Man Today," the two main plots featuring Sky and Sarah, Nathan and Adelaide, are resolved. This number, Goddard Lieberson says:

> . . . goes far beyond the function of a show song since the lyrics serve to resolve the entire plot. The music, couched in misterioso Gilbert and Sullivan style, forewarns us of the grim determination of the two girls who sing the song, and the lyrics develop a philosophy which leads them to the action which finished the story.[23]

Loesser himself explains the broader application of the song beyond the show's context. He says:

> "All this says . . . is what every woman is always teaching her daughter: get the man, marry him, then worry about him. But you can't do anything with him until you marry him first. Sure the lyrics have to be right for a Broadway show anyhow. But if the generalization ain't there, you got yourself a limited edition."[24]

The musical ends happily with both couples getting married.

Once the book was written, the casting of Guys and Dolls began. According to the Dramatists' Guild, both author and music and lyric

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[22]Swerling, op. cit., p. 363. [23]Lieberson, op. cit.

[24]Schuman, op. cit.

writer must be present at casting and must approve of the choice of actor. He "had certain sounds he wanted," said Burrows, ". . . and he wanted real singers, real stage singers."[25] Burrows said that Loesser felt "louder was better," and that he was very vocal in his desires because the composer is "also in a sense the musical director. He coaches the singers, works with the vocal coach, works with the arranger. . . . The composer always had the choice of the conductor."[26] The musical director for Guys and Dolls was Loesser's old friend and collaborator, Irving Actman.

Loesser had to make several compromises in the casting of Guys and Dolls in order to get actors who could create the comic roles that were envisioned. According to stage manager, Henri Caubisens, "if it wasn't for Loesser, Bob Alda would not have played [Sky Masterson]. . . ." Caubisens went on to say that it was Alda's portrayal of the character and not his singing voice (which wasn't "good" according to Caubisens) that convinced Loesser to give Alda the role. "Most composers would have wanted a man that had a great voice and everything--he sang some beautiful songs--but Loesser really cast Alda. . . ."[27] because, according to Burrows, "we kind of liked Bob's looks and manner."[28]

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[25]Burrows, op. cit. [26]Ibid.

[27]Caubisens, op. cit. [28]Burrows, op. cit.

According to Abe Burrows, many actresses auditioned for the role of Adelaide but "Vivian [Blaine] came on and did a great audition so we bought her."[29] The role of Sarah Brown was not as easily filled. Rehearsals had been in progress for two days before Isabel Bigley came in and auditioned. According to Caubisens, ". . . we had auditioned every girl singer in town. What they wanted was that nice quality, that saintly quality which Isabel Bigley had and that's how she got it. The other characters, my God, we went to night clubs and low dives and finally we got them."[30]

The hiring of Sam Levene for the role of Nathan Detroit led to some problems. "Sam Levene was the perfect choice," said Abe Burrows, but he "couldn't sing, he couldn't carry a tune, so we had to move numbers."[31] Later on Burrows remarked that when companies of Guys and Dolls were being cast for stock or for the road, the actors playing Nathan Detroit always asked him why they didn't have more than the one song, "Sue Me."[32]

Burrows remembered Levene's inability to sing as being the only musical problem in the show. Burrows said:

> We had to give some of his numbers to other people. He had one song, finally, in the show ["Sue Me"]; he was originally meant to have four. A lot of composers would have said get me somebody else. But Sam was so perfect for the part that Frank went with him and we tried to help him musically and sort of straightened out the lines so it wouldn't be difficult. But Sam was tone deaf. . . . The

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[29] Ibid. [30] Caubisens, op. cit. [31] Burrows, op. cit.

[32] Ibid.

> number "Guys and Dolls" was sung by the two fellows instead of Sam. It was really Sam's lead number. There were several; he was in "Rockin' the Boat" and in the final version he just mouthed it. We told him don't sing because he spoiled the harmony.[33]

Thus, Stubby Kaye who achieved a personal triumph in the role of Nicely-Nicely Johnson, owes his success in the big Act II revival number, "Sit Down, You're Rockin' The Boat," to Sam Levene who was not a good singer.

The musical was given its final form during the rehearsal period and out of town tryout. After a 1966 revival of Guys and Dolls, John Chapman of the Daily News remembered Loesser telling him of a song that was eliminated from the score when Burrows suggested that "the oldest established. . ." line might make a better one. The song, in which the crap shooters are standing around waiting for Nathan to tell them where the action is going to be, was later used in The Most Happy Fella. That song was "Standing On The Corner."[34] Chapman is contradicted by Cy Feuer who said, "Frank played it for me after having just written it, which was many years later."[35] Abe Burrows agreed with John Chapman:

> It was written for Guys and Dolls originally. . . . That is the story of all composers, and that is the reason why there is no such thing as a new kid coming up and writing a musical. It takes awhile

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[33]Burrows, op. cit.

[34]John Chapman, "Fine Set of Song Hits Revived In City Center's 'Guys and Dolls,'" Daily News (June 9, 1966), p. 96.

[35]Feuer, op. cit.

> because all professional writers . . . have a trunk; a trunk has become a pejorative word but it really isn't. It's a song that he decided didn't fit there. All the guys you work with, if they are honest . . . would say I had something that didn't work . . . but I think it'll work here. . . . [When asked if the lyrics were changed for Fella he said] not really.[36]

A song cut out of town was one called "Traveling Light," a "three-four jazz thing." It was placed in the first scene and was sung by Nathan and Sky.[37] Nathan asks Sky why he's going to Havana without a girl and Sky answers, "I like to travel light. . . ."[38] This is probably the place the song was meant to fit. Feuer commented, "It never worked. We tried it for weeks and weeks. I staged it half a dozen different ways and it never came off. I cut it, actually, before the last preview in New York."[39] According to Variety, "'Traveling Light' was replaced by a song 'Action' (probably 'Oldest Established . . .')."[40]

"A Bushel and A Peck" was originally intended as the Act II opener, but it was moved to Act I when, on the last matinee in Philadelphia, "Take Back Your Mink" took its place. Later in Act I, Sarah sings a song to Sky in Havana. "If I Were A Bell" was in and out of the show and rearranged several times before it was given to Sarah. At one point it was given to Adelaide "out of desperation . . . and that didn't work."[41] Henri Caubisens remembered:

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[36]Burrows, op. cit. [37]Feuer, op. cit.

[38]Swerling, op. cit., p. 303. [39]Feuer, op. cit.

[40]"Two New Songs into 'Dolls' in Last-Minute Shifts," Variety (November 1, 1950).

[41]Feuer, op. cit.

> We knew that there was a segment there that was not right and Mr. Kaufman knew it and Mr. Kaufman was not a great musical man. Mr. Kaufman had a more book--story mind. And this is why Frank Loesser to me was so wonderful. . . . He put that song in every place in the show but it never fit and everybody said oh, let's leave it, and Frank Loesser would not. [He said] . . . its not the right spot for it. Everybody sang it, Stubby Kaye, Vivian Blaine, and God I was running out, getting furniture with the property man, because they'd say: we need a chaise lounge here, let's have her singing it lying . . . Well, it didn't fit. So finally they all got together: Cy Feuer, Ernie Martin and Kaufman and they said, this needs a dance sequence . . . where a girl goes to Havana and its got to be done all in musical pantomine. Well that's how it was done. . . . finally after all those days and days and days. You know when it went in? Friday before we opened in New York.[42]

Abe Burrows also remembered that changes had to be made. He recalled:

> Songs were thrown out frequently because the people you cast weren't able to do it. One number required a man who could dance and our leading man couldn't . . . it was sort of designed for a dancer. . . . otherwise everything was kept. It was a thrilling way for me to work because the songs were guidelines and in general . . . nothing didn't fit. We changed, and some of the dialogue went to other songs.[43]

During the rehearsal period of Guys and Dolls, Frank Loesser privately coached the singers. These sessions didn't follow Actor's Equity rules since they usually took place in time not allotted to rehearsal, but Cy Feuer explained "he was a fascinating guy and they [the actors] liked them [the songs] and he'd have them up to the house and that's how they would work . . . a social thing."[44] Henri Caubisens remembered that "My Time of Day" was one of Loesser's favorite songs

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[42]Caubisens, op. cit. [43]Burrows, op. cit.

[44]Feuer, op. cit.

and that he worked privately with Robert Alda, both on the words and the music. Loesser was very concerned about the nuances.[45]

Loesser was always present at rehearsals. Abe Burrows remembered that once Loesser lost his temper:

> He would talk roughly sometimes, but he wasn't a roughneck. Very polite guy in company. I once saw him hit a leading lady [i.e., Isabel Bigley] . . . . He got so frustrated. She was doing something with a note and he hit her in front of all of us. . . . He looked and suddenly she began to laugh and we all laughed, but he really hit her--bam! . . . She was breaking in the middle of a note and he felt it was a lack of courage on her part. . . . people who go from the chest tone into soprano or soprano into the chest, they're afraid to go. . . . high in the chest. They go and go and suddenly they break into soprano. He felt she was breaking out of cowardice, which she was; but it's an emotional thing. The word coward is a bad word. . . . [The song was] "I'll Know When My Love Comes Along"--if you hear the record to this day, the original record--you'll hear soprano, "I'll know when my love . . . " [Burrows then dropped into a lower key] "comes along."[46]

Henri Caubisens remembered Loesser as an incessant talker, a nervous and intense man; "when he was working you couldn't come near him, he was just like a wild man."[47] Once George S. Kaufman wanted to use the stage at one o'clock for a rehearsal and Loesser agreed, but at the appointed hour Loesser was still working on finding a spot for "If I Were A Bell." Caubisens saw Kaufman coming down the aisle, and once again reminded Loesser of the time. Loesser's less than polite answer was so blasphemous that "Mr. Kaufman turned right around and walked out."[48]

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[45] Caubisens, op. cit.

[46] Burrows, op. cit.

[47] Caubisens, op. cit.

[48] Ibid.

Caubisens also remembered that Loesser had true pitch and could put his hand to his ear, hum a note and have someone write the music down. "And that's how he used to compose."[49] Loesser continued to use this technique even after he studied music formally in preparation for The Most Happy Fella.

Guys and Dolls opened in New York and was a critical and popular hit. Robert Coleman wrote in the Daily Mirror: "It has everything, as a top-flight stake runner should,"[50] while John McClain wrote in the Journal American, "It is a triumph and a delight, and I think it will last as long as the roof remains on the Forty-Sixth Street Theatre."[51] The daily reviewers praised the score; however, it is interesting to note that many of them praised Loesser primarily because the songs seemed to grow directly out of the libretto. Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times wrote, "Mr. Loesser's lyrics have the same affectionate appreciation of the material as the book, which is funny without being self-conscious or mechanical."[52] The New York Post's Richard Watts, Jr., wrote,

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Robert Coleman, "Runyon's 'Guys and Dolls' Proves Magnificent Hit," Daily Mirror (November 25, 1950) in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1950 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1950), p. 186.

[51] John McClain quoted on "Record liner notes for 'Guys and Dolls,'" Decca, DL 9023.

[52] Brooks Atkinson, "At the Theatre," New York Times (November 25, 1950) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1950 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1950), p. 185.

"Frank Loesser, who provided the book and lyrics, has likewise kept effectively in the proper mood. He has written some good, tuneful songs . . . and his lyrics in addition to being lively, adept and amusing, retain the Runyon spirit as faithfully as the Burrows-Swerling book."[53] Robert Coleman of the Daily Mirror noted, "His lyrics are especially notable in that they help Burrows' topical gags to further the plot."[54] The integration that was achieved here was the kind of seamless work Loesser strived for in all his later works.

Goddard Lieberson, in the Saturday Review, commented that "the lyrics for 'Fugue for Tinhorns,' 'The Oldest Established,' 'Adelaide's Lament,' 'Sue Me [sic.],' etc., are as hard-driving, laugh-provoking, and plot-furthering as any of the dramatic lines in the show."[55]

Lieberson, in discussing Guys and Dolls, also writes:

> Loesser's music is perhaps the most variegated of any popular composer around. . . . His tunes and lyrics range from audible cartoons to nocturnal landscapes and cover nearly everything in between, including canons, fugues, jingles, strettos, adagios, cantatas, incipient sonatas, and minute-operas, such as his famous "Baby, It's Cold Outside."
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> He is quick with words as with tunes, and equally knowledgeable. This is particularly so in the areas of cant, slang, and Menckenian obscurities, which serve him to great advantage in "Guys and Dolls." At the same time, he is capable of genuine lyric beauty, or quick transitions to sophistries dealing with such subjects as the psychosomatic origins of the common cold.[56]

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[53]Richard Watts, Jr., "The Lively World of Damon Runyon," New York Post (November 26, 1950) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1950 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1950), p. 187.

[54]Coleman, op. cit., p. 186.

[55]Lieberson, op. cit., p. 45.

[56]Ibid., p. 32.

Hal Prince, the producer-director, feels that Guys and Dolls is "The perfect show of its kind. . . . it's the perfect entertainment musical, it's everything."[57]

Guys and Dolls' integration of book, lyrics, and music was so complete that this "Musical Fable of Broadway" has become one of America's best examples of musical comedy. For it, Loesser wrote his, up until then, most sophisticated music in what is seemingly the ingenuous form of comic-strip, good-time, New York lowlife. Loesser expanded his musical potential while writing comic songs, love ballads, and lyrical odes to the city. The scope of this accomplishment is evident, yet six years later Loesser pushed himself even further by writing The Most Happy Fella, Loesser's concept for this was more adventurous than most musicals of the time.

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[57]Prince, op. cit.

CHAPTER V

THE MOST HAPPY FELLA

> The word that he used all the time was romance, truthfully; you see I had a scene in Guys and Dolls where Sky Masterson is standing with Sarah and he looks at her and says "Obediah" and she says "What?" He said, "Obediah," that's my real name. I've never told it to anyone else.
>
> I said to Frank, that's the best love scene I ever wrote. And Frank just wanted to hit me; he wanted a real expression of it. . . . He wanted room for a musical saying of it. . . . He used to love the funny stuff but he wanted an area where there's nothing but romance. That was his real love. That's why he wrote The Most Happy Fella. . . .[1]

The Most Happy Fella, a musical in three acts written entirely by Frank Loesser, played its first of 678 performances at the Imperial Theater on May 3, 1956. Samuel Taylor, the playwright, had suggested to Loesser that Sidney Howard's Pulitzer Prize winning play, They Knew What They Wanted would be a perfect vehicle for a musical. Loesser almost didn't take Taylor's advice. Loesser admitted, "I was recalling only the tragic element of the play because in my mind, it had also been the most memorable."[2]

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[1]Burrows, op. cit.

[2]"Some Loesser Thoughts on 'The Most Happy Fella,'" in Souvenir Program for the New York Production of The Most Happy Fella [n.p.].

Loesser further stated:

> But at Sam's insistence I re-read the piece several times--stripping it as I went along of its difficult-to-sing-or-dance items, such as the topical stuff about the labor situation in the 1920's, the discussion of religion, etc. What was left seemed to me to be a very warm simple love story, happy ending and all, and dying to be sung and danced.[3]

For this three act musical, Loesser did not want the individual numbers listed in the program because the music is so integral a part of the show that there is scarcely a moment when someone isn't singing or dancing; or if someone is speaking that there isn't music being played beneath the dialogue. Loesser explained his purpose this way:

> I guess I got carried away by my tendency to write emotional pieces about love (of sweetheart, home town, mother, etc.) as well as my feelings for what some professionals call "score integration." They tell me that means the moving of plot through the singing of lyrics. In "The Most Happy Fella" I found a rich playground in which to indulge both my "integration" and my Tin Pan Alley leanings. Sidney Howard had provided no obstacles. No talking plot scenes about who stole the jewels. No leading characters with distinctly emotional purpose.[4]

For this musically ambitious show, Loesser taught himself formal music theory before he attempted to write the show. Jule Styne commented:

> His musical knowledge was amazing. Well, he came from a musical family. But then having worked with so many fellows, he knew what was good and what was bad. . . . He educated himself to music for about three or four years when he already had it made. Before he did Most Happy Fella he worked very conscientiously and learned the usage of harmonic patterns and what their function is, which I don't think he knew before. . . .[5]

The musical was a long time in preparation, commented Margie Gans, who worked for Frank Music, Incorporated, Loesser's music

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[3] Ibid. [4] Ibid. [5] Jule Styne, op. cit.

publishing firm, from 1952-1962. She remembered: "Most Happy Fella, he started before he came to New York, before I went to work for him in 1952. I don't know what year he started doing the research to get the rights for that show. . . . I guess about 1953 he had several rough drafts that he had done and thrown away and taken back."[6] Kermit Bloomgarden, the co-producer of The Most Happy Fella recalled:

> Well first of all when I got into the picture, he had been working on it for several years. He had done the book, he had done the music and he had done the lyrics, so it was completely his show. I got into the picture when his former wife Lynn Loesser came to town looking for somebody to co-produce the play with her. . . . And after having a meeting with her and subsequently with Frank, they decided to let me co-produce the play which I wanted to do. Now I still hadn't heard anything or read anything. Finally when I went out to the coast, I think it was about two o'clock in the morning, he started playing the score for me. Now the way Frank works. . . . The music was in his head. Frank could not put the notes on paper. When he was finally finished, he called in a pianist to put the score down. I'll never forget the night he played it for me; it was quite wonderful. I was very excited by the score and everything. When he'd make a mistake, there would be a "shit" thrown in and there must have been more "shits" than I ever heard in my life everytime he hit a clinker. This went on till six o'clock in the morning and of course I was exhilarated listening to the score and was anxious to produce the play.[7]

Loesser had always been known as an indefatigable worker. It was this hard work and discipline that enabled him to complete such an ambitious project. Margie Gans, who worked for Frank Music and as Loesser's assistant on The Most Happy Fella, remembered her old boss:

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[6]Interview with Margie Gans, assistant, September 26, 1972.

[7]Interview with Kermit Bloomgarden, producer, September 28, 1972.

> As far as his working habits, he was the strangest man in that he always had a schedule for doing things. He had a yellow sheet of paper and he had his dates and he knew when every single moment of his time [was] scheduled although he acted as if he was a very relaxed man and didn't have any appointments at all. He would get up at six o'clock in the morning and if he was up you were up cause the phone would ring. . . .
>
> Frank was a very intense man and he picked everybody's brains and did it very nicely. He also made you feel as if you were the most important thing in his life at the moment. . . .
>
> He was very curious about everything and when it came to technical things, when there would be a certain prop or something like that, he would find out how it worked and if he didn't like the way he saw it, he would invent something to make it work better. . . . He had that sort of mind. . . .
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> He was always working, doing something at the piano, always writing something. I don't recall any time when he wasn't, even if it was ten minutes during the day, or he wasn't helping somebody to write. . . . I think in a way it was a form of competition for himself, to keep up; if he discovered somebody that had great talent it made him work even harder, because it was a challenge for him. But he wasn't afraid to promote people. They might have resented it at the time thinking "who is he to tell me that I can't do this or I should do that?" But I think they all learned a little bit by having his criticism. . . .
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> He had the greatest sense of humor in the world; it was dirty and I don't think there was any word in the English language that he didn't use. But he used it properly so you weren't insulted by it at all. . . .
>
> He also didn't patronize anybody. . . . Everybody has a right to some sort of say and he respected you for that. He didn't put you down or anything like that. I think he had a great desire to do more than he did in his life. He died much too soon because he really had a great deal of talent. . . . "[8]

In The Most Happy Fella, Loesser was trying to have his score underline and heighten the complicated emotional involvements of the characters. According to him, the musical contains five love stories: the consequence of pure sexual attraction in the Joey-Rosabella plot;

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[8]Gans, op. cit.

the destructiveness of family possessiveness and jealousy shown in the portrait of Tony's sister Marie; the community's affection for one of its members, Tony; the young love of Herman and Cleo; and the mature understanding reached by Tony and Rosabella.[9] Loesser said, "'I tried to emotionalize everything so you know which way people are going. . . . what's he doing, what's he want? That's where the music comes in for me.'"[10] Loesser went back to the 1927 Show Boat to describe the objectives he had in mind for The Most Happy Fella. Show Boat, he felt was the turning point for the American musical, for in it the authors managed to write a serious drama in which the audience's emotions were more deeply stirred than is usual in musical comedy.[11] This is in part because Show Boat contains music of a wide emotional range, from the romantic "Make Believe" to the comic "Life Upon the Wicked Stage" to the powerful "Ol' Man River."

The undertaking of The Most Happy Fella in terms of scope and time did not surprise Jule Styne. Styne said:

> He was very ambitious and wanted to do more, but I think the thing that stopped him from doing more was . . . that [it] is very difficult for a fellow to write both [in this case music and lyrics] at the level Frank worked. There are many fellows who do both but not at any special level. . . . The Most Happy Fella was a very ambitious effort. It didn't come out like he wanted it to,

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[9]"Some Loesser Thoughts," op. cit.

[10]Gilbert Millstein, "The Greater Loesser," New York Times Magazine (May 20, 1956), p. 22.

[11]Ibid.

> but the try was always more important to Frank than the ultimate result. Money was never a big thing. . . . he was trying for an American opera. . . .[12]

Styne continued in the vein of why and how the musical didn't live up to its author's expectations:

> There came moments when you ran the show and the show wasn't working right and you do a song like "Standing On the Corner." Well that is an out and out popular song. He never could escape the popular song. . . . When we discussed it he said, "you know come to think of it I am in a very unique business. I'm an American," he said, "served in the wars. You know what, we've only got three cultures in this country that are original with us--that is, American popular song, Blues and the Musical Comedy. The rest is all from the other side, the painting, and the symphonies, and the book writings and the Shakespeare. That's from another world." He said, "I'm very unique, and I feel that since I am recognized as one of the better lyric writers I want to write better things. . . ."[13]

The plot of The Most Happy Fella deals with the middle-aged Tony Esposito falling in love with a young waitress he calls Rosabella, whom he sees in a San Francisco restaurant. Loesser manages to suggest the personality of his characters in our first meeting with them. Cleo, a waitress friend of Rosabella, sings "Ooh, My Feet" a lamentation dealing with the occupational hazards of waiting tables. Cleo sings:

> This little piggy feels the weight of the plate.
> Though the freight's just an order of melba toast.
> And this little piggy is the littlest little piggy,
> But the big son of a bitch hurts the most![14]

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[12]Styne, op. cit. [13]Ibid.

