“SUCH FANTASY, SUCH HARLEQUINADE”:

ZIEGFELD, CLASS AND THE CULTURAL HIERARCHY

by

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Abstract

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The *Ziegfeld Follies* series, which ran almost annually from 1907 through 1931, is remembered primarily for showgirls, extravagant production values, and its producer, Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. In this dissertation, I argue that the prestige the *Ziegfeld Follies* are remembered as having was the direct result of economic and social forces as much, if not more so, than the artistic genius of a man or the on-stage uniqueness of the *Follies*. These economic and social forces included, but were not limited to, career opportunities open to Ziegfeld; the battle between the Theatrical Trust (the Syndicate) and the Shubert brothers; the prosperity of the Syndicate in general and its need to have a high-profile financially-successful hit in its flagship theatre; the business success of vaudeville's United Booking Office; the economics and social status of summer roof garden shows; the structure and calendar of vaudeville; the structure and calendar of the legitimate theatre industry; the business environment that kept upwardly mobile businessmen—members of the professional managerial class—in the city during the week while their wives and children "summered" away from the city and the automobiles and public transportation that made such commuting possible; the explosion in popular magazines;

the revenue-generating necessities of a magazine dedicated to reporting on the New York theatre scene; and the burgeoning advertising and marketing environment.

These factors share at least equal footing with the beauty of the Ziegfeld chorus and the opulence of the *Follies*' production values in securing Ziegfeld's reputation and status within the prevailing cultural hierarchy, even if the pretty details were what was publicized then and all that is remembered now. Indeed, the relationship between the economic factors surrounding the production of the *Follies* and the cultural status of those productions was intertwined and complicated, and, furthermore, this relationship had—and still has—everything to do with class. Ultimately this dissertation argues that the mystical positioning of Ziegfeld in American theatre history is tied to the rise and concerns of the professional managerial class, and through our roles as academics, theatre historians are implicated in that positioning.

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Like making theatre, writing a dissertation is very much a collaborative process, and I owe thanks and gratitude to many, many people who assisted me in this project, including Professors David Savran, Marvin Carlson, Jane Bowers, Jill Dolan, Stacy Wolf, Judith Milhous, David Nasaw, Judith Summerfield, Elayne Feldstein, and Pamela Sheingorn. I also want to acknowledge the learning environment created by all of the faculty, staff and student colleagues in the CUNY Graduate Center's Theatre Program, and indeed, I am grateful to CUNY itself for being such a unique institution with an important mission, for the education I received here, and for the employment that both enhanced that education and made it financially possible. In addition, my writing was nurtured by the friendship and assistance of Paige West, Elisa Brunelle, Lynette Gibson, and my family, Melford Jr., Janet, Melford III, Amy, John, Liz, Brooks, Luke and Daisy Wilson. I also want to thank James R. Gross for sharing his love of theatre with all of us, and all the Tammies for their moral support and encouragement. Finally, I want to thank John McMurria for all his love and support and for helping me keep my seatbelt securely fastened. For these people and the many more who played a part in my graduate studies, I am very grateful.

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Introduction:

Class, Hierarchies, and the Ziegfeld Name

Prologue

What do you think of when you hear the name "Ziegfeld"? Showgirls? The *Follies*? *Show Boat*? Movies from the early sound era? What if I told you that these common associations are the direct—though distant now through time—result of Ziegfeld's marketing efforts? Florenz Ziegfeld Jr. spent the last twenty-five years of his career and life making the case that he was an artistic genius, one who valued beauty above all, one who had an almost extrasensory ability to recognize talent, and in both cases—beauty and talent—one who scoffed at what having the best might cost. I argue instead that if he was a genius, he was a marketing genius, that the image of himself as *artiste extraordinaire* was part of his marketing strategy, and that, in fact, far from scoffing at economic considerations, those very considerations were at the heart of his efforts. Thus, the female chorus which Ziegfeld famously "glorified" got its start in the first *Follies* as a cross-promotional effort for Ziegfeld's common-law wife. Likewise, the title "Follies" was chosen, at least in part, to appeal to an emergent professional managerial class with social aspirations. Ziegfeld's ability to produce *Show Boat* and build the Ziegfeld Theatre in which it premiered was due in large part to the many successes of the *Ziegfeld Follies*. And, finally, the films which are still accessible to us are the indirect result of Ziegfeld's branding efforts. When he died in 1932, he left his wife and daughter with little but his name—also his brand name—which the new widow sold to Lee and J.J.

Shubert. It was the Shuberts, Ziegfeld's long time rivals, who made the films and their only connection to the man himself was the brand name he worked so hard to establish.

"Let me see if I understand. Are you saying you don't really care about what is happening on the stage?" Professor Marvin Carlson asked me at my dissertation proposal defense.

"Yes," I said with trepidation—I am, after all, in a theatre program. And in truth, it is *not* that I do not care—it is just that there is so much more than what was happening on the stage, and it was that part of the picture that I wanted to explore.

Ultimately I am arguing that any cachet, any prestige the *Ziegfeld Follies* were perceived as having and are remembered as having was the direct result of economic and social forces as much, if not more so, than the artistic genius of a man or the on-stage uniqueness of the *Follies*. These economic and social forces included, but were not limited to, career opportunities open to Ziegfeld; the emerging battle between the Theatrical Trust (the Syndicate) and the Shubert brothers; the prosperity of the Syndicate in general and its need to have a high-profile financially-successful hit in its flagship theatre; the business success of vaudeville's United Booking Office and the envy that success inspired; the economics and social status of summer roof garden shows; the structure and calendar of vaudeville (with big-time stars available in the summer); the structure and calendar of the legitimate theatre industry (leaving as it did the entertainment landscape in the summer wide open); the business environment that kept upwardly mobile businessmen in the city during the week while their wives and children "summered" away from the city (and the boom in automobiles that made such commuting possible); the explosion in popular magazines; the revenue-generating

necessities of a magazine dedicated to reporting on the New York theatre scene; and the burgeoning advertising and marketing environment.

These factors share at least equal footing with the beauty of the Ziegfeld chorus and the opulence of the *Follies*' production values in securing Ziegfeld's reputation, even if the pretty details were what was publicized then and all that is remembered now. In broad strokes, my argument is that the relationship between the economic factors surrounding the production of the *Follies* and the cultural status of those productions was a very intertwined and complicated business that had—and has—everything to do with class.

Such Fantasy, Such Harlequinade

In April 1923, writer and social commentator Edmund Wilson reported his thoughts after attending the most recent edition of the *Ziegfeld Follies*:

> Yet there is still something wonderful about the *Follies*. It exhibits the persistent vitality as well as the stupidity of an institution. Among those green peacocks and gilded panels, in the luxurious haze of the New Amsterdam, there is realized a glittering vision which rises straight out of the soul of New York. The *Follies* is such fantasy, such harlequinade as the busy well-to-do New Yorker has been able to make of his life.[1]

In this description, Wilson used many words traditionally associated with images of the *Ziegfeld Follies*, words like "gilded," "luxurious," and "glittering." At the same time he recognized that the *Follies* had become an institution—which it certainly could be called at this point seventeen years into its run—with all the accompanying limitations that term implied. Beyond all this, however, Wilson acknowledged Florenz Ziegfeld's target audience, a fact that has received remarkably little attention, namely, a very specific

[1] Edmund Wilson, *The American Earthquake* (1958; New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 51.

audience of upper middle-class professional New Yorkers. It is this last point, albeit in combination with and intrinsically related to the *Follies*' glamour and institutionalization, that is worth exploring in more detail. How exactly and why did Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., shape his revues and focus their marketing in order to target this "busy, well-to-do" New York audience? Furthermore, what kept this audience returning year after year to see the latest edition of this particular form of New York entertainment?