[14]Frank Loesser, The Most Happy Fella in Theatre Arts (October, 1958), p. 28.

Rosabella starts to tell Cleo about a tip a customer left her when Cleo interrupts with the song fragment "Seven Million Crumbs and a Gravy Spot." Rosabella interrupts her to show her an amethyst tie pin with a note that becomes another song fragment which goes:

> I call you Rosabella
> Because I don [sic] no [sic] you. . . .
> And I am too a-scared to ast [sic].
> I can - no leeve [sic] you money on the tabel [sic].
> You look to [sic] nice.
> And so I leeve you my genuin Amotist [sic] tie pin.

The note continues with:

> What I see is kind [sic] of young lady,
> I want to get marry.[15]

Rosabella is moved by the note from the stranger and she sings about "Somebody Somewhere" to need her and take care of her. The song betrays the inner longings of the wise-cracking waitress for something gentle. She sings:

> Somebody somewhere
> Wants me and needs me,
> And that's very wonderful to know.[16]

In Scene II, Tony is introduced to the audience in the huge chorus number "The Most Happy Fella." The opening of the song describes Tony's trip to San Francisco, his meeting with Rosabella, and their subsequent courtship by mail. Marie, Tony's sister, enters and tries to dissuade Tony from his romance. She is shocked when Tony, repeating the musical phrase sung by Rosabella when she read his letter, tells his

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[15] Ibid., p. 29. [16] Ibid., p. 30.

sister he wants to marry the girl. Marie tries to win Tony's sympathy by reminding him, in song, that their dying mother put Tony in Marie's protection. Marie jeers at the picture of himself that Tony wishes to send to his young correspondent.

Herman, one of Tony's farm hands, and three of his friends enter. They muse on the boss's having a girl friend, and then sing the popular song "Standing On The Corner." This number is followed by Joe's haunting song "Joey" in which he tells Tony that it is time for Joe to go now that Tony no longer needs him. Knowing that Joe is leaving, Tony convinces the young man to have his picture taken. Tony plans to send Joe's picture to Rosabella and the scene ends with Tony's musically expansive and lyrical aria, "Rosabella."

Scene III opens with three of Tony's farmhands, Pasquale, Ciccio and Guisseppe checking out the wedding feast that will soon begin. They sing, in Italian, the joyous "Abbondanza." Joe, seeing all the lavish preparations, then tells Tony he plans to stay for the party. Tony has assumed Joe would be gone by this time, and, somewhat in shock, leaves for the train station to fetch his bride.

The next scene opens with the neighbors expressing their delight over the wedding feast in the chorus number, "Sposalizio." After a big dance number, everyone enters and Rosabella is brought in by the Postman, who found her alone at the station. Joe happens to be there to meet her, but before they can exchange anything more than a glance, the entire

chorus enters, bidding Rosabella welcome. After she is greeted, she and Joe are once more alone, and Rosabella, feeling quite comfortable, sings about how glad she is to be there, ending her outburst to Joe with:

> Tell me
> Aren't you glad? I mean, glad I'm here?
> You know
> Here beside you.
> Tony dear?[17]

Joe tells Rosabella about Tony's being an old man, and about his helping Tony write the love letters. Rosabella is deeply humiliated, and at that point, Tony's injured body is brought in; in his fear of meeting Rosabella, he has run his car off the road. Rosabella, who thinks Joe has been mocking her all along, defiantly marries Tony before he drifts off into a drugged sleep. Immediately following the ceremony, Joe sings "Don't Cry" to Rosabella, but instead of her going back to her sleeping husband, she succumbs to the wild emotions that have been building within her from the moment she saw Joe, and they passionately embrace.

Kermit Bloomgarden remembered that he was able to get Loesser to change the original ending of the first act, where Rosabella, responding to her shocked surprise at finding Tony an injured old man, succumbs to Joe's animal magnetism. According to Bloomgarden, Loesser and Abe Burrows, who had come down to Philadelphia, felt that the end of the first act was rape. Bloomgarden felt that it couldn't be rape if two people

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[17]Loesser, The Most Happy Fella, p. 37.

were willingly coming together. After a long, angry argument, Loesser and Burrows finally acquiesced to Bloomgarden.[18]

However, Bloomgarden said that he was unable to effect a change in the opening of Act II. He said:

> We had a running quarrel about one scene which I never could get changed, before rehearsal, during rehearsal, after it ran for a year, or after it played in London, and that was the opening of the Second Act . . . I felt there was an obligatory scene implied in the play. The opening of the Second Act there was a song "Cold and Dead." This apparently happened sometime after Rosabella and Joey had gone to sleep together. And by this time Rosabella had fallen in love with Tony, and in the course of the song where the cast froze. . . . Joey and Rosabella sang the song . . . the nature of the song was to say: it's over, forget it. I felt that for Rosabella's character she needed a scene with Joey, a very short scene saying please get out of here, because what we did on my wedding night was wrong, and I'm going to tell Tony because I love him and I want him to know. I felt that later on it would have paid off, when she announced that she was pregnant at the end of the act. It always got a laugh; because the audience didn't really know whether Tony with his body broken up had gone to sleep with her, or Joey, and it was a laugh. Whereas . . . I felt if the audience knew that she wanted to tell Tony and still had a chance to tell him, and now she was pregnant, the sympathy would have gone completely with her. . . . But I never could convince Frank to write that scene. I think I was right. . . .[19]

Although Loesser was obdurate about not writing a new scene for Joey and Rosabella, he was not loath to remove music that he was convinced did not work. Bloomgarden remembers that the first act originally ended with a beautiful aria called "He Looked At Me With Eyes Like A Stranger," that had been written for Tony's sister, Marie, but a secondary character could not end the act, since Joey and Rosabella had just exited

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[18]Bloomgarden, op. cit. [19]Ibid.

to the barn. The song, "a magnificent piece of music, magnificent lyrics. . . ."[20] was cut from the show.

Joseph Anthony, the director, recalled that there had been a song written for Tony, who sat on the porch and sang about a potential baby, but the song was cut "simply because the score was thought to be becoming too heavy, too much music. . . ."[21] Another number that was replaced by dialogue was a song for Rosabella late in the play's first scene. The song reflected how the girl felt about having a house and garden, about wanting a different life. Anthony felt that this song showed the vulnerability of a girl who would send her picture away and become a mail-order bride. The cutting, Anthony felt, compromised to some extent the show's original intention.[22]

Scene I of Act II takes place a week later. After we hear the workers singing over their chores, we hear Joe and Rosabella singing that their passion was only for the moment, and that everything between them is "Cold and Dead." This number segues back into the workers' song, and is then followed by a scene in which Tony, in a wheelchair, and Rosabella, re-introduce themselves after clearing the air about the fake photograph. "Happy To Make Your Acquaintance" is a light tune in the middle of which Cleo, whom Tony has hired both to work in the vineyards

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Interview with Joseph Anthony, director, April 17, 1972.

[22] Ibid.

and to be near Rosabella, enters; the song is finished with the three of them singing.

Marie is asked to show Cleo where to clean up. The two women sing the contrapuntal "I Don't Like This Dame," in which Marie complains about the disparity in age between her brother and sister-in-law, and Cleo states the sentiments of the song's title. The scene ends with Cleo's meeting Herman, their discovery that they are both from Dallas, Texas, and the rousing chorus number "Big D."

Given the serious intent of The Most Happy Fella and the special preparations Loesser made in learning formal music theory for it, it is interesting to observe that the inclusion of the two songs "Big D" and "Standing On The Corner" raised critical questions. The songs achieved a widespread popular success, but given the musical context in which they appear, stand out in style and mood from the rest of the score. The question that arises here is: do the songs indeed belong in the score or was Loesser somewhat unsure of his venture into a more ambitious medium? The question becomes pertinent when we consider that this musical was the first in which Frank Loesser had full artistic control of book and score.

Howard Taubman of the New York Times remarked that by including "Standing On The Corner" and "Big D" in the score, "Mr. Loesser has

submitted to the tyranny of show business."[23] When asked why Loesser included these two popular songs in a score that strived to be musically serious, Abe Burrows replied, "He liked them,"[24] while Margie Gans responded, "You have to write commercial songs. I don't think he felt he was selling out. . . . I think he wanted a little humor in it some place along the line and yes, the public would like it."[25]

Joseph Anthony felt that the inclusion of this material was still another compromise with Loesser's original impulse.[26]

> The Broadway crowd, the music world came down and worked on us and on our sense of the audience. The audience is not certain with new forms. They don't respond as well. You put in a "Big D" and you're going to get a big hand. You put in a lot of high-jinks in the dances and you're going to get more, but in the last analysis you say, wait a minute these are vineyard, farm hands; now where the hell do they learn this type of dancing? They're dancers, they are Broadway dancers, they are not field hands, and that is the difference.[27]

According to Kermit Bloomgarden, "Standing On The Corner" was in the score at least from the time Loesser had played it for him on the West Coast. Bloomgarden further remarked:

> "Big D" came because we needed something in that particular spot and this is what he came up with. He was satisfied and unsatisfied with the score in that extent. I don't know what he felt about "Standing On The Corner," but I do know that "Big D" was an additional piece of music that he put into the show--the only new song that I can remember that he put into the show.[28]

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[23]Howard Taubman, "Broadway Musical: Trend Toward Ambitious Use of Music Exemplified by 'Most Happy Fella,'" New York Times (October 6, 1956).

[24]Burrows, op. cit. [25]Gans, op. cit.

[26]Anthony, op. cit. [27]Ibid. [28]Bloomgarden, op. cit.

Remembering these two songs in particular, Joseph Anthony said:

> "Big D" you know, it was really popped up into a typical Broadway type thing which meant it lost all character with the Napa Valley that he really loved. These things were token additions to pick it up and try to make it for a large popular audience. I think that was a bad mistake. I think it cheapened his talent, not to say that when I use that word cheap I have to be careful, because it suggests a snobbishness about popular theatre. I think there is such a thing as popular theatre and I think one of the great things about Frank was that he could capture that large mass comprehension of a lyric like, you know, an inspired line like "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" . . . I mean that's a thing that can touch everybody in the whole United States and yet its rich and strong and meaningful and honest. But in Most Happy Fella he straddled the two worlds and that showed, I thought, a lack of artistic courage. And this should, I think, have been its own form. He should have ditched "Big D" and "Standing On The Corner": they are pop and they were tokens. . . . But in our earliest conversations he himself was aware that he was doing this. It wasn't an unconscious thing. He said, "Joe, you know, there are other people too, if we want them to come they have to have their dish too." Well, we argued the point and I conceded it because in a certain sense I respected his judgment about musical theatre more than my own. It was, after all, the first one that I was taking on totally on my own. I was not attracted to those numbers, not at all. I thought that they were out of keeping, they were Broadway, they were not this Napa California vineyard world.[29]

Scene II occurs some days later. It is composed of Tony and Rosabella's "How Beautiful The Days," sung against Marie's statement of jealousy and Joe's decision to leave. This quartette ends with Tony and Rosabella in a beatific mood. The scene is followed by Scene III, which takes place some time later. Marie in "Young People Gotta Dance," continues to point out to her brother the large age difference between him and Rosabella while Rosabella sings to her husband "Warm All Over," a song protesting her love. This romantic scene is followed by a

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[29]Anthony, op. cit.

parallel comic love scene between Cleo and Herman, in which Cleo tries to convince the usually placid Herman not to be so easily pushed around by the other farm hands. Herman sings "I Like Everybody," a comically optimistic tune.

By the next scene another month has passed and Tony is on crutches. He has remained aloof from his bride, but Rosabella protests that her love for Tony is not that of a child, but of a full grown woman. Tony next sings a lushly romantic duet with his wife entitled "My Heart Is So Full of You," and decides to hold the postponed wedding party that night. While dancing for joy, Rosabella becomes faint. She tells Tony the dizzy spell is nothing, but tells Cleo she is expecting a baby. The Act ends with Tony, unaware of the turn of events, singing about his sweetheart.

Act III opens with a reprise of the spirited "Abbondanza," which segues into a quarrel between Cleo and Herman because Herman has been made the butt of a joke by the other workers. Cleo wants him to stand up for himself. Following this comic moment, there is heard the delicate strains of "Song of a Summer Night," sung by the chorus, but the mood is broken by Rosabella's confession that she is expecting Joe's baby. In a rage, Tony tells Rosabella to get out, and, brandishing a pistol, rushes out to find Joe.

In constructing his work, Loesser attempted to free himself from the traditional uses of dialogue and song. He said, "'I'm kind of

hipped on the idea that there aren't any rules. I want to combine some things that are said to have certain rules and some that are said to have certain other rules.'"[30]

When Rosabella makes her big confession to Tony, it is in dialogue and not in song. Usually for moments of high emotion in musical comedy, the characters break into song. Here, Loesser successfully reversed the process in order to achieve a desired contrast. After the confession about her carrying Joe's baby, which is delivered in a series of short speeches, Rosabella then sings, proclaiming her love for Tony. In his daily review in the New York World-Telegram and the Sun William Hawkins noted, "The solemn passages are something else again. The composer has been bound by no convention. He does a dialogue where spoken lines are the alternate replies to lines sung. He lets a line of speech gather momentum until it turns into song. He suddenly interrupts a flood of music, for tremendous suspense."[31]

Loesser also felt the work had a sense of symmetry by saying, "'I like my stuff to rhyme. I think there's a more memorable quality to it than in the loose recitative form.'"[32] Thus all the set musical numbers in

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[30]Millstein, op. cit., p. 22.

[31]William Hawkins, "'Most Happy Fella' Hits Happy Note," New York World-Telegram and the Sun (May 4, 1956), in The New York Critics' Review: 1956 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1956), p. 309.

[32]Millstein, op. cit.

the show are complete songs, unless there was an idea which could not be communicated in song. Then the dialogue is underscored musically.

Commenting on this fluidity between song and dialogue, Loesser said, "'To say that "Seven Million Crumbs and A Gravy Spot" is a song, or that "Young People Gotta Dance" is a song, would be a misnomer. They're lines from a play. But they're sung as if they were songs, because I like that form. They have more appeal.'"[33] Commenting on "I Don't Like This Dame," Loesser said, "'I use this form [a two part invention for soprano saxaphone and mezzo-soprano voice] because I like the sound of it and I don't think the form belongs in any special niche.'"[34]

The musical's last scene takes place at the Napa depot. Joe is leaving, but not with Rosabella, as Tony thinks. Before he departs he sings his plaintive "Joey" theme once more. He exits, and Cleo and Rosabella enter, ready to leave Napa by bus. Tony comes on looking for Joe and Rosabella, only to discover from two of his farm hands that Joe has left alone, and that he has sent a message of goodbye to Tony and his wife. Tony sees his wife on the bus and his anger slowly dissipates into concern as he sings that she has no place to go, no money. He also realizes that she could have just run off, with no explanation about the baby. He decides she must return home with him. Marie tries to convince Tony to let Rosabella go, and Cleo finally tells Marie off. Marie and Cleo continue to fight as Tony goes into the bus looking for his wife.

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[33] Ibid. [34] Ibid.

Pasquale, meanwhile, has come to Marie's defense and has pushed Cleo down; Herman finally asserts himself and slugs Pasquale, much to Cleo's delight. Thus in one dramatic confrontation, Tony rids himself of Marie's smothering love, and realizes his need for Rosabella. Cleo tells Marie off and is reconciled to Herman. Tony tells Rosabella he understands that the fear that forced him to send her Joe's picture, was the same kind of confused emotion that caused her to sleep with Joe. The musical ends with the weaving together of all of Tony's love themes for Rosabella. The finale becomes the jubilant reprise "The Most Happy Fella."

Having conceived the entire production, Loesser had a very active hand in casting the show. He was searching for voices that could sing his score. He did not want to rely on actors who could not sing his score as written as he had done previously with Robert Alda and Sam Levene in Guys and Dolls. Abe Burrows recalled that in Guys and Dolls, when a performer was chosen for his acting and not his singing, Loesser used to walk around growling. Burrows compared Loesser to Cole Porter, who also used to "hate the way the things were sung."[35] Robert Weede, who had sung at the Metropolitan Opera, was chosen for his voice and the way he looked. Burrows felt that Weede looked like a barrel he couldn't act his way out of, but "Weede could sing and Frank won his point there; he was right."[36] Joseph Anthony, the production's director, remembered that "Weede was pretty much definite"[37] from the beginning.

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[35]Burrows, op. cit. [36]Ibid. [37]Anthony, op. cit.

The roles of Cleo, Herman and Marie were settled rather easily also. Susan Johnson, according to Anthony, came to audition for Cleo and was chosen.[38] Mona Paulee, who was cast as Marie, had been starred with the Metropolitan Opera also. Shorty Long was cast as Herman, and, Joseph Anthony recalled, "Frank had known about [him] and said this is the one."[39] Loesser had known Long "from his singing and doing demonstration songs and singing hillbilly, and that's what he wanted. He wanted sound and he wanted Shorty. Shorty was a natural when it came to something like that" recalled Margie Gans.[40]

Casting the role of Joe, the farm hand who has an affair with Rosabella on her wedding night, proved to be somewhat difficult. Art Lund, who later became closely identified with this role, was not the first choice, nor was he originally signed for the part. Kermit Bloomgarden remembered the situation. He said:

> As far as the casting is concerned certainly he [Loesser] had everything to do with the casting. This was my first musical and I accepted the voices that he wanted. When we got to the actual working on the play, the first time we read the play I realized that we had hired an actor [for Joey] that had a brilliant voice but was not an actor. I thought it was wrong, but made a contract with him for two years at $400 a week, and at the end of the first day I said to Frank: I think we made a mistake, a $40,000 mistake, but your show depends upon it and I think we should get rid of him. At first it was difficult for him to admit that he might have made a mistake. Well finally we got rid of this actor in Boston and we got Art Lund.[41]

Joseph Anthony also remembered the casting of this role. He said:

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[38] Ibid. [39] Anthony, op. cit. [40] Gans, op. cit.

[41] Bloomgarden, op. cit.

> Actually we cast a genuine opera singer for Joey, and he was dropped out of town because he was really pretty much of a stick. A marvelous voice, deep, rich, low baritone, but not much of an actor, just a clunk standing there, you know; a marvelous presence. And when he spoke he spoke with his [here Anthony dropped his pitch] singers' voice, and it didn't work. So we got a really nice Joey, Art Lund; nice voice, everything fine, but not a Joey, not an enigma, no smell of a complex nature.[42]

Margie Gans remembered that Art Lund had auditioned for the role, but had been turned down in favor of the original, Moley Morris. When Morris was fired, Gans said that she suggested Lund, not knowing he had already auditioned. Luckily for him, Lund called Gans in Boston in order to secure tickets for the show. She and Tommy Goodman taught Lund the part for a new audition. Gans concluded her story by saying, "He had everything down pat and never changed the way he did it. . . . Everything he did at the audition he did in the show."[43]

Casting Jo Sullivan in the role of Rosabella was easily done, yet the ramifications for Loesser's personal lifewere to be great. Jo Sullivan, whose two big New York credits before The Most Happy Fella were as Julie in a City Center revival of Carousel, and as the original Polly Peachum in the off-Broadway Theatre De Lys production of The Three-Penny Opera, became Frank Loesser's second wife soon after his 1957 divorce from Lynn Loesser. Miss Sullivan is currently the president of Frank Music, Incorporated, the publishing-leasing firm that Loesser began.

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[42]Anthony, op. cit. [43]Gans, op. cit.

According to Abe Burrows, it was Lynn Loesser who found Jo Sullivan and brought her in for the leading lady of Most Happy Fella.[44]

Joseph Anthony spoke about Miss Sullivan:

> I love Jo. I loved working with her. She has a tremendously true and full voice for a tiny little creature like that. But I don't think that she has the gift of a rich actor's talent. Her body, for instance, rarely responds; it stays kind of minaret correct, upright. . . . I think that what should have been done right at that moment, and it would have been absolutely correct for both the piece and the actress, Judy Garland should have been persuaded to play that part. . . . She had been absent for quite some time, it would have been a problem, and we would have all had to attend her, she's a very neurotic woman, but she would have played the ass off that part and made a vast difference, a vast difference.
>
> It was not even considered. First of all, his [Loesser's] own mood at that point was against us. But I suppose we directors are more willing to take big chances than producers, and I think Frank was determined upon Jo.[45]

Loesser's marriage to Miss Sullivan lasted until his death in 1969. Jule Styne felt it helped to mellow the composer. Styne recalled:

> In later years he had a summer house near West Hampton, a lovely wife and family and stuff like that. He enjoyed that in his later years, you know. . . . He had children with his second wife, and I think he found a very special happiness, and I think she did tremendous things for him, because she made him get some sun on his face. . . .[46]

Thus the casting for The Most Happy Fella was completed. Margie Gans commented on Loesser's general approach to casting a production--an approach used for all other productions he had a hand in. Miss Gans said:

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[44]Burrows, op. cit. [45]Anthony, op. cit.

[46]Styne, op. cit.

> He was interested in seeing new talent. He had a marvelous memory for faces and things. He couldn't remember a name, but he would see somebody he hadn't seen in forty years, before, when he was a boy, and he would remember them by faces, not names. He could tell them where he met them and under what circumstances they had met and things like that. I think when he did casting he pulled out his memory bag or something like that and not names; people who had the ability to interpret what he wrote.[47]

According to all involved, the rehearsal period for The Most Happy Fella was one of conflict between Loesser and his director Joe Anthony. Henri Caubisens, the production's stage manager, felt that it was Loesser who actually directed the musical, not Joe Anthony. Caubisens recalled:

> I think that he directed that show. Of course Joe Anthony was there, but Frank had his ideas and he would whisper in Joe Anthony's ear. . . . He always gave Joe Anthony the right to tell the actors and sometimes they would disagree, but Frank Loesser was really always positive of what he wanted--that was his show.[48]

In an interview, Anthony went on at great length discussing the problems he had working with Loesser. When asked if Loesser had a very strong hand in changing the production in any way, Anthony responded:

> Well you have to know that Frank was an ego-maniac. It's part of his talent, probably. He saw it all so clearly. He heard it so absolutely. He had it so powerfully in mind that it was very hard for him to see it otherwise, so that he talks generously about the contributions of others but in fact, one of the reasons he liked not to work with too powerful pros, names, stars, was because he couldn't coach them. They'd say, "listen, I have my own way." He'd rather have somebody that he could take over to his house and coach. He loved his work, he loved not only writing but composing. . . . but he loved to perform and he loved to coach. He worked on all these people, coaching them like mad, and yes, his imprint was powerfully on every scene, every song, every performer.

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[47]Gans, op. cit. [48]Caubsisens, op. cit.

He wanted everybody to play the part the way he saw it. I think that . . . they're [Loesser's interpretations] always brilliant . . . but they are personal to Frank; they are not the performer's best juice. . . .

In that way he was quite intrusive. Also I think it was during that period that he and his wife Lynn were really going through terrible times, because there were periods where he was so soused [drunk] that he would just come in and stay for ten minutes . . . come away and form an opinion on something he had seen only ten minutes of.

He would just love to come in, and for a half hour entertain the cast out of ego-hunger, which is very time wasting. He had the talent and was a highly entertaining man, but it invariably wasted time. I think there was the period where he would have fired me if Kermit would have permitted it. I think it was all because I was finally saying the cast was beginning to get confused between what Frank was doing with them privately, behind my back, and what I was trying to accomplish with the show. And I think at that point he would have happily gotten rid of me and gotten somebody that he could have manipulated with greater ease. . . .

Frank and I didn't have open conflicts. Frank would throw a fit and walk out, but he couldn't confront. . . . But then you could call him up ten minutes later and say, "Frank, now I know that something's bothering you, let's get together and talk about it," and he'd be able to. He tended not to want to tell exactly what was bothering him. He couldn't stand people not loving him.

I'm certain that at one point he went to Kermit and said, please let Dania [Krupska, the choreographer] take over the direction of the show. Dania never directed in her life before, but I think he knew that I was working on the actors in a different way and had my own convictions about staging, etc. He totally supervised the music, totally. He didn't even permit anybody to do the score for the dances, he did it all himself. . . .

Unity? It put a great strain on him to do that kind of methodcal work, you know, four bars of this, five bars of that, which is so much technical work. He tried to hang on to tunes, melodies, and sometimes dance structure shouldn't be dependent upon that.

But as a musician he was totally in control of all his people and went to every musical rehearsal and kept very strong discipline going there. He had a tremendous ear, I mean he could tell immediately a wrong sound or wrong note was there, so that the copy work was very carefully attended to, perhaps more than by the conductor, Herbie Green. . . .[49]

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[49]Anthony, op. cit.

When interviewed, Kermit Bloomgarden, the musical's co-producer, vividly remembered the days of preparation for the New York opening. Bloomgarden also recalled difficulties concerning the direction of the show:

> Frank was there all the time and very demanding and sometimes very difficult. He had many conflicts with Joe Anthony the director, which he was wrong about. It came from a certain sense of insecurity on Frank's part. . . . Frank was involved with everything. Yes. What he knew or didn't know made no difference, he was involved. It was his show and, as it should be, it has to come back to being what the author wants. Sometimes you try to convince the author that certain things are wrong, or certain changes should be made, but basically, . . . where there is a good collaboration and the conflict is on a high level, one reaches the solution by mature discussion, and you arrive at a solution.
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> I remember one incident, I think in Boston: Loesser came up the aisle and said to me, "that's it, we've got to replace Joe, and we'll meet at the bar and talk about it." At the bar was Frank Loesser, Dania Krupska the choreographer, Lynn [his wife], and myself. I said, "I will not discuss something as important as this at the bar, we'll meet tomorrow morning at ten. . . .
>
> And so we met the next morning and Frank now took over and he harangued for about two hours about Joe Anthony, and said in the course of it, that the four of us would take over. I said, "Let's examine that. I don't think Lynn's experience in the theatre warrants it, Dania has enough trouble with her choreography. . . ." I said, "you Frank, when you even talk to a singer they lose their voice for the rest of the day. . . . I'm a good producer because I know my limitations--I'm not a director."
>
> Then I said, "If you don't want Joe, do you want Josh Logan? Josh will come up, and if you start talking to him the way you do, Josh will say goodbye. If you want Gar Kanin, Gar will be more polite, then he'll just disappear. Let's face the fact that Joe is a good director, and that way people should be constructive rather than destructive and we'll get a good show." And we did because Joe did a hell of a good job. . . . That was the last and only time we went into the business of Joe as director.[50]

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[50]Bloomgarden, op. cit.

Eventually however, according to Margie Gans, Loesser had the last say in the production. Miss Gans remembered that Anthony would direct a scene after Loesser explained or acted out the scene to him:

> We enacted an awful lot of the parts for the show . . . and in doing the dialogue we acted it out. I took it down in shorthand naturally, but any kind of physical things, we enacted . . . the stage movements and everything else. He did it physically. That's the way he wrote.[51]

Miss Gans also noted that Loesser worked closely with the music people.

The question arises at this point, would Loesser have made a good director in his own right? If yes, why didn't he attempt it? We know that he spent much time coaching his singers from the very beginning. In order to circumvent Equity rules, he would have them come over to his house to show them the way he wanted the music performed. She explained that in the film version of Guys and Dolls, for example, Jean Simmons, who played Sarah, learned everything she uttered from Loesser. However she believes that Frank Sinatra, who played Nathan Detroit, did not do what Loesser wished.[52]

Joseph Anthony remembered:

> We used to give him a secretary to sit with him and say "take the notes for the show and meet with Joe after the show." He'd say, "no, no, what the hell, I can't do that kind of crap." . . . What he wanted to do was tap me on the shoulder and have me come and talk to him out in the lobby about something he had just seen, and I'd say, "Frank, you know I got this other number we just came in there and changed and fixed. I've got to see that

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[51]Gans, op. cit. [52]Ibid.

> too. He'd say, "you can see that tomorrow night." "No," I'd say, "tomorrow night? You know we only have four hours tomorrow." Those realities were very hard for Frank to live by. He's an impulsive, responsive, immediate person. I think it was part of his talents, you know. . . . I don't think he was a "rule" person at all. I'm sure he lived a very disciplined life, when he was working. He might have worked sixteen hours straight, that's my guess, I don't know. . . . He never could understand that people have to be on call. He wanted them, so he'd say, "well, where is so and so, call her over here." "But Frank, you want her in a costume, don't you?"
>
> You know that whole mechanical area of working on a show was madness for him, he couldn't control that. Frank could never live in that kind of orderly world. He wanted to work when he was ready to work, and then he wanted the other people to be there. If he wanted to work after the show, it was maddening to him to have to face the fact that no, they are not free to work. . . . Yeah, six o'clock maybe because he'd be up all night, but then he couldn't get there at eleven o'clock in the morning.
>
> Very disorganized man, except his own discipline was powerful, very powerful. But his discipline, not the discipline of the group.[53]

Abe Burrows also discussed this same question of whether or not Loesser would have been a good director. Burrows reflected:

> He loved that aspect of it. He wanted to really control. He wouldn't have been a good director because he didn't have patience. . . . The closest thing to being a good director is being a good father. It's really odd; that's what it is. It's a matter of using people, following what they do, not telling them. Autocratic people generally are very poor directors.[54]

Other changes that occurred during rehearsals and out of town were primarily about the style of the show, as more and more recitative was turned into dialogue. Marie had a fight that was changed into dialogue. Ultimately, "we all began to adapt our work more and

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[53]Anthony, op. cit. [54]Burrows, op. cit.

more towards a typical Broadway musical type show,"[55] said Joseph Anthony. The director felt that the reason the musical did work was because the songs:

> . . . do develop character, they do develop a story, they do . . . include mood, all the things that usually are left to book and the damn song comes along or the dance comes along and it then is just the cream on top of the book. Frank took a lot of book and made songs out of them, took a lot of book and asked the dancers to do it--and in that way I think that's why most of his things work so powerfully in a theatrical way.[56]

The changes to popularize the production, occurred out of town when the critics could not pidgeonhole or categorize the work. It was here that the compromising began. Joseph Anthony related some examples:

> Now, for instance, the quartet of the four vineyard men . . . was criticized as being too imitative of a kind of contemporary Verdi structure. I said . . . it was the wedding of the old and the new, and I thought that was the great contribution that this show should have. And when we opened out of town I think we had a better show, though less popular. It was truer, it was richer. Then we began to tamper with it, polish it up and tighten it. All those words that are know-how, expertise and make things more pop, but in this particular piece I think it cheated Frank of a special kind of contribution he could have made to the musical theatre.
>
> Dania was asked to make the dances peppier, tighter, you know, more flashy, all that kind of thing, instead of truer. Instead of our saying "no, . . . we're going to make it the way we believe," . . . instead it was whooped up. . . . I think the fact that he had already a couple of pop numbers in there indicated his lack of faith in it as a true form, so he was already compromised when he let us hear it.
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> The conflict began after the opening out of town when they said, "it's too much music here," "too much opera," "What the hell is all this?" "that's not Frank Loesser, what's he trying to

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[55]Anthony, op. cit. [56]Ibid.

> do?" and everybody carping and a lack of appreciation for the way in which he wanted it to go. Once that process started to happen, some of the heart of many of us began to diminish, it certainly did me. The more we began to compromise, the more I felt we're beginning to lose Frank's initial conviction, impulse; we're beginning to push this thing right back into the groove that's already known.[57]

Because the musical moved from operatic aria to popular song with such ease and rapidity, the New York critics were unable to give the show a label. Walter Kerr seemed to be the most indecisive. In his "day-after" review in the New York Herald Tribune, he chided Loesser for writing "an operetta and a haymaker" in one entertainment. Ultimately, Kerr implied that such overwriting exhaused the audience because " . . . a stimulus too often applied is at last powerless. . . ."[58] Then, nine days later, Kerr decided that the different styles of the musical: lyrical outpourings for Tony and Rosabella versus standard pop songs for Cleo and Herman, did indeed work. He noted:

> As mood and locale changed, and the story line took a bumptious step forward, the melodic phrasing might change, too. After all, the characters were moving into a different world, and were going to remain suspended for a long while between two contending environments; why shouldn't the composer do the same? . . . Mr. Loesser has . . . made his transitions swiftly, gracefully, and with a heartening arrogance.
>
> In fact, he has made the most of his contrasting veins--the free emotional outpourings that opera allows, the tempo and blare that belong to musical comedy--all night long.
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> Sometimes the two styles meet in a single song. . . . ("Don't Cry") . . . blends the superficial tenderness of a standard

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Walter Kerr, "'The Most Happy Fella,'" New York Herald Tribune (May 4, 1956) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1956 (New York: Theatre Critics' Reviews, Inc., 1956), p. 308.

> ballad with the foreboding chords of something much more meaningful and much more dramatic. Complexity brings an undeniable richness with it; at the point in the acting four separate emotional crises are fused into a single fury of song.[59]

George Jean Nathan stated in his New York Journal-American review:

> The truth, I think, is that, despite Loesser's disclaimers that his aim was not opera or anything quite so elevated, he betrays a clearly perceptible ambition in that direction. But it is even clearer that he is more at home on his popular musical comedy playground and that the most acceptable portions of his show are those which are admittedly musical comedy.[60]

Henry Hewes, in the Saturday Review, considered the musical to be a "dull, poorly-blended mixture of musical trifles."[61] Howard Taubman in the New York Times felt:

> His grasp exceeds his reach. One respects him for it, for that is the way of the artist. It is true that in reaching he looked back and made compromises with what seemed to be the demands of show business. That is why he did not catch hold of a lyrical expression that is consistent throughout.
>
> [The songs] . . . may well have alienated the theatre-goers who like the numbers in a musical show to be clearly fixed and sustained. To a habitual opera-goer they are no trouble at all. But they are dissatisfying for another reason: they are not distinctive and eloquent enough, and they are not tightly knit into the musical fabric as a whole.[62]

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[59]Walter Kerr, "Loesser's Latest Musical Concept," New York Herald Tribune (May 13, 1956), pp. 1, 6.

[60]George Jean Nathan, "Theatre Week: Fish nor Foul," New York Journal-American (May 9, 1956), p. 16.

[61]Henry Hewes, "No Longer In Love With Amy," Saturday Review (May 19, 1956 [n.p.].

[62]Howard Taubman, op. cit. [n.p.].

Richard S. Hill, in the Music Library Association Notes, sensed that perhaps Loesser had made too many stylistic excursions, basing his songs on Italian folk dances, 1920's American pop, Bellini, and Puccini, so that "the total effect is so variegated that it almost seems as if Loesser had no genuine style of his own."[63] But Hill finds much to praise in Loesser, particularly in the composer's method of handling the combined music and dialogue passages. Hill says:

> Quite properly, there is no secco recitativo, which always sounds unacclimated in English, and the passages of accompanied dialogue generally pass into a type of writing that is difficult to describe, but which may well be Loesser's most significant contribution. In such passages, the melodies grow quite obviously out of the prosody, and at first view one is tempted to classify them as a heightened arioso recitative. But Loesser has gone a step further than what is generally understood by the term arioso, and once the melodic phrases are shaped, he builds from them a wide variety of freely organized song forms. Sometimes, a particularly striking phrase--as with Tony's "I Want to get Marry" or Cleo's "I Know What You Mean"--is lifted out of its original context and, with or without its words, made to serve as a leitmotiv. But generally those arioso-songs run their course, building naturally into a major production number or subsiding once more into further accompanied dialogue. In the process, they provide a font of melody closely allied to American speech patterns, and keep the story moving without having to eschew completely the softer pleasures of the more elaborately developed song forms.[64]

In The Most Happy Fella, Loesser tried to extend the range of traditional musical comedy in much the same way George Gershwin tried in the 1935 Porgy and Bess. While Gershwin was grounded in the jazz tradition and attempted to translate those rhythms for the Broadway stage,

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[63]Richard S. Hill, "Frank Loesser: The Most Happy Fella," Notes: Music Library Association, 2nd series, XIV, 3 (June, 1957), p. 439.

[64]Ibid.

Loesser was enamored of the music of traditional opera and Broadway, which he attempted to fuse in his score. After a 1966 revival of the musical, Vincent Canby discussed the problem once more: "It is this uneasy alliance that flaws 'The Most Happy Fella,' and at the same time makes it a unique experience in Broadway musical comedy."[65]

Listening to the record album of this successful show (it was the first musical comedy to be recorded in its entirety), one is caught up and swept along by its virtuosity. Because he wrote the entire work himself, Loesser's "extended musical comedy," as he preferred calling it, has a sense of completeness and wholeness that is often lacking in musical theatre pieces for which the book and score are written by three or more people. The Most Happy Fella combines the divergent musical forces which shaped Loesser's life and joins them to form a whole--a full musical statement from its creator. As Loesser himself said:

> "Here's a story about a Cinderella sitting by the ashes and she takes an old prince, a tired prince, a prince who may die tomorrow. Go spell what you sound like when you're laughing or crying. You have to say it in music. A woman says: 'I'm necessary to him, it's what sustains me and that's enough for me.' That's for music."[66]

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[65]Vincent Canby, "Theatre's 'Most Happy Fella' Revived," New York Times (May 12, 1966).

[66]Schumach, op. cit.

CHAPTER VI

GREENWILLOW

After three long-running successes, Frank Loesser's Greenwillow closed only 97 performances after its March 8, 1960 debut at the Alvin Theatre. Changing direction again after the farcical Where's Charley?, the underworld fable Guys and Dolls and the romantic The Most Happy Fella, Loesser and his collaborator on the book, Lesser Samuels, attempted to write a folk-tale fantasy based on the novel Greenwillow, by B. J. Chute.

After The Most Happy Fella it is interesting to note that Greenwillow follows a more traditional form. There are two acts with individual musical numbers listed for each of the production's fifteen scenes. The musical's plot revolves around a "wandering curse" that possesses Amos Briggs and then his eldest son, Gideon. Gideon's personal conflict forms the main action of the play. He loves and is loved by Dorrie, but he must fight his true feelings knowing that the curse will make him unable to stay home with his wife. At the climactic moment, about to lose Dorrie, the call to wander does come. It has been transformed

however, into a call to stay in Greenwillow. Gideon's sense of loving and being loved by Dorrie has driven the evil force away. All this action is underscored by simple folk-type melodies which, in their simplicity, complement the characters, the mood, and the conflict.

Greenwillow opens in the town square as the villagers sing of the wonders of nature in the musical number, "A Day Borrowed From Heaven." After the song, Gramma Briggs says "Heavens to Habbakuk"[1] as she sees a piece of riddleweed on the ground. A traveler has come to Greenwillow and a charm must be put on the riddleweed so the traveler won't be harmful. Soon Dorrie enters. She proclaims her love for Gideon in the song "Dorrie's Wish" which states:

> Nesting Dove or Flying Lark
> I wish me Gideon, Day and Dark
> Flying Lark or Nesting Dove
> I wish me Gideon for my love.[2]

At the end of the scene we discover the traveler to be Amos Briggs, Gideon's father, back from wandering. In the next scene he greets his wife and children, including little Jabez who has never known his father since he was "started" on Amos' last visit. The audience now discovers that the Briggs' family has the curse to wander on it and there is the possibility it will also possess the eldest son, Gideon. The Reverend

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[1]Lesser Samuels and Frank Loesser, Greenwillow, typescript in the Lincoln Center Library Theatre Collection, 1-1-4.

[2]Ibid., 1-1-6,7.

Lapp attempts to exorcise the curse and everyone, convinced of his success, sings about "The Music of Home."

Now that the curse seems to have been lifted, Gideon is able to express his love for Dorrie, and the young couple become betrothed. But at the reading of the second banns, just after a dance celebrating the couple's engagement, Amos enters in his "wandering clothes" whistling all the while. The Reverend Lapp cannot get him back. In "Summertime Love," Gideon longs for the uncomplicated emotions he felt when he thought the curse had been exorcised and Dorrie sings of her fears of losing Gideon in the sad "Walking Away Whistling."

Through some mix-up, the Bishop has sent to Greenwillow another clergyman, the Reverend Birdsong who with Reverend Lapp, preaches a sermon. The contrapuntal number based on the coming of winter expresses the optimistic views of Birdsong and the somber doomsaying of Lapp. After the Halloweve revelry and the sermon of the two clergymen, Gramma Briggs asks the town's mean man, Thomas Clegg, to return her cow. The cow had been given to Clegg years before as part of a dowry; and since the marriage had not been entered into, Gramma feels that the animal should be returned. She sings of what might have been with the jaunty "Could've Been a Ring."

When asked why he's been avoiding her, Dorrie is told by Gideon that the fear he has the wandering curse is so strong that he won't let himself love Dorrie for her own sake. Even the rapturous protestation of

"Gideon Briggs, I Love You" cannot assuage the young man's fears. Gideon's conscience is examined with "Never Will I Marry" in which he says that though his world will be wide, his bed therefore must be narrow. During the Christmas candlewalk, Dorrie manages to keep her candle alight and wishes that her love for Gideon be gone from her heart.

Act II of Greenwillow opens with "The Music of Home" which segues from the entr'acte. Dorrie is waiting for the right man to come along and sings the haunting "Faraway Boy."

Gramma Briggs has taken Clegg's cow without his knowing it and the children decide to baptize it. Within the framework of good cheer, however, there exists a serious undercurrent dealing with the perversion of religion, so that when Gideon's younger brothers and sister baptize the cow, they dwell on saving it from becoming a miserable sinner and going to hell. At first hearing, "Clang Dang the Bell" sounds "cute," but its discordant accompaniment and lyrics joyfully dealing with "hell," "doom," and "blasphemy" undercut the seeming frivolity of the moment. The haunting quality of Dorrie's "Faraway Boy" and the inherent sadness to "Walking Away Whistling" and "Never Will I Marry" also cut through the simple lyricism of "The Music of Home" and the romanticism of "Summertime Love." The Greenwillow score, which seems on the surface to be so happy, always manages to retain a poignant undercurrent sadness.

Before the cow can be redeemed, Clegg dies. In "He Died Good," Gramma tells all the villagers that Clegg had repented and will now go to heaven. She adds to the lie by telling everybody the cow and its calf have been left to Gideon. Soon after this Dorrie is considering an engagement to another young Greenwillow lad, but, before it becomes official, Gideon has received "the call." The villagers though call him to stay. Their call of love supercedes the call to wander, and Gideon remains. The production ends with Dorrie and Gideon's embrace and a reprise of "The Music of Home."

According to Joe Layton, the show's choreographer, the production fell into the typical pattern of a Loesser production.[3] When asked if Loesser coached the singers privately, he responded, "Yes, all the singers." Asked whether Loesser supervised the orchestrations, Layton replied, "Yes, entirely."[4]

As a matter of fact, Tony Perkins, who was cast in the leading role of Gideon, had never studied music but had been approached by Loesser himself. Perkins recalled:

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[3]The amount of published information dealing with this unsuccessful musical is considerably less than the amount for the Loesser hits. Also the personnel involved with the show were unwilling to discuss their involvement with Greenwillow. Thus the amount of space devoted to Greenwillow in this paper is severely limited by the few facts this author could acquire.

[4]Letter from Joe Layton, director-choreographer, postmarked, August 2, 1972.

> "As for the songs, Loesser has told me that the only time a song should occur is when the emotion has become so intense that it's no longer sufficient to explain it in speech. I try to bear that in mind. When I'm doing a number, I try to remember that it's a moment so intense I can't speak it."[5]

Loesser was very much in evidence during rehearsals. During the pre-Broadway period there was a constant shifting and replacing of scenes and songs. At least one Greenwillow song was pulled from the trunk, because when asked if she knew of any The Most Happy Fella songs that reappeared in later shows, Margie Gans said, "Well there's a song, I forget the name of it, that Tony's sister sang about making coffee and there were only about 16 bars in Most Happy Fella but he took the rest of that song and I think used it in Greenwillow--the full song."[6] This song may have been "The Music of Home" from the first act of Greenwillow.

Joe Layton said that Loesser "was extremely inventive and outspoken,"[7] but did not throw his weight around in relation to the singing of the musical. Layton said in a letter:

> All of the choreography and musical staging was under my direction. I decided where the dancers were to be placed. As in any production where professionals work together to produce a successful work of any kind, suggestions could be, and were, freely voiced and considered. Loesser had no "muscle" as far as my work was concerned.[8]

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[5]Barney Lefferts, "He Sings in 'Greenwillow,'" a clipping in the Lincoln Center Library Theatre Collection [n.p.].

[6]Margie Gans, op. cit. [7]Layton, op. cit.

[8]Ibid.

Phillip Bloom, the press agent for the show, did not recall any specific problems in putting Greenwillow together. Yet, twelve years later he commented:

> I have my own theories about Broadway musical theatre (not really theories, kind of instinctive gut reactions). . . . You get involved in a show and it's rehearsed part of it in the lobby in the theatre, part of it downstairs in the men's room. The choreographer is over at Dance Players [a rehearsal hall], nothing is anywhere. Then somebody blows a whistle and everybody comes and they start to put it together. . . then you look at it, and it's a terrible thing to say, but in the first ten minutes of looking at the whole thing, in my opinion, you can tell if it will go or it won't go. . . . When Greenwillow was pulled together, it didn't--it was like scotch tape and the goo was dried up and wouldn't hold. I don't know, it would be unfair to demean him, and in death. I can't remember whether Loesser knew at that point.[9]

When asked whether Loesser himself was aware that the show was not going to be successful and if he had tried to save it, Joe Layton replied:

> No one ever knows whether or not a show will be successful until it is open and running. As far as "saving," the whole pre-opening tour and previews was [sic] when he and the others involved changed, restructured, rewrote, added, etc. That's what this time is for, to redo what doesn't seem to work. It is only possible to tell what does and doesn't work when the show finally is done before an audience. And, of course, by the time it reaches the opening night audience you're either in great shape, or you're lost. In any case, it's too late to do any major changes then. If an artist is aware that a certain project is not his milieu, then I doubt that he would undertake it. If he becomes aware of this much later on, then as I said, it is too late to turn back.[10]

After the musical opened, there were a few good notices. Variety called the score "beguiling" and the book:

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[9]Interview with Phillip Bloom, press agent, May 11, 1972.

[10]Layton, op. cit.

> . . . way above average, with warmth, intelligence and understanding. The score is undoubtedly one of Loesser's best. Virtually every song is a delight, and the composer has neatly inserted them between and among old English folktunes, Christmas carols and part ensembles making for a wonderfully smooth effect.[11]

There were those reviewers who liked the score but felt there was a weakness in the book. Brooks Atkinson felt Greenwillow had a tasteful book and "buoyant music of a romantic nature that illustrates the affable unreality of the fable."[12] He also felt that Loesser was able to avoid the cloying "by writing music out of personal musical convictions. There isn't a Tin Pan Alley tune in the lot, nor is there a slovenly singer."[13]

John Chapman of the Daily News did not like the book but found the production splendid both musically and lyrically.[14] Richard Watts, Jr., in the New York Post, found the musical whimsical, coy, and

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[11]Variety, unidentified review found in Lincoln Center Library Theatre Collection.

[12]Brooks Atkinson, "Taste in Music," New York Times (March 20, 1960) [n.p.].

[13]Brooks Atkinson, "The Theatre: 'Greenwillow' an Enchanted Fable," New York Times (March 9, 1960) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1960 (New York: Theatre Critics' Reviews, Inc., 1960), p. 327.

[14]John Chapman, "'Greenwillow' Filled With Spring and Beauty, but Plot's not Clear," Daily News (March 9, 1960) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1960 (New York: Theatre Critics Reviews, Inc., 1960), p. 325.

dull.[15] Frank Aston of the New York World-Telegram and the Sun felt that the musical couldn't make up its mind, for he found a hint of opera in "The Music of Home."[16]

Time magazine described the plot as vague, and said there were some pleasantly catchy tunes and some ringing, folk-operatic choruses, but the show was not first rate Loesser.[17] Ernie Schier in an article for the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin was more specific in voicing what he felt was wrong with the musical. He felt that the score was pleasing, although low key, and that Loesser was not the first composer to succumb to fantasy. He went on:

> What is surprising is that he had put his faith in tried and true devices. When in doubt, 'Greenwillow' resorts to the comedy number, a patch of dance or, when things are really in danger of bogging down permanently, a wide-eyed tyke who runs across the stage without his pants.[18]

The most scathing review of Greenwillow came from Kenneth Tynan in The New Yorker. He said Greenwillow "makes Glocca Morra look like a teaming slum" and:

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[15]Richard Watts, Jr., "Review of 'Greenwillow,'" New York Post (March 9, 1960) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1960 (New York: Theatre Critics' Reviews, Inc., 1960), p. 326.

[16]Frank Aston, "'Greenwillow' Poses at Alvin Theatre," New York World-Telegram and the Sun (March 9, 1960) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1960 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1960), p. 326.

[17]"New Musical on Broadway," Time (March 21, 1960), [n.p.].

[18]Ernie Schier, "New Musical 'Greenwillow' Based on Fantasy," Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, clipping found in Lincoln Center Library Theatre Collection [n.p.].

> In the last ten years, Mr. Loesser has travelled from urban ingenuity to grassroots ingenuousness; with 'Greenwillow' he has reached the end of the line, and we must wish him a rapid recovery, followed by a speedy return to the asphalt jungle.[19]

Walter Kerr in the New York Herald Tribune reported the musical as filled with the:

> . . . whoosh of tea-kettle in the orchestra pit, a parade of rustic sentences beginning with "twas" or "twill," and a packet of old-fashioned, time honored village ceremonies that seem to have been invented on the spot.

and that the language was a:

> soft distillation of remembered slurs from everywhere. . . .
>
> Frank Loesser is one of the wittiest lyricists, and most jubilant composers we possess. He has spent the years since "Where's Charley?" and "Guys and Dolls" in a clear effort to better himself, to extend his emotional range and to enrich his musical vocabulary.
>
> His ear is at its most alert when the vernacular is floating past it. He can hear a musical phrase, too, some two or three years before it is in the wind, as his "Make a Miracle" . . . attested.
>
> Indeed, he is so restless and inventive with a song that is content to be a song that one can only watch with regret his present determination to become an orchestrator.
>
> The dew-soaked fields are not, I would guess, his proper playground.[20]

Twelve years later Hal Prince, the producer, concurred with the reviewers but felt that the musical's quality was affected once Loesser became his own producer. Prince said:

> Because he chose to write the book of some of his later shows, to co-produce or produce, I don't remember which they were,

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[19]Kenneth Tynan, "Nymphs and Shepherds, Go Away," The New Yorker (March 19, 1960), p. 117.

[20]Walter Kerr, "A Folk Legend Made to Order," New York Herald Tribune (March 20, 1960). [n.p.].

> that he became an arbiter in areas, visual areas, the word areas, that he was not as good at; and as good as the score of Greenwillow is and it's marvelous, the book isn't. It didn't look right and he mis-cast it.[21]

Another possible cause for the musical's failure was that Loesser was writing a fantasy based on a bucolic way of life, of which he, a city boy, knew nothing. In an interview, Margie Gans was asked why she thought Greenwillow was not successful. She replied:

> I think that the sets ruined it. . . . There were so many trees going on and the cow that came in. I'll never forget that opening night. . . . [The milieu] . . . was too fake. I don't know, it was a sweet show, probably that was the problem and nobody was interested and it didn't have any pretty dancing girls going on or something like that. . . . In fact he was always talking about wanting to redo it some day.[22]

Perhaps Cy Feuer came closer to the reason for the show's failure. When asked whether he felt Guys and Dolls and How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying were more successful than Greenwillow because Loesser was more comfortable within a big city milieu, he replied:

> I thought he was a mismatch for that [i.e., Greenwillow]. . . . For Most Happy Fella . . . they were kind of mugs, the Italian was closer to a New York character, and the leading man was kind of a tough guy. Frank always looked like a little tough guy but he wasn't--a bantam weight. So possibly . . . he went too far afield with Greenwillow. . . . It was terrible. It was terrible. It was dull, undramatic, boring, kind of didn't care about anybody. But the music was nice--it always was.[23]

Elliot Lawrence, the conductor and arranger for How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying also felt that with Greenwillow Loesser had been writing out of his depth. He said:

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[21]Prince, op. cit. [22]Gans, op. cit. [23]Feuer, op. cit.

> He was in my mind, one of the best American lyricists we ever had, of a certain design. He had a weakness, of course; one of his weaknesses was that he wrote best was hard lyrics--the feeling of the city--and actually he had a weakness because what he would really like to have written was poetry. . . . In the back of his mind was the kind of thing like Greenwillow--you know very poetic type things. Actually there were other people--Hammerstein-- . . . could do that better than he could but nobody could write lyrics of the city and the feeling of America (the industrial part) and the bitterness of America and the comedy of America than Frank. You know what they say, comedians always want to play drama.[24]

Jule Styne commented that Loesser should never have tried to be Rodgers and Hammerstein because except for "Never Will I Marry" his "tonality music-wise was different."[25] If Greenwillow wasn't his milieu, the world of New York City big business was, because Loesser's next show the following year was to become his longest running musical.

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[24]Interview with Elliot Lawrence, conductor, June 15, 1972.

[25]Styne, op. cit.

CHAPTER VII

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

How to Succeed In Business Without Really Trying began its 1,417 performance run at the Forty-Sixth Street Theatre on October 14, 1961. The Guys and Dolls team of Feuer, Martin, Burrows and Loesser "did it again" by presenting to a New York audience a musical which succeeded brilliantly in score-book integration. The musical was based on a play by Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert, which had in turn been based on a "How To" manual by Shepherd Mead. Mead mentioned to his friend Abe Burrows that a play had been written based on his manual; Burrows immediately read the Weinstock-Gilbert play and saw its inherent possibilities for the musical stage. Burrows wrote the libretto for How To Succeed alone, but gave billing to the co-authors of the original play, on condition that they contributed nothing to his new work. Frank Loesser was then asked to write the words and music and the musical was born. It came as a surprise to Burrows that only he and Loesser were awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the show, for as far as the public knew, Gilbert and Weinstock were his co-authors.[1]

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[1]Burrows, op. cit.

Lawrence Kasha, the stage manager, recalled that there had been a draft of a play in existence before Abe Burrows was brought in by Feuer and Martin. Kasha thought that work might have even begun with another composer, but nothing had been accomplished. Then Kasha recalled:

> They decided to have a reunion since they had that great success with Guys and Dolls. So they spoke to Frank, and Frank was not one to say yes or no. Frank had become, at that point, an entrepreneur as well as a composer and lyricist. If you joined up with Frank, he had to co-produce and get very involved in the production of the show. It was a prerequisite to their association and obviously it turned out that way, as they produced it with the then called Frank Productions. Frank didn't say yes or no; the idea intrigued him, so he said, "well yes, let me think about it, I'm interested."
>
> Frank thinking about it took on a different dimension than many composers have. Frank wouldn't go home and think, "How can I make my contribution," or "What can I do?" the way that many composers approach a show. Frank went and wrote. He wrote three, four, as many as five songs. Nothing to do with Succeed. He sat down and wrote songs--he had read Abe's script obviously--and the work the other men had done and Shepherd's book, and based on the combination of all of those he decided to sit down and write. I think he wrote four songs actually. I don't know if they were complete per se. I think two or three of them remained in the show, but he polished them and changed them. But he saw that he had the knack for this kind of a show. . . .
>
> I think "Company Way" was one of them, it's hard to remember; the "How To" song, I would imagine. I forget the other ones. But Frank auditioned for himself to see if he could do that. . . . Then we started production on the show and worked very closely with Abe. They had a series of meetings; Cy Feuer, Abe Burrows and Frank worked together, but Abe works very slowly and Frank is much more prolific, so Abe had to catch up or be ahead all the time. We were ready to go into production in March of 1961, and in fact, we had auditions, chorus calls had ensued, and we postponed because the script wasn't complete.[2]

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[2]Interview with Lawrence Kasha, stage manager-producer, May 9, 1972.

According to Abe Burrows, in a New York Times interview, the second collaboration took place this way:

> Since Guys and Dolls . . . Frank and I have been looking for another show to do together. It had to be on a modern theme. We couldn't find anything that sparked us. . . . I convinced Frank if he could put a crap game to music in Guys and Dolls, he could certainly put a big corporation to music. He did it too. Why he even put a board meeting to music.[3]

Loesser explained their method of collaboration saying, "'We first choose the song area. . . . we lay out the spots where to place the ballads, the comedy song, the patter songs, dance numbers, like that.'"[4] Then, said Burrows, "'we'd go our separate ways to do the writing of the songs and the book. Only the best composer-lyricists can work that way.'"[5] Thus, the numbers were placed where the book needed musical amplification and not really in the arbitrary manner Loesser suggests. Burrows did not make it seem as if integration was achieved by sticking to a tried and true formula. According to Burrows, Cy Feuer, and Phil Friedman, the preliminary work on a musical was always long and intense even before a word was written.

Burrows reported that they worked on the musical for about a year and a half, and that it was written with Robert Morse in mind. Burrows had worked with Morse in Say, Darling and wanted to work with him again. Burrows said: "It was really, the script and everything, written

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[3]Maurice Zolotow, "Building Musicals," New York Times [n.d.], pp. 1, 3.

[4]Ibid., p. 3. [5]Krebs, p. 34.

with him in mind. The songs were partly written with him in mind, in other words nothing too difficult to sing, 'cause he's a good singer, but not a great one."[6]

The collaboration between Burrows and Loesser proceeded in a very organized fashion. Burrows recalled:

> He and I sat down and we had an idea of what the story was and where the thing would go and everything. . . . Before I started to write a line we figured out eight musical numbers, because a musical is a musical. A lot of people think, they sit down and write a libretto for a musical, they say here the Gypsies all will dance, and here they'll say I love you. And that's no good. It really had to kind of work backwards, in a sense. Because we had to sit down in How To Succeed and say, how do you sing in an office? For instance, an interesting point . . . [is] the fact that our two big shows, Guys and Dolls, and How To Succeed In Business were not, well, good ideas for musicals. How To Succeed was a group of people in an office, how do you dance in an office? And so we sat and began to figure it out and before we solved that I didn't write any libretto. We stumbled on it one day really, the coffee break number. . . . He had the idea for how it could be done; the Latin rhythms which he got from the idea of the coffee commercials which are always about Latin things, Jose and stuff. . . . and that gave him the notion for it, and then we suddenly said, hey, sure, they are singing about their coffee, and we suddenly saw how they could do it. That's really the idea where it came from; we got that and put it together very closely, and there it was . . . when we were figuring out the numbers we met every day, all day, my house, his house, we just worked. It's hard to explain. Then he went off and I went off. That's how we did it.[7]

Elliot Lawrence, who conducted the show and worked closely with Loesser as he wrote the score, said that Loesser's methods of work were unique. He explained:

> I sat with him. . . . I think the most interesting things that I watched I had never seen or heard of any other composer or

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[6] Burrows, op. cit. [7] Ibid.

> lyricist doing in a show. Frank laid out the show and he'd say, "Now let's see what I have in the show. I have a song in four-four, I have a song in three-four, I'd like to put a song here--let's do a fast number--let's do a tango here . . . so that . . ." he laid out what kind of songs he wanted in the show, which I never heard of. Of course it sounds like a prosaic way of doing it, but actually it was very smart . . . [because] that way the show has a lot of variety. That's the first thing he did that I had not ever seen.
>
> The second thing is, he always got his lyric ideas first and would always write the lyrics first. He didn't always have complete lyrics to sit down and put the music to, but he had enough. Often the lyric was coming out full blown and complete the way he wanted it, maybe missing a word here or there. Then he'd sit down--and the lyrics usually came to him quickly--the music came much more slowly. He picked and pulled, and he always used various people; he liked to have somebody with him. . . . Mostly what he wanted was someone whom he trusted when he'd say, "Now what do you think of this?" and we'd have to say, "Oh I like it Frank, it works," of the music. He never questioned or asked anybody what they thought of the lyrics, from the day he started, but he often questioned about the music, mostly because he was self-taught and he absorbed a tremendous amount of knowledge of music in a very short time; he read all the basic books on orchestration. . . . he studied scores and he did his own graduate course all by himself, in music. He was very knowledgeable. But, as with someone who's self-taught, he often had the book things in his mind, what should work and not always did work, and that is why he liked somebody to say, "Well, it'll work."[8]

Phil Friedman, the production stage manager of the musical, remembered that from the earliest meetings of the collaborators, a basic structure was decided on. Even if there were changes from draft to draft, to rehearsals, to tryouts, the basic structure never altered. Friedman said:

> The basic structure of the show never changed. The story that they were telling, and the situations, and the way they were

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[8]Interview with Elliot Lawrence, conductor, June 15, 1972.

> telling it never changed, and that was the key to its success, because basically what they were doing was right, and the frosting on a cake you can always add; you could fix a dance number, you could fix a musical number, but you had to be right basically, and How To Succeed from the very beginning was right. So all of the tampering on the show that happened over a perioof of a long time, from the first draft to the New York opening, was almost a year. . . . So there were . . . a lot of changes, but nothing that affected the story line, or the situations, or the characters. They were good from the very beginning, and that is one of the reasons why the show was so successful; because basically they were on a firm foundation.[9]

Casting How To Succeed went smoothly. Robert Morse, for whom the role was written, played the leading role of J. Pierrepont Finch, and Rudy Vallee played the role of the company president, J. B. Biggley. Lawrence Kasha was casting director as well as stage manager for the production, and it is he who takes credit for the casting of Rudy Vallee. Many actors had been auditioned, but Kasha felt that Vallee's "square" image was a perfect counterpoint for Morse's "flamboyant, mad style."[10] Rudy Vallee remembered his being cast this way:

> . . . in January of 1961, Cy Feuer, who always had a "yen" for me to be in a vehicle that he and Ernie Martin were about to launch, and after a discussion about the title and a not too good sketching of the plot of How To Succeed, he then casually mentioned something about coming to New York!!!
>
> There was no mention of who would pay for the trip, or why he felt I should make the trip. It wasn't until much later that I learned that NO ONE HAD EVER BEEN IN A LOESSER MUSICAL WITH [sic] FIRST AUDITIONING FOR HIM!! [capitals are Vallee's][11]

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[9]Interview with Phil Friedman, stage manager, May 9, 1972.

[10]Kasha, op. cit.

[11]Rudy Vallee, letter dated May 23, 1972.

According to Vallee, Cy Feuer followed him up to Ontario, Canada, with a draft of Act I, trying to convince the singer to be in the musical. It was at that point that Vallee fell in love with the material and agreed to do the role.[12]

Loesser worked auditions in a most peculiar fashion. Lawrence Kasha remembered that people were brought in to sing, and Loesser "would jump up and run down the aisle and say, 'sing that again'; really intimidate people."[13] Loesser kept raising the key of the song, half tone by half tone, until the singer's voice would break, and then he would say, "Okay, take it back just a little bit--that's where you should sing it."[14] By taking the key just back under the breaking point, he felt he was helping to change singers' audition keys for them, something they could use later on.

In a letter, Bonnie Scott, who created the role of Rosemary, remembered her audition for Frank Loesser. She wrote:

> Before meeting him I was warned that one of Frank's favorite games was getting singers to run crying out of the theatre during an audition. I was told he would try to intimidate me, but would love it if he couldn't. He had me sing a few songs, then take the first two notes of "Blue Skies" higher and higher up the scale. Finally, when I was up around Z#, and he still wanted me to go even higher, I stopped, looked him square in the eyes, and allowed that I would sing it if he would clean it up. He laughed, and said it really wasn't necessary. I had his respect and the part. Throughout our relationship, I never did get over being in awe of his genius.[15]

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[12]Ibid. [13]Kasha, op. cit. [14]Ibid.

[15]Bonnie Scott, actress, letter dated May 16, 1972.

Claudette Sutherland, who played the secretary Smitty, remembered that Abe Burrows and Cy Feuer were present at her first audition, and it wasn't until the following week that she sang for Loesser. She too noted that Loesser was infamous for putting auditioning performers through very vigorous vocal exercises, and that he used "Blue Skies" because he felt "that that was the most adequate audition song. . . . Almost everyone who came out from auditioning for him would come out with their hair standing on end and say, 'you have to sing "Blue Skies" seventeen times, and he'd keep raising the key and all. . . .'"[16]

Phil Friedman recalled that for the role of Smitty, "we saw every belter in the city of New York. They chose Claudette because they liked her best, and of course they all think alike when it comes to casting."[17] So it seems that the Guys and Dolls team, after an eleven-year hiatus, were still able to work together with ease. Friedman went on to discuss the kinds of performers they were looking for. He said:

> They wanted people with what they called bumps and curves. They wanted the off-beat, they didn't want any straight people. They wanted off-beat performers with an extra curve, and with a little unusual quality, and they all thought in that term, and were all in agreement on that point. . . . I hesitate using the word kooky because that isn't the correct word, but there was that element, just that little extra curve that would make the person unique and different and unusual and not just a performer on the stage. . . . not only on this show, but they all agree on this kind of casting when they did other shows. Abe does and Frank did on his other shows, and Feuer and Martin always agreed on this kind of casting; they want that extra curve that gives a little freshness, a

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[16]Interview with Claudette Sutherland, actress, May 19, 1972.

[17]Friedman, op. cit.

> little difference, a little unusual quality, a little more interest to the audience, even on shows they didn't collaborate on. They certainly did it on Guys and Dolls and they certainly did it on How To Succeed. . . .[18]

Friedman also commented on Loesser's omnipresence at auditions. He noted:

> . . . getting the people was paramount to Frank because the voice was so important. And he always wrote for what we call "the edge of the voice," he wrote for the top edge of the range of the singer, for brilliance you see. He was very instrumental in the casting because of the singing requirements of the show. As well as everything else; he was at every audition and he had approval of everybody, down to the last chorus person, dancers, singers . . . everybody. The approval is collaborative, Frank and Abe and the producers, they'd get together and they would decide on who they wanted, but everybody had to agree. And if Frank didn't agree, then that person was not hired and they would have to find somebody else that everybody did agree on. The whole thing was a collaborative effort. It takes a tremendous amount of cooperation and the fact that these people were all friends, friends of long standing, you see, Abe and Frank and Cy. . . . This was a collaboration not only of creative people but of friends, both Guys and Dolls and How To Succeed. . . . He wrote a song for a certain person and that person was hired and Abe wrote the part for her. But it was something that happened as a result of seeing her and hearing her, and they wrote for her. They often write for people. I don't know whether he ever had any idea of a certain specific person for any specific part, 'cause no casting was done in advance for preparation of the show, except for Bobby Morse. The show was written for Bobby Morse and he was set long before they even wrote the book. So that piece of casting was very early, the rest was all done in the course of the regular time it takes.[19]

Who was this girl for whom Burrows tailored a role? Since the only female singing roles are Rosemary, Smitty, Miss Jones and Hedy, and since we know that Bonnie Scott and Claudette Sutherland auditioned "cold," and Miss Jones' role has a one chorus solo, the actress Friedman

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[18] Ibid. [19] Ibid.

was referring to must have been Virginia Martin, who in the role of Hedy La Rue, sings a duet with J. B. Biggley entitled "Love From A Heart Of Gold."

Loesser tried to cast the right person for the role, and he always had the final say in order to ensure that the performer could sing the role as written. When asked why Succeed had so many new faces, Elliot Lawrence replied: "I think that he liked young people. He liked to have young people around him, and I think he liked to try to get [i.e., cast] them. . . ."[20]

The comic plot of How To Succeed centers on the rise of J. Pierrepont Finch, from window washer to chairman of the board of the World Wide Wicket Company. No one is really hurt as Finch progresses up the corporate ladder, and his only opposition is Bud Frumps, the President's nephew, who is a broadly drawn comic villain.

The book of the musical is clever, but it is Loesser's use of music that gives it its extra satiric thrust. The orchestrations for the show involved the rhythmic sound of a typewriter in "A Secretary Is Not A Toy" and the hum of an electric shaver in an executive washroom scene involving the male chorus' attempts to oust the "on the make" Finch. The strains of Greig's Piano Concerto help Finch in his declaration of love for the secretary Rosemary; the sexy but dumb Hedy is introduced not with sexy music, but by Valhalla strains, and a board meeting

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[20]Lawrence, op. cit.

progresses with the sounds of chapel music. Loesser's musical sophistication was explored "when Burrows changed the first act finale from the hero to the heroine singing their troubles, by adding the villain to the scene; this gave Loesser a chance to compose a three-part counterpointed chanson of some interesting harmonic complexity."[21]

The lyrics of the show follow Loesser's belief that the audience should never be overprepared by a long lead-in, "Nor must he put in the spoken dialogue what will be stated in the song lyrics."[22] The musical opens with Finch, a window-washer, reading the "How To Succeed" manual. Using the tricks suggested by the book, Finch manages to secure himself a job in the mailroom of World Wide Wickets. Rosemary, a secretary from the typing pool, wants to help Finch because she is attracted to him. She confides her dream of the future to her friend Smitty. Rosemary's dream home is located in New Rochelle, where she will be "Happy to Keep His Dinner Warm" as long as she is loved:

> By a man I respect
> To bask in the glow
> Of his perfectly understandable neglect.[23]

The next song after Rosemary's dream is a paen to a most unlikely coffee urn that is out of coffee. The celebration of the ritual of the "Coffee Break" is summed up in this lyric:

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[21]Maurice Zolotow, op. cit., p. 3. [22]Ibid.

[23]Abe Burrows and Frank Loesser, Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert, How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying (London: Frank Music Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 11.

If I can't make three daily trips
Where shining shrine benignly drips, . . .
And taste cardboard between my lips,
Something within me dies. . . . [24]

In the mail room Finch has his first run-in with Bud Frump, the President's nephew, who is also trying to become a success in the company. Loesser then juxtoposes his opening song "How To" climb the corporate ladder with "The Company Way" a song Finch sings with Twimble, the head of the mail room. The song celebrates conformity with:

Your brain is a company brain
The company washed it and now
I can't complain.[25]

Sammy Smith who played Twimble reported that the song was done originally as his solo with Finch sitting on a stool listening. But Finch was the star and Loesser re-wrote the song to make it a duet. The number needed the cajoling and toadying to Twimble by Finch, the young climber, to make it work.[26] Smith remembered this change taking place in Philadelphia when Loesser had some lyrics in mind and the three of them (Loesser, Smith, and Robert Morse) went down to the ladies lounge. Loesser would walk into the toilet and come out and tell the actors to write down a new lyric; they would try it, he would listen and then disappear again only to come back with another new lyric. Smith also remembered that Loesser was a stickler for the way the song sounded

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[24] Ibid., p. 13. [25] Ibid., pp. 24-5.

[26] Interview with Sammy Smith, actor, May 31, 1972.

[27] Ibid.

and that he wanted to be able to hear all the "t's" and "d's" because the lyrics were the lyrics.[28]

"A Secretary Is Not A Toy" follows Finch's becoming a junior executive much to Frump's chagrin. Sung by Bratt, Frump, and the chorus it was originally written for J. B. Biggley, the company's president, as a solo, but ultimately with a change in rhythm, was turned into a chorus number. Bob Fosse was brought in to stage the musical numbers and was the one who changed the tempo from an anthem to a syncopated dance, with Loesser's permission.[29] Claudette Sutherland remembered the number as having been given to almost all the characters, before it was given to Bratt and Frump.[30]

Elliot Lawrence commented that the song originally had been a waltz and that Fosse told Loesser he couldn't hear the change the choreographer envisioned until it was ready. "When he had it ready, it [had been] turned into a six-eight song--a schottische--Frank just loved it. It was the same melody that he wrote, but it was . . . the form . . . that changed."[31] Phil Friedman recalled that Loesser used a piano in the men's lounge while the dancers were working, in order to redo the lyrics for the song.[32]

Next, J. B. hires the unqualified but luscious looking Hedy La Rue for the secretarial pool. Biggley wants to have Hedy near him but

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[28]Ibid. [29]Kasha, op. cit. [30]Sutherland, op. cit.

[31]Lawrence, op. cit. [32]Friedman, op. cit.

doesn't want his wife to know of the relationship. Then Finch overhears Biggley telling Miss Jones, his secretary, he will be in early the next morning, a Saturday, in order to retrieve his golf clubs. After ferreting out the information that Biggley is a proud alumnus of Old Ivy, he meets Smitty and Rosemary at the elevator where they sing the trio "Been a Long Day," a song in which Rosemary and Finch voice their unspoken thoughts about one another. Smitty functions as their go-between and the young couple go off to have dinner. Frump catches his uncle and Hedy together at the elevator and there is a reprise of "Been a Long Day" in which Biggley realizes his nephew could blackmail him, so he gives the young rascal a promotion.

Early Saturday morning, just a few moments before Biggley arrives, Finch appears, litters the place with papers and cigarette butts and convinces the boss that he's been working there all night. As J. B. goes off for his clubs, Finch hums the Old Ivy song and convinces the boss he too is an Old Ivy alumnus. The two men sing the satirical school song "Grand Old Ivy" which celebrates the school's mascot, the glorious groundhog. Having Rudy Vallee, famous for his rendition of "The Wiffenpoof Song," singing this number added extra satirical thrust to the production.

Finch manages to climb one more rung of the corporate ladder when Hedy is assigned to be his secretary. Realizing that the dumber and more incompetent a girl is, the more powerful her friends must be,

Finch keeps his hands off Hedy but is able to have another executive fired when the executive makes a pass at the boss's girl.

More jibes are taken at the company way during a company party. At the party all the secretaries, trying to make an impression, wear the same "Paris Original" dress. Only Hedy with her sensational figure makes any stir at all in the frock. The first act ends with Finch's being promoted over Frump again and his name being put on the door. Rosemary professes her love, and the comically villainous Frump tries to figure out how to stop Finch's incredible rise.

Act II opens with "Cinderella, Darling," a song in which the secretaries convince Rosemary not to give up her prince, one J. Pierrepont Finch. Rosemary wants to quit her job because she has been ignored by Finch; however, the girls explain that a secretary who is engaged to her young executive boss is the dream on which they have all been nurtured.

Finch has been made advertising vice president, a job no one has been able to hold for very long. Frump, pretending to make up with Finch, offers him an idea for a TV treasure hunt show that the company could sponsor. Of course, he hasn't told Finch that J. B. has already dismissed the idea. Unknown to all, Hedy, disgusted with her job, has threatened to quit, and in order to hold her, J. B. sings the overly sentimental "Love From a Heart of Gold." This song does not win her over, so J. B. jumps at the TV show idea in order to make Hedy a star.

Before the decision is made though, Finch finds himself in the executive washroom with the other executives. The men are trying to stop the meteoric rise of Finch while he sings the show's first love song, "I Believe In You." The song provides a comic twist, in that Finch sings it to himself, as he gazes into a mirror and shaves. He sings:

> Now, there you are,
> Yes, there's that face;
> That face that somehow I trust,
> It may embarrass you to hear me say it,
> But say it I must, say it I must!
> You have the cool, clear eyes of a
> Seeker of wisdom and truth;
> Yet there's that upturned chin, and the
> Grin of impetuous youth.
> Oh, I believe in you, I believe in you.[33]

Loesser is able to take a standard love song and by giving it to an egomaniac, turns it into a parody of itself. Abe Burrows remembered how the song came about. He said:

> I remember he had this one ballad "I Believe In You" and when I came up with the idea of his singing it to himself in the mirror--first I was going to have him sing it in a red polished table in the board room as he looks at his image, then I got the idea of the washroom. . . . --He looked at me for a moment and said, "I ought to hit you," and then he laughed and that's how we did the number. Later, outside, it's used as a love song but in the show it was an acidic mean kind of a song.[34]

This number, one of the production's most popular, according to Burrows, never worked, at least not until opening night, and was almost removed from the show.[35] The number was accompanied by the sound of electric razors approximated by kazoos in the orchestra pit.

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[33]Burrows and Loesser, op. cit., p. 102.

[34]Burrows, op. cit. [35]Ibid.

The treasure hunt television show is a fiasco because of Hedy's telling the truth. She was secretly told the location of the treasure by J. B. and when on TV she is asked to swear on a Bible that she has had no knowledge of the treasure's whereabouts, says that she won't perjure herself. Everyone figures Finch's head has to roll for the disaster but all is straightened out when he says the idea for the show was Frump's and the idea to put Hedy on the show was Biggley's.

Before all is worked out satisfactorily, the executives and the male principals, along with Miss Jones, sing in the board room a wild revival meeting number entitled "The Brotherhood of Man." Then the chairman of the board runs off with Hedy, J. B. is made chairman, Finch is made President and is reconciled with Rosemary. Thus the musical, which contains barbed thrusts at human nature, ends happily, genially, and with great fun.

Preparations for How To Succeed began in what had now become typical Frank Loesser fashion. According to Elliot Lawrence, Loesser started coaching his singers even before rehearsals officially began. He would invite the performers up to his office and work with them at the piano. When asked what techniques he used in these sessions, Lawrence replied, "He used everything. He was like a small tenacious dog. He had a great personality, very humorous. He used any technique he could to get what he wanted out of people. He'd make them

laugh, he'd scream at them, whatever he needed to do."[36] Lawrence continued:

> He always worked on the songs. The character of the person . . . of course runs in the dialogue and runs in the whole characterization of the show. . . . It's against Equity rules, you're allowed only so many weeks of rehearsals, but Frank would then always call the performers up on the phone and he'd get them weeks before they would go to the rehearsal. He'd have them come up every day and we'd have long sessions with the principals. And not only that, he did something else. . . . He had a group of five or six singers that he used in his various shows, chorus people, very good singers, and he would try out all his chorus parts in advance, in the office. He had tenors, sopranos, altos, and basses try out the vocal parts, to see if they worked.[37]

Claudette Sutherland remembered that she was coached three weeks before rehearsals were due to begin. Being a newcomer to the theatre, she was happy to have this coaching session because, first, she and Loesser were able to get to know one another, and, second, she felt that when the first day of rehearsal arrived she wouldn't appear foolish.[38] The technique Loesser used for Miss Sutherland was learning by rote, i.e., going over and over the song in question, doing it louder and louder. Loesser never wanted his singers to worry about saving their voices. Loesser would tell his female leads to sing "at the top of your chest range . . . because that makes it louder."[39]

Phil Friedman recalled that some performers were coached two or three days a week for an hour or more, and that this was certainly an unusual procedure for a composer.[40] Trying to explain the reasons for

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[36]Lawrence, op. cit. [37]Ibid. [38]Sutherland, op. cit.

[39]Ibid. [40]Friedman, op. cit.

the coaching, and the insistance that the songs be sung in such a precise manner, Friedman recalled Loesser's method of writing. From this it is easy to see why he was so concerned about how his songs would sound. Friedman said:

> Frank wrote for the human voice. . . . The way the music sounded depended on the sound that came from the voice because that's the way he writes. You see . . . he wrote by singing himself the notes as he writes the music, which is the best part of his technique. So consequently, the human voice becomes the instrument of the sound.
>
> This was a technique that I am sure was unique to him. I had lots of composers that were very particular about the voice, but I think that the voice, the timbre of the voice, the sound that it makes in relationship to the instruments that are playing at the same time, or in harmony or whatever . . . is very important.
>
> He'd often get other people, he had lots of friends who were singers, I mean everybody loved him, and he had some of the best singers on Broadway that were his personal friends. Sometimes he would get them up and try a song out on them, and they would sing it for him while he was composing it up in the studio or his office. He could hear how it sounded and then he'd change things he didn't like.
>
> They weren't famous but they were the best singers that you could find on Broadway, I can tell you that. Some glorious voices that were personal friends of Franks. But they were production people that had been in the theatre a long time and worked with Frank and that he knew and liked. He'd try out the songs on them or they'd try out the songs while he was still composing, not after it was all set; then it was all done.
>
> The making of a musical is a vastly complicated process, it takes a tremendous amount of effort for the creative people. I think that shows fail if the collaboration is not close and harmonious. I think that shows can fail if there is not a complete cohesion of the collaborative effort and How To Succeed had that and so did Guys and Dolls. And his music was integrated into the character and the situation and everything. He was a perfectionist. He would never let anything slide by.[41]

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[41] Ibid.

Loesser supervised every note of music that was heard in How To Succeed. A perfectionist to work with, he and the arrangers would toil for hours with the orchestrator to get exactly the sound he wanted.[42] Elliot Lawrence said:

> Normally if you changed a chord, a note of Frank's music, you were in for trouble. If the orchestrator put his own harmonies in he would get crucified and many times the orchestrator would come to me and say . . . I can't orchestrate this bar; the bass note is in the wrong place, I can't do it. I'd say, just like it is on the page, Frank wrote it and that's the way it goes down. . . . You had to put it down his way and then if you heard it for a week and said Frank, that's not going to sound well, not going to work. . . . A week later he'd always come say, I changed it. But it had to go in first the way he wrote it.[43]

Loesser would work hard and seriously at rehearsals. Phil Friedman remembered that he was never difficult, but if he did lose his temper he would then "crack a joke" and relieve the tension. Sometimes tension would arise because he was so persistent in getting the moment right.[44] Sammy Smith recalled that when he had a noon call after a tryout performance, he would find Loesser lying across the ledge of the boxes sleeping, with papers all over the floor, after having been there all night.[45]

Two numbers that were cut out of town were "Status or Status" sung by Hedy, a dance interlude that was to follow "Paris Original" and a solo for Rosemary called "I Worry About You." Hedy's song was

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[42] Ibid. [43] Lawrence, op. cit.

[44] Friedman, op. cit. [45] Smith, op. cit.

a play on the pronunciation of the title word. Bonnie Scott wrote about her excised song:

> Bob Fosse had staged it so I was jumping around like a Cossak [sic] while trying to sing. It was impossible and it never came off too well. I know it was one of Frank's favorites and I loved to sing it. But Mr. Fosse refused to change the staging, so it was out.[46]

One other change that occurred was in "The Brotherhood of Man" number in the second act. Originally, Biggley's secretary, Miss Jones, was a non-singing role, but Ruth Kobart, the actress playing the role was a trained opera singer. Miss Kobart recalled:

> I had been told that there would be no singing in the part of "Miss Jones"--but several weeks into the rehearsal period [sic] Mr. Loesser checked me out for vocal range, and wrote me into the BROTHERHOOD OF MAN [sic] number, which was a LOVELY [sic] moment for me.[47]

Phil Friedman seemed to remember that there had also been a knitting number written for Rudy Vallee which never went into the show.[48] Relations between the star and Loesser seemed to have been strained. Lawrence Kasha recalled that as great as the rapport was that existed between Morse and Loesser, it was equally poor between Vallee and Loesser. Kasha recalled, "Rudy Vallee was a pain in the ass to Frank, he just didn't like him nor did Abe Burrows. Rudy, who is really kind of a sweet man, kept seeing things his [own] way, which was not the way of the theatre in the 1960's. . . . "[49]

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[46]Scott, op. cit.

[47]Ruth Kobart, actress, letter dated May 18, 1972.

[48]Friedman, op. cit. [49]Kasha, op. cit.

Rudy Vallee recalled that his songs were simple ones and that he felt that he didn't need to rehearse them to the extent that Loesser wanted them rehearsed. Originally slated to sing in "A Secretary Is Not A Toy," Vallee hated the song and was glad when it was given to someone else. He said:

> I NOTICED THAT THE KIDS HAD TO SIT ON THE STAGE SOMETIMES FOR SEVERAL HOURS SINGING THE GOD DAMNED ATROCITY OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN!!! [sic] I guess he theorized that this was the only way for them to really learn it!!!
>
> But later on when Virginia Martin and I completed our duet of a very corny and lousy (melodically speaking) song called [Love From a] HEART OF GOLD [sic] and after our third rendition in a small hot room he then instructed us to remain in this . . . room and sing the song for the next four hours, I told him very quietly that I didn't need to sing it ONCE MORE, as I wouldn't do it any more perfectly the thousandth time than I had just done it!!!
>
> He then very dramatically, with hands outstretched, said, "I'M NOT GOING TO HAVE MY SONGS RUINED BY YOUR NOT SINGING THEM PROPERLY!!!!"[50]

Vallee then believed that Loesser tried to have him fired from the production but Vallee demanded full payment for his fifty-seven week contract, and all the producers offered him was $40,000 "to get the hell out."[51] Vallee concluded his story with:

> During the Philadelphia five weeks, one day, as Mrs. Vallee was having a drink [sic] in the lobby bar, Loesser said to her, "YOUR HUSBAND IS THE FINEST DISCIPLINED PERSON IN THE SHOW!!!" So for what that remark was worth, Loesser must have reversed his opinion of me but he never admitted changing his mind!!![52]

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[50]Vallee, op. cit. [51]Ibid. [52]Ibid.

Aside from this Rudy Vallee incident, everything else went smoothly on the production. Bonnie Scott recalled how hard the company worked. In a letter she wrote:

> Songs and scenes were cut, shifted and replaced every day. We only had two days off in the 12 1/2 weeks of rehearsals, tryouts, and previews. All we did was rehearse, perform and change. The show was not frozen until the day befor [sic] we opened in N.Y. [sic]
>
> Frank Loesser was very difficult to work for when he thought something was wrong. He didn't always know what he wanted--only what he didn't want. This would necessitate doing a phrase or a song over and over again until he would, hopefully, find something he liked. This was very frustrating and confusing to me. . . . and he had me in tears more than once. Sometimes he was a crass, cynical and gruff old bear. Other times he was a dear sweet little boy, totally innocent, with eyes that shined and danced with creativity.[53]

How to Succeed In Business Without Really Trying opened to rave New York notices, with Frank Loesser's music and lyrics hailed as an indispensable part of the show. John Chapman, after praising Robert Morse, said:

> Like Morse, Loesser is the perfect man for his end of the show--the songs; for he is a cynic without being tough. He has not put in a note of music or a syllable of lyric that doesn't carry the story along. . . [The songs] . . . are filled with satirical comment, musically as well as lyrically.[54]

John McClain in the Journal American said:

> It is gay, zingy, amoral, witty and shot with style. It comes very close to being a new form in musicals.

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[53]Scott, op. cit.

[54]John Chapman, "'How To Succeed In Business' Is Splendid Satire with Grand Cast," Daily News (October 16, 1961) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1961 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1961), p. 224.

> The score by Mr. Loesser is not great by "pop" standards; it is better than that. All the music has been integrated into the plot, to fit the mood as well as the momentum. His lyrics are generally superb; thoughtful, witty and often hilarious."[55]

George Oppenheimer concurred in Newsday. He wrote:

> Although melodically it does not compare to his music for "Guys and Dolls" or to that of George Gershwin for "Of Thee I Sing," lyrically it is every bit as comic and as witty as the book. I believe that Mr. Loesser has purposefully sacrificed popular melody in order to achieve musical travesties that integrate perfectly into the show. In doing so, he may have bypassed the Top Ten to help create a top show.[56]

The same feeling was echoed by John Indcox in High Fidelity Magazine.

Indcox wrote:

> . . . Frank Loesser has written pungent and adroit lyrics which illuminate every scene of this latter-day Horatio Alger story, although the lyrics are so pertinent that in the theatre I was scarcely aware of Loesser's extremely functional score; it both punctuates and propels the dramatic action perfectly.[57]

Also mentioned by the critics was the use of a strain from the Grieg Piano Concerto in the midst of Finch's love song "Rosemary"; the kazoos in "I Believe In You"; chapel music preceding the board room scene; and Valhalla strains, rather than sexy music, for Hedy La Rue.

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[55]John McClain, "A Gay, Zingy Smash Hit," Journal American (October 16, 1961) in The New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1961 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1961), pp. 224-225.

[56]George Oppenheimer, "'How To Succeed,'" Newsday (October 18, 1961) [n.p.].

[57]John F. Indcox, "'How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying,'" High Fidelity Magazine, 12 (January, 1962), p. 80.

Loesser must have been delighted with these reviews, for according to Phil Friedman, Loesser never consciously worked to write a "hit song" for the production. Friedman recalled:

> He once said in Philadelphia . . . if I want to write a hit song I can go to the piano and write it. . . . He wanted his score to be absolutely right for the show. And if by chance a song hit from it then he would not be unhappy about it. But he didn't think in terms of "Is this song going to be a hit." . . . I think he wrote what he thought was right for the show and. . . . integrated very carefully. It is one of the most remarkably integrated shows.
>
> In How to Succeed all of the elements. . . . worked as one cohesive whole--one integrated piece of theatre. It was very unusual that it all happened that way.[58]

Lawrence Kasha, now a producer in his own right, agreed. He said:

> Frank was not pedantic in the show, he didn't show off. I think he wrote a score that really suited the book. I mean, he wanted to write an integrated score . . . and he kept saying . . . this is the funniest book I ever worked on, this is a very funny show. I want to keep my lyrics and my style in keeping with the look . . . of the show. He thought that it was marvelous that we had kept that cartoon feeling that Shepherd Mead's book had and Abe's script had.
>
> He worked to make sure that the music captured that feeling. I mean even things like "Heart of Gold" where Hedy La Rue lets out that unbelievable scream. He wrote constantly with a sense of humor . . . I don't truly think the show had one serious moment. . . .
>
> Also, Frank was very interested in the upkeep of the show. He came back to see it or called about it. He was very involved in all of the companies of the show and did a marvelous job in promoting it.
>
> For style and integration and point of view, I think it's sensational because there's not a wasted note or lyric. . . . Frank knew he was writing for Bobby's voice and for Bobby's style.
>
> I think one of the reasons for his success with that show and possibly not with some other shows that Frank did like

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[58] Friedman, op. cit.

> Greenwillow . . . is that his rapport with Abe was sensational. Abe is very good at writing . . . a good lead in. The best song can be ruined if it isn't properly set up in the book. A bad song, or let's say not as good song, can somehow work if it is properly built into the script because it has the audience prepared--they understand the moment and they are set for it. . . . They [Burrows and Loesser] worked very well together so that the songs actually grew out of the script and that's why I think that that team was so successful. That's "lightning strikes twice" to pull off those two shows. They're impeccable.[59]

In this his last musical to reach Broadway, Loesser was able to achieve an ideal that was implicit in all the other shows he had written. In How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying, he was able to create a score that interacts so completely with its book that if a song is removed either the plot or the motivations of the characters would become unclear. Conversely when removed from the book, no song (with the possible exception of "I Believe In You" and "The Brotherhood of Man") is understandable. This achievement in the field of musical comedy is a fine example of the integrated work in which all the elements blend so perfectly that tampering with one would do the whole basic harm. Thus at the close of his career, Frank Loesser achieved a goal toward which he had been striving in all his previous musicals.

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[59]Kasha, op. cit.

CHAPTER VIII

THE END OF A CAREER

How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying was Frank Loesser's last Broadway show. However, Pleasures and Palaces, a musical based on Sam Spewack's play Once There Was A Russian, with a book by Frank Loesser and Sam Spewack and a score by Frank Loesser, was tried out in Detroit from March 11 to April 10, 1965.[1]

The musical deals with Catherine the Great of Russia hiring the famous naval hero, John Paul Jones of America, to fight Turkey in 1787. Potemkin, Catherine's advisor, also plays a part in the musical. It closed in Detroit and was never brought to New York. What attracted Loesser to this particular project? Abe Burrows saw the production in Detroit and said: "He did that because he loved the idea of the Russian music. He had a chance there to expand; he did some marvelous things. But it was a bum show, just a bad show and he closed it."[2]

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[1]Since Pleasures and Palaces never opened in New York and since it never took a final shape as a theatrical entity, the script for the show is not available and the amount of information in the press is limited to a few reviews from Detroit newspapers. As in the case of Greenwillow the personnel seem unwilling or unable to supply this author with any first-hand accounts of the production.

[2]Burrows, op. cit.

Cy Feuer also saw the musical in Detroit. Feuer explained that he had been invited to Detroit by Loesser in order to come and help the ailing show. Feuer advised Loesser to close the show because the concept was weak, the book was terrible and Bob Fosse's choreography wasn't working. The show was badly cast as well, Feuer added, because Loesser had selected actors primarily for their voices. Even Abe Burrows didn't know where to start reworking the show.[3]

Some interesting insights into the problems of the show were offered by Sammy Smith, an actor featured in the production. Smith, who had created the roles of Twimble and Womper in How To Succeed, commented on Pleasures and Palaces:

> . . . it shouldn't happen to a dog. . . . Sam Spewack had fixed the book up [from the original play Once There Was a Russian] and it seemed to be acceptable to Frank. It needed other work on it, so Sam Spewack would leave for four or five days . . . lock himself up, work on it, and . . . come in. But Sam Spewack didn't have it. He just couldn't come up with anything to untangle this mess and the story didn't hold. And then the panic started hitting. They had a fellow called Alfred Frank [Marks], an Englishman, but they let him go. They brought in Jack Cassidy, but that didn't help. They had an Australian actress, Hy Hazell, as Catherine. But a pall hit the whole thing. . . . [It] just didn't go anywhere.

Loesser's fluctuating moods are evidenced by Smith's next remarks. In a moment of attempted frivolity, at the last Detroit performance:

> He sat there and right as we came off the stage was the biggest bunch of bushel baskets you ever saw. All the fellows had let their beards grow . . . and the biggest stack of razors and shaving cream and shaving brushes you ever saw, for everybody in the cast. . . .

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[3]Feuer, op. cit.

But this lighthearted act belied Loesser's true feeling. Smith went on:

> In fact, he said, "I can't write anymore. I can't write anymore." I said, "Oh, come on, forget about it." He said, "No, I can't write anymore." I don't think he wrote too much after that. . . . He was just down.[4]

The Detroit critics did not like the musical. Jay Carr, of the Detroit News, remarked that the characters were two-dimensional, in his article "Palaces Da, Pleasure Nyet." He wrote:

> The characters were comic opera Balkan fossils that were beginning to show signs of age half way through the original run of "The Merry Widow." . . . They have defanged and prettied up this rather freewheeling queen, presenting her as a bitter-sweet soap opera type who can't help leading with her heart. . . . Certainly Mr. Loesser has proved he's a man who can do a lot more than just turn the crank.[5]

Louis Cook, of the Detroit Free Press, felt that the music was lacking in sprightliness, but that the real reason the show failed was that "'Pleasures' can't make up its mind whether to be an old-fashioned costume melodrama or a commentary on current Russian-American relations."[6]

In a review five days later, Cook continued with the additional sentiments:

> The story is dull and often incredible and the music does nothing for you. . . .
>
> Unfortunately, Spewack and Loesser have done little more than create a succession of stock characters.

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[4]Smith, op. cit.

[5]Jay Carr, "Palaces Da, Pleasures Nyet," Detroit News (March 12, 1965), p. 12.

[6]Louis Cook, "'Pleasures' Not Quite Pleasing," Detroit Free Press (March 12, 1965).

> Writer and songsmith came close to a good moment towards the end, when they have Catherine and Potemkin involved in a moody, almost operatic duet called "Far, Far, Far Away."
>
> In this one they approached the change from farce to seriousness which has been the mark of good American musicals from the beginning.
>
> But it is too late. Instead of high spirits, "Pleasures" deals in burlesque, which you can buy cheaper elsewhere.[7]

In a review dated March 17, 1965, the Variety reviewer wrote:

> Since the tuner [sic] is conceived as a comic opera and is played very broadly, its failure to generate even one side-splitting laugh indicates the magnitude of the rewrite job Spewack faces. He will need all the help that Loesser, who collaborated on the book, can give him.
>
> The music and lyrics, on the admittedly inconclusive basis of a first hearing, seems undistinguished and lacks . . . catchyness. In some cases, the music is constructed so simply that it seems unmelodic, as in "What is Life?" which sounds like a second-rate nursery rhyme. Since this particular song is important for plot purposes and is reprised twice, its successful reworking would make a significant improvement.
>
> Loesser's lyrics in many instances, are so repetitious that they detract. . . .[8]

Pleasures and Palaces was Frank Loesser's last show.

There was one property, however, that he had been working on for many years and which might have come to fruition had he lived. Abe Burrows remembered the musical not as an original, but "It was based

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[7] _____, "A Classy Vehicle in Need of Fuel," Detroit Free Press (March 17, 1965) [n.p.].

[8] "Shows Out of Town: Pleasures and Palaces," Variety (March 17, 1965) [n.p.]. It is impossible to make any comments on the worth of the show based only on the preceding critical reviews. Thus, without an available script the newspaper reviews must by necessity stand on their own.

on a story of Buddy Shulberg's, I think."[9] Cy Feuer, when asked if he knew of this property said:

> Yeah, I heard it all. He played me the whole thing. He never could lick it. He dropped it. I advised him to drop it because he was heading nowhere. He liked the expression of Mexicans and he could talk great Mexican--he could affect a great accent . . . and I said, "Jesus, you're trying to put a whole show together so you can use your Mexican accent? For Crissakes, I mean what kind of a base is that? If it turns out to be lousy, so you got off a couple of Mexican outpourings; it isn't worth it and I don't see where you're going." He told me what the story was. It was like Greenwillow in an odd way and he had little eight bar things that he wanted to use as a gimmick instead of a song--a little eight bar expression here and there. Character things. But I don't think that worked either.[10]

The Mexican musical[11] must have been pretty well worked out, for Joe Anthony remembered it well. He recalled:

> A musical that has not been done [that] he wanted to do [was] some Mexican musical. . . . He had a script that he sent me that had every possible item all totally described. I mean, lights, what quality of light, what exact costumes, what a prop should look like; he was so terrified of a community of talents, he wanted to do the whole thing himself. I had a very interesting and pleasant meeting with him about it, but I said "Frank, what director wants to do this? You've done it all. You said exactly what you want. You want a director who's just a stage manager, or do you want a director? Why don't you direct it yourself, fall on your face and find out that you are not a director, or become a director and do it? But don't write everything down and then invite a director." You see, he is so oriented as a performer that he really never did understand that other performers would find other means in his work than he uses. He could admire a performer in something that he didn't have anything to do with, but once he came into his work, there was only his way.[12]

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[9]Burrows, op. cit. [10]Feuer, op. cit.

[11]No materials other than those cited are available relating to this work.

[12]Anthony, op. cit.

The Mexican musical was never produced. On July 28, 1969, Frank Loesser died of cancer in Mt. Sinai hospital.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

By pursuing his desire to write the compleat musical, Frank Loesser helped the form retain its place of prominence in the Broadway scene. The mid-twentieth century musical was striving to become an integrated form where each of the disparate elements fit together to create a unified theatrical expression. Frank Loesser, a man of varied talents, was able to write both words and music for a production as well as to have a hand in creating the book. He possessed--as did Irving Berlin and Cole Porter--the ability to create scores for Broadway musicals which were popular with the public and which were treated seriously as theatre works by the critics.

Where's Charley? was Frank Loesser's debut in the world of the New York Broadway musical. In this show he collaborated with the already successful and well-established George Abbott, and the newcomers to the producing field, Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin. The star of the show was Ray Bolger who had been chosen before Loesser was introduced to the project. The major decisions for the show were made by

the producers and the author of the book, Abbott. Loesser played a minor role in the formation of the structure of the piece, fitting songs into a script that was developed from and closely followed a well-known English farce. Thus Where's Charley? is more or less a traditional musical with a traditional score. The musical includes the standard complement of "straight" and comic lovers, as well as secondary comic relief. Loesser fashioned a score that was filled with romantic melodies and crisp, satiric lyrics. When a "straight" love song was called for, he was able to supply "My Darling, My Darling," and when a comic song was needed, he devised several inventive lyrics which made their comic points. Loesser drew upon local color for his waltz and march numbers in the production and, even if a song like "My Darling," is a standard pop tune, it at least suggests the emotions of characters who find themselves at a loss to express those feelings.

Loesser excelled in the writing of songs which reveal character. Having been a Hollywood song writer, he was expert at fashioning a song for a character in a particular plot situation. To compound the difficulty, the song frequently had to reflect both the personality of the character who was singing the song and the star who was playing that character. Thus, the score of Where's Charley? was tailored both for the talents of Ray Bolger as Charley and for Ray Bolger the performer.

Loesser's next Broadway project was Guys and Dolls. Here Loesser had more creative control because the show's book, written by Abe

Burrows, was fashioned around a score he had already written for a previous version of the show. The collaborators, Loesser and Burrows, were men born and raised in New York and who seemed to have a similar view of the world. Preparations for the production were made with a "give and take" between men who obviously had great respect for one another so that compromises could be made. Burrows must have possessed the same sense of conviction and stubborness as Loesser; but since neither was in total control, any disagreements had to be mutually solved. Besides, they were friends; each deeply respected the talents of the other.

Loesser was known to be a hard worker and a perfectionist when it came to the performance of his work. At this time he utilized what seems to have become standard procedure in later years. He held personal coaching rehearsals with his leads so that they would sing his songs exactly as he had envisioned them.

The book for Guys and Dolls created a world complete unto itself. The Runyon world on the stage is not the serious social milieu that was popular in the movies of the 1930's[1] nor was it the savage and brutal satirical milieu of John Gay and Bertolt Brecht, although both Loesser and Burrows were captivated by the underworld milieu of The Three-Penny Opera. The Runyon world was a uniquely comic one, and any temptation to descend into burlesque was avoided.

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[1] i.e., the world in the films of Cagney, Robinson and Bogart.

Although the characters are two-dimensional in their conception, the Loesser score makes these comic characters human. The score, both music and lyrics, makes the audience empathize with their problems. What is one moment a cartoon character, quickly becomes a human being with feelings. Thus a comic number like "Adelaide's Lament" becomes a song of unrequited love, while "Luck Be a Lady," which is sung to a pair of dice, expresses the love of a man who is not used to showing the emotions he can feel for a woman. The score of Guys and Dolls also consistently transforms cartoon characters into real people with whom we can sympathize.

The collaborators on Guys and Dolls did not work together again for many years, but when they did, they created a work that seems to be a logical extension. In How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying, Loesser and Burrows once again created a cartoon world, not of gangsters but of another kind of crook, the corporate executive. The hero, Finch, a charming but ruthless corporate climber such as was often dealt with in the literature of the 1950's[2] achieves a high position in the business world, but in the Loesser-Burrows environment no one is really hurt by this basically likable young man. No threat in this musical world is really serious. In How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying, Loesser was dealing with a milieu with which he was totally comfortable. He knew the machinations of the world of big business and the characters, like their less sophisticated brethren in

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[2] e.g., the novels of Kingsley Amis and John Braine.

Guys and Dolls, spoke in a Manhattan vernacular. Loesser's collaborators on this show were Feuer and Martin and Abe Burrows who had worked together on Can Can and Silk Stockings. Now with Loesser they re-established the partnership that had produced Guys and Dolls.

Loesser did not have the strength of this teamwork to support him in his other musicals. For The Most Happy Fella, he wrote the book and the score himself and was in essence the co-producer of the production. He had the final say, yet he seems to have been unable to follow his ideal of a completely musical production without making concessions. Perhaps it was an overriding desire for popular acceptance of this, his solo effort, that made him alter his original concept in order to introduce dialogue where he originally planned on having song or recitative. Pop tunes were introduced and dances were jazzed up in order to please a Broadway audience. The director and co-producer of the musical were experienced theatre people, but whose previous experience in the theatre had been with straight fare and not with musicals. They were easily persuaded to bend somewhat, and the know-how and stubbornness of an Abe Burrows was not there to force Loesser to see the mistakes he was making by compromising his original intentions.

In order to write such a musically sophisticated show, Loesser first tried to learn as much as he could about formal music theory. He knew that what he had picked up in his years as lyricist and composer of pop scores and tunes was not sufficient for the scope of the material

he was attempting to write in The Most Happy Fella. The music he finally did write is romantic and emotional. The songs are at their best when they are defining character and establishing mood.

The characters are, to be sure, alien to the cartoon creations of the New York Guys and Dolls and How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying. With these productions Loesser's audiences were able to accept the worlds that were created because stylistically every part fit the whole. With The Most Happy Fella Loesser was not quite able to achieve a unity of style that would allow his audience to accept completely the world of the Napa Valley.

Greenwillow failed for the same reasons The Most Happy Fella almost fails. In Greenwillow Loesser was not secure with this fantasy world and so the musical was not able to achieve integration of style.

Greenwillow is fey and other-worldly. It is as far from the bustle of New York as one can get, and Loesser did not have the touch to create a totally bucolic, mythical environment, where rare and magical things can happen. In Greenwillow a man is separated from his love not because of business (i.e., wickers or craps) or circumstances (i.e., a large age difference and the spectre of an illegitimate love affair) but by some supernatural call to wander. Loesser was not able to write a show in which children

baptize a cow with a 'twill and a 'twas; Loesser was more comfortable using New York slang: "dese," "dem," and "doze." Greenwillow rings false, not because Loesser's score doesn't achieve some lyrical moments, but because Loesser was working with a plot whose fantastical premises the audience never accepted.

Perhaps the failure of Greenwillow was a direct outgrowth of Loesser's stubborn insistence on working alone. Elliot Lawrence, the conductor, supports this view. Lawrence stated:

> One of his flaws was . . . except with Abe Burrows, he didn't want to write with people on his . . . level as book writers. For one reason or another, I don't know the reason, when he wrote Pleasures and Palaces . . . he took a very bad book and a very bad book writer. On other shows he tried to write his own books which he should not have done. . . . He liked to be king and that's why he was so successful as a music publisher. He's probably one of the best lyricists . . . we ever had. As far as a musician he was a self-taught musician and he lived in the shadow of his brother. . . . He studied constantly. . . . He wrote really wonderful songs because he struggled much more with his music than he did with his lyrics.[3]

Lawrence continued by examining the relationship among Loesser, Feuer, and Burrows. He said:

> Frank Loesser was a very strong man. Cy Feuer is one of the strong men of the world and Abe Burrows was strong and they'd have give and take and fights and so that the best part of everybody's talents came out in the show. If in Pleasures and Palaces, Frank was the whole power, lyricist, composer and producer and everything, then there was nobody . . . (even the director was of his choice) then there was nobody that would say, look Frank, you should do this or that . . . so he did everything he wanted. For that reason . . . they never . . . take anything out of a show and that's very dangerous. With a Feuer and Martin show and

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[3]Lawrence, op. cit.

> Abe they were merciless on each other and it made for a marvelous show.[4]

Hal Prince, the producer-director, added that Loesser's business pursuits kept him from creating as much as he should have. That involvement with his business along with his desire to have the final say, limited his output and gives us only five works by this creator of musical comedy.

In giving a character sketch of the composer, Prince also touched upon Loesser's large ego. Prince said:

> He was a New York fella . . . he talked out of the side of his mouth. He was like Humphrey Bogart and seems to have come from that whole sidewalks of New York [here Prince paused] sharpie segment of society and from that period. He had to do with music plugging . . . these were all overlays, these are all attitudes that he chose to present to the world. He was an intellectual, he was, he read books and thought a lot. He was bit too self (I don't want to say self-involved because we are all self-involved). I always come back to the same theme with Frank, he did too little because he listened to things within himself that predominated; the things which were the best about himself. He hustled things, he jockeyed things around until they came out his way. He tried as best he could to manipulate the principals in projects. Insofar as he didn't succeed, his work succeeded. Almost I would have said in relation to his failure to be the predominant voice except where it came to music and lyrics. He was--I said the word before--dazzling.[5]

Loesser's desire to always remain predominant can be seen in another more subtle fashion. His voice singing his own songs can be heard on the demonstration albums cut for several of the shows. Elliot Lawrence said of Loesser's performing abilities, " . . . he sang marvelously, he demonstrated his own songs better than anybody ever did them in the

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[4]Ibid. [5]Prince, op. cit.

show afterwards. . . . you always believed exactly that he was the character that he had written the song for."[6] Lawrence also commented on what we might call Loesser's outstanding flaw, an ego involvement that was so great that it would cause him to make his own demonstration records and expect his performers to follow, if not mimic, his interpretation of the songs.

Lawrence discussed Loesser's difficulty working with people of equal stature.[7] As has already been seen, it is possible that the problems of the non-Feuer/Burrows musicals were related to the fact that no one else had a chance to have an artistic say. Lawrence stated:

> He wanted to be the boss of everything. . . . Abe in many ways would always give in to him, in a nice lovely way, and he knew how to handle him because Abe would get the line back in. But I can tell you one thing, Frank was very good, never taking any lyric suggestions from anybody. But I can tell you one lyric in How To Succeed that's Abe. It's in "I Believe in You." He couldn't--he had to have a rhyme with "truth" and he was looking for it . . . and Abe was in the office and he said I've got a funny one, "vermouth"--and Frank said that's great and that became gin and vermouth in the lyrics, and that rhyme was Abe. But very seldom would he ever take a suggestion from anybody. . . .[8]

It seems that Abe Burrows was the only creative person with whom Loesser could comfortably work. Burrows remembered the ease of their collaboration as he recalled the time when How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying was being devised. Burrows felt that the hero, Finch, needed a moment towards the end of the show in which everyone would get excited but in which "nothing gets resolved because the show ain't

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[6]Lawrence, op. cit. [7]Ibid. [8]Ibid.

over yet. So I need a song that'll tear up the joint but doesn't end the show. So he did it."[9] And "The Brotherhood of Man" was created.

Burrows also remembered another Loesser flaw, that of having a very fast temper but one that would cool down quickly. Remembering rehearsals for How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying, he said, "He was there all the time, hollering. He would get very angry, he'd holler and threaten everybody and then walk away and come back with an ice cream cone or something."[10]

Loesser's ego involvement and his desire to develop his publishing business worked hand in hand with helping new talent. Whether the development of new talent sprang from the desire to make the best business deal he could for his publishing firm or artistic satisfaction isn't really important. Burrows, when remembering the careers of Adler and Ross, who were Loesser discoveries, said, "He had the ego satisfaction of teaching them. . . . He used to love to sit with young people and tell them what was what. And Dick Adler told me Frank helped him a good deal when they [he and Jerry Ross] were writing."[11]

At the time of his death from lung cancer, Frank Loesser had won many prizes for his contributions to the field. Among them were: an Oscar for "Baby, It's Cold Outside," a Tony for Guys and Dolls, three New York Drama Critics Circle Awards for Guys and Dolls, The Most Happy Fella, and How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying

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[9]Burrows, op. cit. [10]Ibid. [11]Ibid.

and a Pulitzer Prize for How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying.

He was a man who could, if he had to, work quickly and well. He is ranked on a par with Irving Berlin and Cole Porter. Burrows has said his friend "could do it all,"[12] while Kasha feels that Loesser was capable of writing a popular song worthy of a Berlin, with the wit of a Lorenz Hart or a Cole Porter.[13]

The number of Loesser's works for Broadway is not large but one must remember he came to Broadway well into his career after having apprenticed himself in Hollywood. His business affairs at Frank Music, Incorporated, took time away from his creative life. His studying was also time consuming. There is a six-year gap between the production of Guys and Dolls and The Most Happy Fella.

The finished products of all his musicals were so well integrated that no one element can be lifted out without doing intrinsic harm to the work. Loesser's musicals blend all their theatrical and musical elements into one unified artistic statement. This ability to combine the disparate elements of musical theatre into one coherent whole was the most important accomplishment of this artist.

Perhaps Abe Burrows, one of Loesser's dearest friends and closest collaborators summed it up as clearly as possible in his August 10, 1969, obituary for his friend that appeared in the New York Times.

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[12] Ibid. [13] Kasha, op. cit.

Burrows said:

> Frank was one of the song men in the musical theatre who "did it all." A man with the technique and talent to cover the whole range of what is needed to get a musical show on. Ballads, character things, group songs, comedy numbers, and anything else including a good overture. There haven't been many men who could "do it all" and, among the few who could, Frank ranks with the greatest.[14]

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[14]Abe Burrows, "Frank Loesser: 1910-1969," New York Times (August 10, 1969) [n.p.].

APPENDIX A[1]

LOESSER LYRICS

1931

"I'm in Love With a Memory of You," music by William H. Schuman.

1933

"Spahetti," with Billy Frisch, music by Otto Motzan.

1934

"Doesn't That Mean Anything to You," music by Bob Emmerich.
"Goo Goo G'Da," with Billy Frisch and Raymond Leveen, music by Ernest Breuer.
"I Wish I Were Twins (so I Could Love You Twice as Much)," with Eddie Delange, music by Joseph Meyer.
"Junk Man," music by Joseph Meyer.
"Oh! What a Beautiful Baby (You Turned Out to Be)," music by J. Fred Coots.
"The Old Oak Tree," music by Joseph Meyer.

1935

"Sunday at Sundown," music by Otto Motzan.
"The Traffic was Terrific," with Buddy Bernier, music by Otto Motzan.
POETIC GEMS (a series of short motion picture subjects with fifteen original poems by Edgar A. Guest with songs inspired by the poems, music by Louis Herscher). Including:
"Everybody's Ship Comes In" (poem: Sea Dreams)

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[1]Arthur Loesser, op. cit., pp. 230-239.

"A Symphony in Green" (poem: Early in the Mornin')
"Take me Home to the Mountains" (poem: Old Prospector)
"Indian Moon" (poem: When Redskins bit the Dust)
"Little Miss Mischief" (poem: Worn Out)
"Down the Lane to Yesterday" (poem: Boyhood)
"By a Silvery Stream" (poem: Bill and I went Fishing)
"The Snowflakes" (poem: Call of the Woods and Silence of the Snow)
"Don't Grow any Older" (poem: Couldn't live Without You)
"Here's to the Builder" (poem: Song of the Builder)
"Get Under the Sun" (poem: After the Storm and When we were Kids)
"A Real True Pal" (poem: Scout Master)
"Back-seat Drivers" (poem: Ma and the Auto)

1936

"A Tree in Tipperary," music by Irving Actman.
"Wild Trumpets and Crazy Piano (Got a Gal to Forget)," music by Irving Actman.
The Illustrator's Show (music by Irving Actman). Including:
"Bang--the Bell Rang"
"I'm You"
"Finale" (with Carl Randall)
"If you Didn't Love Me"
"I Like to go Strange Places"
"Give me Wild Trumpets"

1937

Blossoms on Broadway (Paramount)
"No Ring on her Finger," music by Manning Sherwin.
"You Can't Tell a Man by His Hat," music by Manning Sherwin.
The Hurricane (United Artists)
"The Moon of Manakoora," music by Alfred Newman.
Walter Wanger's Vogues of 1938 (United Artists)
"Lovely One," music by Manning Sherwin.

1939

Coconut Grove (Paramount)
"Says my Heart," music by Burton Lane.

College Swing (Paramount)
"College Swing," music by Hoagy Carmichael.
"How'dja like to Love Me," music by Burton Lane.
"I Fall in Love with You Every Day," music by Manning Sherwin.
"Moments like This," music by Burton Lane.
"What did Romeo say to Juliet," music by Burton Lane.
"You're a Natural," music by Manning Sherwin.
"What a Rumba does to Romance," music by Manning Sherwin.
Men with Wings (Paramount)
"Men with Wings," music by Hoagy Carmichael.
Sing you Sinners (Paramount)
"Small Fry," music by Hoagy Carmichael.
A Song is Born (Pararmount)
"Heart and Soul," music by Hoagy Carmichael.
Spawn of the North (Paramount)
"I wish I was the Willow," music by Burton Lane.
"I like Humped-backed Salmon," music by Burton Lane.
Stolen Heaven (Paramount)
"Boys in the Band," music by Manning Sherwin.
Thanks for the Memory (Paramount)
"Two Sleepy People," music by Hoagy Carmichael.
Zaza (Paramount)
"Hello, My Darling"
"Forget Me"
"Zaza," music by Frederick Hollander.

1939

"Fragrant Night," music by Louis Alter.
"Here Comes the Night," music by Hilly Edelstein and Carl Hohengarten.
"I Kind'a Dream," music by Bernie Kane.
"I'm all A-tremble over You," music by Ted Fiorito.
"Old Fashioned Love," music by Fritz Miller.
Cafe Society (Paramount)
"Kiss me with Your Eyes," music by Burton Lane.
"Park Avenue Gimp," music by Leo Shuken.
Heritage of the Desert (Paramount)
"Here's a Heart," music by Victor Young.
Destry Rides Again (Universal)
"(See what) the Boys in the Backroom (will Have)"
"Li'l Joe, the Wrangler"
"You've got that Look (that Leaves me Weak)," music by Frederick Hollander.
Gracie Allen Murder Case (Paramount)
"Snug as a Bug in a Rug," music by Matt Malneck.

Hawaiian Nights (Universal)
"Hawaii Sang me to Sleep"
"Hey, Good-looking," music by Matt Malneck.
"Then I Wrote the Minuet in 'G,'" music by Ludwig von Beethoven, adapted by Matt Melneck.
Invitation to Happiness (Paramount)
"Invitation to Happiness," music by Frederick Hollander.
Island of Lost Men (Paramount)
"Music in the Shore," music by Frederick Hollander.
Man About Town (Paramount)
"Fidgety Joe," music by Matt Melneck.
"Man About Town," music by Frederick Hollander.
"Strange Enchantment," music by Frederick Hollander.
"That Sentimental Sandwich," music by Frederick Hollander.
St. Louis Blues (Paramount)
"Blue Nightfall," music by Burton Lane.
"I Go for That," music by Matt Malneck.
"Junior," music by Burton Lane.
"The Song in my Heart is a Rumba," music by Burton Lane.
Some Like it Hot (Paramount)
"The Lady's in Love With You," music by Burton Lane.
"Some Like it Hot," music by Gene Krupa and Remo Biondi.
"Whodunit," music by Hoagy Carmichael.

1940

"By the By 'By'"
Buck Benny Rides Again (Paramount)
"Drums in the Night"
"My Kind of Country"
"My! My!"
"Say it (Over and Over Again)," music by Jimmy McHugh.
Dance with the Devil (20th Century-Fox)
"Your Kiss," music by Alfred Newman.
Dancing on a Dime (Paramount)
"Dancing on a Dime," music by Burton Lane,
"I Hear Music," music by Burton Lane.
"Lovable Sort of Person," music by Victor Young.
"Manana," music by Burton Lane.
Johnny Apollo (20th Century-Fox)
"Dancing for Nickels and Dimes," music by Lionel Newman.
Moon Over Burma (Paramount)
"Mexican Magic," music by Harry Revel.
"Moon Over Burma," music by Frederick Hollander.
A Night at Earl Carroll's (Paramount)
"Li'l Boy Love," music by Frederick Hollander.

The Quarterback (Paramount)
"Out with Your Chest (and up with Your Chin)," music by Matt Malneck.
Seven Sinners (Universal)
"I Fall Overboard"
"I've been in Love Before"
"The Man's in the Navy," music by Frederick Hollander.
Typhoon (Paramount)
"Palms of Paradise," music by Frederick Hollander.
Youth Will Be Served (20th Century-Fox)
"Hot Catfish and Corn Dodgers," music by Louis Alter.

1941

"Sentimental Folks," music by Jule Styne.
Aloma of the South Seas (Paramount)
"The White Blossoms of Tah-nim," music by Frederick Hollander.
Arizona Sketches (Paramount)
"Prairieland Lullaby," Desert Motif of Victor Young's suite "Arizona Sketches."
Caught in the Draft (Paramount)
"Love me as I Am," music by Louis Alter.
Glamour Boy (Paramount)
"Love is Such an Old Fashioned Thing"
"The Magic of Magnolias," music by Victor Schertzinger.
Hold Back the Dawn (Paramount)
"My Boy, My Boy," with Jimmy Berg and Fred Jacobson, music by Fred Spielman.
Kiss the Boys Goodbye (Paramount)
"Find Yourself a Melody"
"I'll Never let a Day Pass By"
"Kiss the Boys Goodbye"
"Sand in My Shoes"
"That's How I Got My Start," music by Victor Schertzinger.
Las Vegas Nights (Paramount)
"Dolores," music by Louis Alter.
"I Gotta Ride," music by Burton Lane.
"Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary," music by Burton Lane.
Mr. Bug Goes to Town (Paramount)
"Boy, oh Boy!," music by Sammy Timberg.
"I'll Dance at your Wedding, Honey Dear," music by Hoagy Carmichael.
"Katy-did, Katy-didn't," music by Hoagy Carmichael.
"We're the Couple in the Castle," music by Hoagy Carmichael.
Sailors on Leave (Republic)
"Since You," music by Jule Styne.

Sis Hopkins (Republic)
"Cracker Barrel County"
"If You're in Love"
"Look at You, Look at Me"
"That Ain't Hay"
"Well! Well!," music by Jule Styne.
Sweater Girl (Paramount)
"I Don't Want to Walk Without You"
"I Said No"
"Sweater Girl"
"What Gives Out Now?," music by Jule Styne.
World Premiere (Paramount)
"Don't Cry Little Cloud," music by Burton Lane.

1942

"Hello Mom," words by Captain Arthur V. Jones, music by Captain Eddie Dunstedter.
Beyond the Blue Horizon (Paramount)
"Pagan Lullaby," music by Jule Styne.
The Forest Rangers (Paramount)
"(I got Spurs that) Jingle Jangle Jingle," music by Joseph J. Lilley.
"Tall Grows the Timber," music by Frederick Hollander.
Priorities on Parade (also listed as "Priorities of 1943") (Paramount)
"You're in Love with Someone Else (but I'm in Love with You)," music by Jule Styne.
Seven Days Leave (RKO Radio)
"Baby"
"Can't Get Out of This Mood"
"I Get the Neck of the Chicken"
"Please, Won't you Leave my Girl Alone"
"Puerto Rico"
"Soft Hearted"
"A Touch of Texas"
"You Speak my Language," music by Jimmy McHugh
Totilla Flat (M-G-M)
"Oh, How I Love a Wedding," music by Franz Waxman.
"Ai-Paisano," based on an old Mexican folk tune, transcribed by Max Wagner and arranged by Franz Waxman.
True to the Army (Paramount)
"Need I Speak"
"Jitterbug's Lullaby," music by Harold Spina.

1943

Happy Go Lucky (Paramount)
"The Fuddy Duddy Watchmaker"
"Happy-Go-Lucky"
"Let's Get Lost"
"Murder, He Says"
"Sing a Tropical Song," music by Jimmy McHugh.
Thank Your Lucky Stars (Warner Brothers)
"The Dreamer"
"Good Night, Good Neighbor"
"How Sweet You Are"
"I'm Riding for a Fall"
"Ice Cold Katy"
"Love Isn't Born, It's Made"
"Thank Your Lucky Stars"
"They're Either too Young or too Old," music by Arthur Schwartz.
Tornado (Paramount)
"There Goes my Dream," music by Frederick Hollander.

1944

"My Gals Workin' at Lockheed," music by Matt Denis.
"One Little WAC," music by Eddie Dunstedter.
"Sing a Tropical Song," music by Jimmy McHugh.

LOESSER LYRICS AND MUSIC

1934

"Home Ties," words and music with Charles Tobias and Samuel Pokrass.
"Now I lay me Down to Sin"

1935

"I Just Came Back to Haunt You (Boogy Boogy Boogy Boo)," words and music with Billy Hueston and Bob Emmerich.

1937

"Dream To-night," words and music with Jackson Swales, 2nd.
"Love for a Day"

The Duck Hunt (Universal)

"Action"
"A-hunting We Will Go"
"The Decoy"
"Duck Antics"
"Duck Hunt Finale"
"In the Boat"
"A Run for It"
"Shooting," words if any by FL, music with Irving Actman.

Everybody Sings (Universal)

"Chasing"
"Chinese Serenade"
"Everybody Sings"
"Flight of the Birds"
"March Song"
"Morning Serenade"
"Nobody but You"
"The Preacher's Sermon"
"Robber's Song"
"Run for Your Lives"
"The Scarecrow"
"Song of the Humming Birds"
"Song of the Sparrow"
"Three Black Crows," music with Irving Actman.

Fight for Your Lady (RKO Radio)

"Blame it on the Danube," with Harry Akst.

The Golphers (Universal)

"Ball Dance"
"Can you Imagine"
"Folk Song"
"Golf Song"
"The Golfers, Intermezzo"
"I Like You"
"Just for a Change"
"Meany Meiny Moe"
"Nothing"
"Paraphrase"
"Scotch Air"
"Should I"
"Sleepy," music with Irving Actman.

The Man I Marry (Universal)
"I Know I'm in Harlem"
"Old Homestead," music with Irving Actman.
Mysterious Crossing (Universal)
"The Railroad that Ran Through our Land," music with Irving Actman.
Postal Inspector (Universal)
"Let's Have Blue Birds," words and music with Irving Actman.
"Don't Let Me Love You," words and music with Irving Actman.
Three Smart Girls (Universal)
Songs not used:
"Heart of Harlem"
"I Think you Have got Something There"
"Life is Peaches and Cream"
"Since When"
"You're my Heart," music with Irving Actman.
Turkey Dinner (Universal)
"Are You in Trouble"
"Do You Like Me?"
"Finale"
"Hot Bread"
"Hot Towel"
"Hot Turkey"
"Intermezzo"
"Just Like That"
"Tempest"
"Turkey Giblets"
"Turkey Trot," music with Irving Actman.
Yellowstone (Universal)
"Just Joggin' Along," music with Irving Actman.

1938

Freshman Year (Universal)
"Chasing you Around," music with Irving Actman.

1939

"Bubbles in the Wine," words and music with Bob Calame and Lawrence Welk.
Seventeen (Paramount)
"Seventeen"

1940

A Night at Earl Carroll's (Paramount)
"I Wanna' Make with the Happy Times," words and music with Gertrude Niessen
"Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition"

1943

"Have I Stayed Away too Long?"
"In my Arms (Ain't I Never Gonna get a Girl in my Arms?)"
"The Road to Victory"
"Skirts (Night After Night in the Army)"
"What do you do in the Infantry (you March, you March, you March)"

1944

"Leave us Face It (We're in Love)," with Abe Burrows.
"The One Pip Wonder" (song of the Canadian Armored Corps)
"Sad Bombardier"
"The WAC Hymn"
About Face! (soldier show with music and lyrics by Loesser, Hy Zaret, Peter Lind Hayes, Jerry Livingston, and Lou Singer)
"Dog Face Opening"
"Gee! but it's Great to be in the Army"
"First Class Private Mary Brown," by FL
"P.X. Parade"
"Why do they Call a Private a Private?," with Hayes.
"Dog Face Finale"
Christmas Holiday (Universal)
"Spring will be a Little Late this Year"
Hi, Yank! (soldier show with music and lyrics by Loesser, Alex North, Jack Hill, and Jesse Berkman)
"Overture"
"Yank, Yank, Yank"
"The Saga of the Sack"
"Ballet"
"My Gal and I"
"The General Orders"
"Classification Blues"
"Little Red Rooftops"
"Report from the Caribbean"
"The Most Important Job"
"Finale"

P. F. C. Mary Brown (A WAC Musical Revue with music and lyrics by Loesser, Ruby Jane Douglass, Hy Zaret, and Arthur Altman)
"Overture"
"Something New"
"25 Words or Less"
"New Style Bonnet"
"Come On, Honey"
"PFC Mary Brown"
"Lonely MP"
"Lost in a Cloud of Blue"
"Finale"
"The WAC Hymn"

See Here, Private Hargrove (M-G-M)
"In my Arms," with Ted Grouya.

1945

"Rodger Young"
"Wave to Me my Lady," with William Stein.

It's the Goods, with music by Loesser and David Mann, book by Frank Provo and John Pickard, lyrics by Loesser, Pickard, and Mann)

OK, U. S. A. (a soldier show with no credits)
"Overture"
"A Trip Round the USA"
"'Way Down Texas Way"
"My Chicago"
"Miss America"
"Tonight in San Francisco"
"When he Comes Home," with words and music by Loesser.
"The Tall Pines"
"You're OK, U. S. A."

1946

The Day Before Spring (Loew's; songs for unreleased picture)
"It's Time for the Love Scene"
"Who Could Forget You"
"My Sentimental Nature"
"Bing Bang"
"You're so Reliable"
"Ibbedy Bibbedy Sibbedy Sab"

1947

"Bloop, Bleep! (the Faucet Keeps a-Dripping and I Can't Sleep)"
"Keep Your Eye on the Sky (Follow the Bright Silver Wings of the Air Force)"
"A Tune for Humming"
"What are You Doing New Year's Eve"
Perils of Pauline (Paramount)
"I Wish I Didn't Love You So"
"Poppa, Don't Preach to Me"
"Rumble, Rumble, Rumble"
"The Sewing Machine"
Variety Girl (Paramount)
"He Can Waltz"
"Tallahassee"
"Your Heart Calling Mine"

1948

"Down the Stairs, out the Door Went my Baby"
"The Feathery Feelin' (got a Covey of Quail Flyin' 'Round in my Noggin)"
"The Last Thing I Want is your Pity"
"On a Slow Boat to China"
A Miracle Can Happen (Paramount)
"The Queen of the Hollywood Islands"

1949

Neptune's Daughter (M-G-M)
"My Heart Beats Faster"
"Baby, it's Cold Outside"
"Neptune's Vocal Finale" (from "Flash! There's Gonna be-a Party.")
Red, Hot and Blue (Paramount)
"I Wake up in the Morning Feeling Fine"
"That's Loyalty"
"(Where are You) Now That I Need You"
"Hamlet"
Roseanna McCoy (Goldwyn)
"Roseanna"

1952

Hans Christian Andersen (Goldwyn released by RKO)
"I'm Hans Christian Andersen"
"Anywhere I Wander"
"The Ugly Duckling"
"Inchworm"
"Thumbalina"
"No Two People"
"The King's New Clothes"
"Wonderful Copenhagen"

1955

Guys and Dolls (Goldwyn released by M-G-M)
"(Your Eyes are the Eyes of) A Woman in Love"
"Pet Me Poppa"
"Adelaide (Adelaide, ever Lovin' Adelaide)"

APPENDIX B

THE ILLUSTRATORS SHOW (5 performances)[1]

A revue in two parts assembled by the Society of Illustrators, amplified and edited by Tom Weatherly; music and lyrics by Frank Loesser and Irving Actman. Produced by Tom Weatherly at the 48th Street Theatre, New York, January 22, 1936.

Principals Engaged:

Helen Lynd	Earl Oxford
Niela Goodelle	Robert Berry
Phyllis Cameron	Otto Soglow
Elizabeth Houston	Fred Cooper
Norman Lind	Joe Donatello
Edward Mowen	Dan Harden
Betty Gillette	O. Z. Whitehead
	William Houston

Gomez and Winona

Staged by Tom Weatherly; dances and musical numbers by Carol Randall; sketches by Allen Delanes; music directed by Gene Salzer; settings by Arne Lundberg from designs by the Society of Illustrators; costumes by Carl Sidney; curtain by Russell Patterson.

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[1]Burns Mantle (ed.), The Best Plays of 1935-36 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1936), p. 463.

WHERE'S CHARLEY? (792 performances)[2]

Musical comedy in two acts, based on Brandon Thomas' "Charley's Aunt," with book by George Abbott and songs by Frank Loesser; produced by Cy Feuer and Ernest H. Martin, in association with Gwen Rickard, at the St. James Theatre, October 11, 1948.

Cast of Characters:

Brassett. . . . . John Lynds
Jack Chesney . . . . . Byron Palmer
Charley Wykeham . . . . . Ray Bolger
Kitty Verdun . . . . . Doretta Morrow
Amy Spettigue . . . . . Allyn Ann McLerie
Wilkinson . . . . . Edgar Kent
Sir Francis Chesney . . . . . Paul England
Mr. Spettigue . . . . . Horace Cooper
A Professor . . . . . Jack Friend
Donna Lucia D'Alvadorez . . . . . Jane Lawrence
Photographer . . . . . James Lane
Patricia . . . . . Marie Foster
Reggie . . . . . Douglas Deane

DANCERS: Mary Alice Bingham, Vicki Barrett, Geraldine Delaney, Marge Ellis, Marie Foster, Marcia Maier, Nina Starkey, Susan Stewart, Toni Stuart, Douglas Deane, George Enke, John Friend, Bobby Harrell, Dusty McCaffrey, Walter Rinner, Bill Weber, Gordon West, Ken Shelan.

SINGERS: Rae Abruzzo, Jane Judge, Ruth McVane, Betty Oakes, Eleanor Parker, Katherine Reeve, Gloria Sullivan, Irene Weston, Robert Baird, James Bird, Dan Gallagher, Bob Held, Cornell McNeil, Stowe Phelps, William Scully, Ernest Taylor.

ACT I. Scene 1: Room at Oxford University. Scene 2: A Street. Scene 3: A Garden. Scene 4: Where the Nuts Come From.
ACT II. Scene 1: A Garden. Scene 2: A Street. Scene 3: Where the Ladies Go. Scene 4: A Garden Path. Scene 5: The Ballroom.

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[2]John Chapman (ed.), The Best Plays of 1950-1951 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1951), p. 346 and Where's Charley? Playbill.

Staged by George Abbott; sets and costumes by David Ffolkes; dances by George Balanchine, assisted by Fred Danielli; vocal arrangements and direction by Garry Dolin; musical direction by Max Goberman; orchestrations by Ted Royal, Hans Spialek and Phil Lang.

Musical Numbers:

ACT I

"The Years Before Us"	Students
"Better Get Out of Here"	Amy, Kitty, Charley and Jack
"The New Ashmolean Marching Society and Students Conservatory Band"	Jack, Amy, Kitty, Students and Young Ladies
"My Darling, My Darling"	Jack, Kitty
"Make a Miracle"	Charley, Amy
"Serenade With Asides"	Spettigue
"Lovelier Than Ever"	Donna, Sir Francis, Students, Young Ladies
"The Woman in His Room"	Amy
"Pernambuco"	Charley, Amy, the "Pernambucans"

ACT II

"Where's Charley?"	Jack, Chorus
"Once in Love With Amy"	Charley
"The Gossips"	Young Ladies
"At the Red Rose Cotillion"	Jack, Kitty, Chorus and Dancers
"Finale"	Ensemble

GUYS AND DOLLS (1,200 performances)[3]

Musical comedy in two acts, based on a story and characters by Damon Runyon, produced by Feuer and Martin at the Forty-sixth Street Theatre, November 24, 1950. Music and lyrics by Frank Loesser; book by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows.

Cast of Characters:

Nicely-Nicely Johnson . . . . . Stubby Kaye
Benny Southstreet . . . . . Johnny Silver
Rusty Charlie . . . . . Douglas Deane
Sarah Brown . . . . . Isabel Bigley
Arvide Abernathy . . . . . Pat Rooney, Sr.
Calvin . . . . . Paul Migan
Agatha . . . . . Margery Oldroyd
Priscilla . . . . . Christine Matsios
Harry the Horse . . . . . Tom Pedi
Lt. Brannigan . . . . . Paul Reed
Nathan Detroit . . . . . Sam Levene
Angie the Ox . . . . . Tony Gardell
Miss Adelaide . . . . . Vivian Blaine
Sky Masterson . . . . . Robert Alda
Joey Biltmore . . . . . Bern Hoffman
Mimi . . . . . Beverly Tassoni
General Matilda B. Carstairs . . . . . Netta Parker
Big Jule . . . . . B. S. Pully
Drunk . . . . . Eddie Phillips
Waiter . . . . . Joe Milan

DANCERS: Wana Allison, Geraldine Delaney, Barbara Ferguson, Lee Joyce, Marcia Maier, Beverly Tassoni, Ruth Vernon, Onna White, Forrest Bonshire, Peter Gennaro, Joe Milan, Eddie Phillips, Harry Lee Rogers, Bud Schwab, Merritt Thompson.

SINGERS: Beverly Lawrence, Christine Matsios, Charles Drake, Tony Gardell, Bern Hoffman, Carl Nicholas, Don Russell, Hall Sanders, Earle Styres.

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[3]John Chapman, The Best Plays of 1950-1951 (Dodd, Mead and Company, 1951), pp. 329-330.

ACT I. Scene 1: Broadway. Scene 2: Interior of Save-a-Soul Mission. Scene 3: Wall Telephone--coin box. Scene 4: The Hot Box. Scene 5: A Street off Broadway. Scene 6: Mission Exterior. Scene 7: Street off Broadway. Scene 8: Havana, Cuba. Scene 9: Havana Exterior. Scene 10: Mission Exterior.

ACT II. Scene 1: The Hot Box. Scene 2: Street Exterior. Scene 3: Subterranean Crap Game. Scene 4: A Street off Broadway. Scene 5: Mission Interior. Scene 6: A Street off Broadway. Scene 7: Broadway.

Staged by George S. Kaufman; dances and musical numbers staged by Michael Kidd; sets by Jo Mielziner; costumes by Alvin Colt; orchestra arrangements by George Bassman and Ted Royal; vocal arrangements by Herbert Greene; musical direction by Irving Actman; production stage manager, Henri Caubisens.

Musical Numbers:

ACT I

"Fugue for Tinhorns" . . . . . Nicely-Nicely, Benny, Rusty
"Follow the Fold" . . . . . Mission Group
"The Oldest Established Permanent Floating Crap Game in New York" . . . . . Nathan, Nicely-Nicely, Benny, Ensemble
"I'll Know" . . . . . Sarah, Sky
"A Bushel and a Peck" . . . . . Adelaide and Hot Box Girls
"Adelaide's Lament" . . . . . Adelaide
"Guys and Dolls" . . . . . Nicely-Nicely, Benny
"Havana" . . . . . Onna White and Ensemble
"If I Were a Bell" . . . . . Sarah
"My Time of Day" . . . . . Sky
"I've Never Been in Love Before" . . . . . Sky, Sarah

ACT II

"Take Back Your Mink" . . . . . Adelaide and Hot Box Girls
"More I Cannot Wish You" . . . . . Arvide
"Luck, Be a Lady" . . . . . Sky and Crapshooters
"The Crap Game Dance" . . . . . Ensemble
"Sue Me" . . . . . Nathan, Adelaide
"Sit Down, You're Rockin' the Boat" . . . . . Nicely-Nicely and Ensemble

"Marry the Man Today".....Adelaide, Sarah
"Guys and Dolls".....Ensemble

THE MOST HAPPY FELLA (678 performances)[4]

Musical in three acts by Frank Loesser, based on Sidney Howard's "They Knew What They Wanted." Produced by Kermit Bloomgarden and Lynn Loesser at the Imperial Theatre, May 3, 1956.

Cast of Characters:

The Cashier.....Lee Cass
Cleo.....Susan Johnson
Rosabella.....Jo Sullivan
The Waitresses.....Marlyn Greer, Martha Mathes, Myrna Aaron, Meri Miller, Beverly Gaines
The Postman.....Lee Cass
Tony.....Robert Weede
Marie.....Mona Paulee
Max.....Louis Polacek
Herman.....Shorty Long
Clem.....Alan Gilbert
Jake.....John Henson
Al.....Roy Lazarus
Joe.....Art Lund
Giuseppe.....Arthur Rubin
Pasquale.....Rico Froehlich
Ciccio.....John Henson
Country Boy, Country Girl.....Meri Miller, John Sharpe
The Doctor.....Keith Kaldenberg
The Priest.....Russell Goodwin
Tessie.....Zina Bethune
Gussie.....Christopher Snell
Neighbors.....Helon Blount, Myrna Aaron, Beverly Gaines, Henry Director, Hunter Ross, Bob Daley

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[4]Louis Kronenberger (ed.), The Best Plays of 1955-1956 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1956), pp. 387-388.

Neighbor Ladies.....Lillian Shelby, Lois Van Pelt, Marjorie Smith
Brakeman.....Norris Greer
Bus Driver.....Ralph Farnworth

ALL THE NEIGHBORS AND THE NEIGHBORS' NEIGHBORS: Helon Blount, Thelma Dare, Carolyn Maye, Genevieve Owens, Lillian Shelby, Marjorie Smith, Toba Sherwood, Lois Van Pelt, Betsy Bridge, Theodora Brandon, Art Arney, Ken Ayers, Lanier Davis, Henry Director, Ralph Farnworth, Alan Gilbert, Russell Goodwin, Norris Greer, Richard Hermany, Walter Kelvin, Roy Lazarus, Louis Polacek, Evans Thornton, Myrna Aaron, Patti Schmidt, Beverly Gaines, Marlyn Greer, Martha Mathes, Meri Miller, Bob Daley, Athan Karras, Jerry Kurland, Arthur Partington, Hunter Ross, John Sharpe.

ACT I. Scene 1: A Restaurant in San Francisco; January, 1927. Scene 2: Main Street, Napa, California; in April. Scene 3: Tony's Barn; a few weeks later. Scene 4: Tony's Front Yard.
ACT II. Scene 1: The Vineyards in May. Scene 2: Later in May. Scene 3: The Vineyards in June. Scene 4: The Barn. Scene 5: The Vineyards in July.
ACT III. Scene 1: The Barn an Hour Later. Scene 2: Napa Station; a little later.

Staged by Joseph Anthony; orchestration by Don Walker; orchestra and choral direction by Herbert Greene; choreography by Dania Krupska; scenery and lighting by Jo Mielziner; costumes by Motley; production stage manager, Henri Caubisens; stage manager, Terence Little.

GREENWILLOW (97 performances)[5]

Musical in two acts, based on the novel by B. J. Chute; with book by Lesser Samuels and Frank Loesser; music and lyrics by Frank Loesser. Produced by Robert A. Willey, in association with Frank Productions, Incorporated, at the Alvin Theatre, March 8, 1960.

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[5]Louis Kronenberger (ed.), The Best Plays of 1959-1960 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1960), pp. 327-328.

Cast of Characters:

Jabez Briggs . . . . . John Megna
Clara Briggs . . . . . Dortha Duckworth
Mrs. Hasty . . . . . Maggie Task
Mr. Preebs . . . . . Jordon Howard
Mrs. Lunny . . . . . Marie Foster
Reverend Lapp . . . . . William Chapman
Gramma Briggs . . . . . Pert Kelton
Maidy . . . . . Elaine Swann
Emma . . . . . Saralou Cooper
Gideon Briggs . . . . . Anthony Perkins
Dorrie Whitbred . . . . . Ellen McCown
Amos Briggs . . . . . Bruce MacKay
Micah Briggs . . . . . Ian Tucker
Martha Briggs . . . . . Lynn Brinker
Sheby Briggs . . . . . Brenda Harris
Thomas Clegg . . . . . Lee Cass
Reverend Birdsong . . . . . Cecil Kellaway
Young Churchgoer . . . . . Thomas Norden
Will . . . . . David Gold
Nell . . . . . Margery Gray
Andrew . . . . . Grover Dale

SINGERS: Kenny Adams, Betsy Bridge, Marie Foster, Rico Froehlich, Russell Goodwin, Jordon Howard, Marion Mercer, Carl Nicholas, Virginia Oswald, Bob Roman, Shelia Swenson, Maggie Task, Karen Thorsell.

DANCERS: Jere Admire, Don Atkinson, Estelle Aza, Joan Coddington, Ethelyne Dunfee, Richard Englund, David Gold, Margery Gray, Mickey Gunnerson, Patsi King, Jack Leigh, Nancy Van Rhein, Jimmy White.

The action of the play takes place in and about Greenwillow during the four seasons.

ACT I. Scene 1: The Square. Scene 2: Briggs Farm. Scene 3: The Mill. Scene 4: The Willow. Scene 5: The Square. Scene 6: Cleggs Farm. Scene 7: The Mill. Scene 8: Briggs Farm. Scene 9: The Church. Scene 10: The Square.

ACT II. Scene 1: The Square. Scene 2: Briggs Farm. Scene 3: Cleggs House. Scene 4: The Square. Scene 5: Briggs Farm.

Staged by George Roy Hill; settings by Peter Larkin; choreography by Joe Layton; costumes by Alvin Colt; lighting by Feder; orchestrations by Don Walker; musical direction by Abba Bogen; production

stage manager, Terence Little; stage manager, Arthur Rubin; press representatives, Phillip Bloom and David Lipsky.

Musical Numbers:

ACT I

"A Day Borrowed from Heaven" . . . . . The Villagers
"A Day Borrowed from Heaven" . . . . . Gideon
"Dorrie's Wish" . . . . . Dorrie
"The Music of Home" . . . . . Amos, Gideon, and the Villagers
"Gideon Briggs, I Love You" . . . . . Gideon, Dorrie
"The Autumn Courting" . . . . . All the Villagers
"The Call to Wander" . . . . . Amos
"Summertime Love" . . . . . Gideon and the Villagers
"Walking Away Whistling" . . . . . Dorrie
"The Sermon" . . . . . Reverend Lapp and Reverend Birdsong
"Could've Been a Ring" . . . . . Clegg, Gramma
"Gideon Briggs, I Love You" (reprise) . . . . Dorrie
"Halloweve" . . . . . The Young Villagers
"Never Will I Marry" . . . . . Gideon
"Greenwillow Christmas" (carol) . . . . . Martha and the Villagers

ACT II

"The Music of Home" (reprise) . . . . . The Villagers
"Faraway Boy" . . . . . Dorrie
"Clang Dang the Bell" . . . . . Gideon, Gramma, Martha, Micah, Sheby and Jabez
"What a Blessing" . . . . . Reverend Birdsong
"He Died Good" . . . . . The Villagers
"The Spring Courting" . . . . . Andrew, Dorrie, the Young Villagers
"Summertime Love" (reprise) . . . . . Gideon
"What a Blessing" (reprise) . . . . . Reverend Birdsong
"The Call" . . . . . Gideon
"The Music of Home" (reprise) . . . . . All of Greenwillow

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING (1,417 performanaces)[6]

Musical based on the novel by Shepherd Mead; book by Abe Burrows, Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert; music and lyrics by Frank Loesser. Produced by Feuer and Martin, in association with Frank Productions, Incorporated, at the Forty-sixth Street Theatre, October 14, 1961.

Cast of Characters:

Finch . . . . . Robert Morse
Gatch . . . . . Ray Mason
Jenkins . . . . . Robert Kaliban
Tackaberry . . . . . David Collyer
Peterson . . . . . Casper Roos
J. B. Biggley . . . . . Rudy Vallee
Rosemary . . . . . Bonnie Scott
Smitty . . . . . Claudette Sutherland
Frump . . . . . Charles Nelson Reilly
Miss Jones . . . . . Ruth Kobart
Mr. Twimble . . . . . Sammy Smith
Hedy . . . . . Virginia Martin
Scrubwomen . . . . . Mara Landi, Silver Saundors
Miss Krumholtz . . . . . Mara Landi
Toynbee . . . . . Ray Mason
Ovington . . . . . Lanier Davis
Policeman . . . . . Bob Murdock
Womper . . . . . Sammy Smith

SINGERS: David Collyer, Lanier Davis, Robert Kaliban, Bob Murdock, Casper Roos, Charlotte Frazier, Mara Landi, Fairfax Mason, Silver Saundors, Maudeen Sullivan.

DANCERS: Nick Andrews, Tracy Everitt, Stuart Fleming, Richard Korthaze, Dale Moreda, Darrell Notara, Merritt Thompson, Carol Jane Abney, Madily Clark, Elaine Cancilla, Suzanne France, Donna McKechnie, Ellie Somers, Rosemary Yellen.

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[6]Henry Hewes, ed., The Best Plays of 1961-1962 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1962), pp. 261-262 and Abe Burrows et al., How To Succeed . . . , op. cit., p. iii.

Time: The Present. Place: the Park Avenue Offices of World Wide Wickets Company, Incorporated.

ACT I. Scene 1: Exterior. Scene 2: Corridor. Scene 3: Outer Office. Scene 4: The Mail Room. Scene 5: Biggley's Desk. Scene 6: Corridor. Scene 7: Elevator. Scene 8: The Outer Office. Scene 9: Finch's First Office. Scene 10: Plans and Systems Office. Scene 11: Corridor. Scene 12: The Roof. Scene 13: Elevator. Scene 14: Biggley's Office.

ACT II. Scene 1: The Outer Office. Scene 2: Finch's New Advertising Office. Scene 3: Biggley's Office. Scene 4: Men's Washroom. Scene 5: Boardroom. Scene 6: Television Show. Scene 7: Wrecked Outer Office. Scene 8: Elevator. Scene 9: Biggley's Office. Scene 9a: Traveller. Scene 10: The Outer Office.

Staged by Mr. Burrows; musical staging by Bob Fosse; settings and lighting by Robert Randolph; costumes by Robert Fletcher; choreography by Hugh Lambert; musical direction by Elliot Lawrence; orchestrations by Robert Ginzler; production state manager, Phil Friedman; stage manager, Lawrence N. Kasha; press, Merle Debuskey and Seymour Krawitz.

Musical Numbers:

ACT I

"How To" . . . . . Finch
"Happy to Keep His Dinner Warm" . . . . . Rosemary
"Coffee Break" . . . . . Frump, Smitty, Office Staff
"The Company Way" . . . . . Finch, Mr. Twimble
"The Company Way" (reprise) . . . . . Frump, Twimble, Staff
"A Secretary is not a Toy" . . . . . Bratt, Frump, Staff
"Been a Long Day" . . . . . Finch, Rosemary, Smitty
"Been a Long Day" (reprise) . . . . . Biggley, Hedy, Frump
"Grand Old Ivy" . . . . . Finch, Biggley
"Paris Original" . . . . . Rosemary, Smitty, Miss Jones and Secretaries
Finaletto . . . . . Finch, Rosemary, Frump

ACT II

"Cinderella, Darling" . . . . . Rosemary, Smitty, Secretaries
"Happy to Keep His Diner Warm" (reprise) . . Rosemary
"Love From a Heart of Gold" . . . . . Biggley, Hedy

"I Believe in You"..... Finch, Frump, Bratt, Executives
"The Yo Ho Ho"..... Jolly Wicket and Wickettes
"I Believe in You"..... Rosemary
"Brotherhood of Man"..... Finch, Miss Jones, Frump, Biggley, Bratt, Womper, Office Staff
Finale..... The Company

PLEASURES AND PALACES[7]

Musical with book by Frank Loesser and Sam Spewack based on Mr. Spewack's play Once There Was A Russian; music and lyrics by Frank Loesser; directed and choreographed by Bob Fosse; settings and lighting, Robert Randolph; costumes, Freddy Wittop; musical director, Fred Werner; orchestrations, Philip J. Lang. Produced by Allen B. Whitehead in association with Frank Productions, Incorporated, in a pre-Broadway tryout at Fisher Auditorium, Detroit, March 11, 1965. (Closed April 10, 1965.)

With Alfred Marks (later replaced by Jack Cassidy), Leon Janney, Hy Hazell, John McMartin, Mort Marshall, Woody Romoff, Phyllis Newman, Eric Brotherson, Sammy Smith.

SINGERS: John Anania, Ken Ayers, Burt Biers, Michael Davis, Alice Evans, Laurie Franks, Walter Hook, Howard Kahl, Zona Kennedy, Stan Page, Michael Quinn, Dana Simmons, Henrietta Valor, Carole Woodruff.

DANCERS: Pat Cummings, Kathryn Doby, Don Emmons, Eddie Gasper, Gene Gavin, David Gold, Dick Korthaze, Darryl Notara, Leland Palmer, Renata Powers, Brooke Roma, Betty Rosebrook, Barbara Sharma, Ron L. Steinbeck.

Story about Catherine the Great of Russia hiring John Paul Jones to fight the Turks in 1787.

Musical Numbers: "Salute," "I Hear Bells," "My Lover is a Scoundrel," "To Marry," "Hail Majesty," "Thunder and Lightning," "To Your Health," Turkish Delight," "What is Life?," "Neither the Time

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[7]Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., ed., The Best Plays of 1964-1965 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1965), p. 371.

Nor the Place," "In Your Eyes," "Truly Loved," "The Sins of Sura," "Hoorah for Jones," "Propaganda," "Barabanchik," "Ah To Be Home Again," "Pleasures and Palaces," "Tears of Joy," "Far, Far, Far Away."

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