This project originally began with research investigating Broadway revue showgirls costumed as objects. As I wrote about this aspect of revue history, I developed an intense curiosity about the people who paid to see Shubert showgirls dressed as a tea set (including sugar tongs) and Ziegfeld showgirls dressed as taxicabs (complete with headlights that worked), especially after I realized how similar the non-showgirl numbers were to what was available in big-time vaudeville theatres. This similarity between numbers in the *Follies* and vaudeville turns is apparent even in recent scholarship. For example, the book *The Ziegfeld Touch* includes a photograph with the caption "Eva Tanguay doing her popular interpretation of Salome in the *Follies of 1909*." Robert Snyder's book on vaudeville uses the very same photograph, but not in the context of the *Follies*. Tanguay did the act in both the *Follies* and in vaudeville, and the photograph itself either does not specify in which context it was taken or whether it was simply taken in a studio around the time she was performing this number on both stages. In either case, both authors believed themselves accurate in using it.[2] Who were these people who paid more to see performers like Tanguay in the *Follies* instead of in vaudeville? How

[2] Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (1989; reprint, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), plate preceding 107; and Richard Ziegfeld and Pauline Ziegfeld, *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 220.

were these shows sold to them? What did they gain by attending? Answers to these questions, it seemed to me, had to do with class, and as I explored the archives and published accounts I found references to the class make-up of the *Follies* audience like Wilson's above: in essence, this dissertation is an analysis of these references to Ziegfeld's audience in combination with archival evidence of Ziegfeld's efforts to reach that audience.

Ziegfeld produced his revues with substantial success almost annually from 1907 to 1932. Of course the *Follies* series was not the sum of Ziegfeld's career. Before the *Follies*, he worked as a bookkeeper in his father's Chicago music school; he managed the Great Sandow and an accompanying variety show at the Chicago Columbian Exposition and on tour; and finally, he served as manager and producer for his common-law wife, star Anna Held. Similarly, the *Follies* and its offspring were not the end of the story for Ziegfeld; in addition to exploratory ventures in music publication and radio and film production, Ziegfeld filled the twenties with musical theatre successes from *Sally* in 1920 to the milestone *Show Boat* in 1927.

Ziegfeld and the *Ziegfeld Follies*, however, are the focus of this project, and they have been written about in many contexts. There are several works on the life and times (and mythology) of the producer and some of his stars, beginning with works such as Eddie Cantor's and David Freedman's *Ziegfeld: The Great Glorifier* and culminating in Richard and Paulette Ziegfeld's (distant cousins of the producer) *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.*, cited above. While this latter book is very well researched, it is not critical in its approach, and as such is part hagiography and part encyclopedia. Then there are scholarly studies like Linda Mizejewski's *Ziegfeld Girl:*

Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema and Angela Latham's *Posing a Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920s*. These two texts are both well researched and critical in approach; however, they focus very specifically on one aspect of the *Follies* and revues in general, namely the showgirls within the context of women's roles and images, especially in the later editions of the *Follies*. Finally, the *Follies* are mentioned within various theatre histories, including, for example, those of burlesque (Robert C. Allen's *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*), musical theatre (Gerald Bordman's *American Musical Revue*), and Broadway theatre roof gardens (Stephen Burge Johnson's *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres, 1883-1942*).[3] Likewise, although there are a growing number of studies on the complexities of the shifting American cultural hierarchy at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, many of which I have used as resources in this study, there has not been any specific scholarly focus on the way Ziegfeld's shows fit into, survived in, and helped to transform that changing landscape.

In contrast to these research traditions, I consider the *Follies* series in the contexts of class changes and business practices, both issues of considerable importance given the explosive growth of both the professional managerial class and the marketing industry during this period. In this dissertation I argue that indeed the two are related—marketing

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[3] Eddie Cantor and David Freedman, *Ziegfeld: The Great Glorifier* (New York: A. H. King, 1934); Linda Mizejewski, *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Angela J. Latham, *Posing a Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920s* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000); Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Revue: From The Passing Show To Sugar Babies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and Stephen Burge Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres, 1883-1942* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985).

was used to help sell the *Follies* to a particular class of audience—and further that the positioning of the *Follies* in the cultural hierarchy had everything to do with both class and promotion as demonstrated in the ads, features and reviews from publications as diverse as the *New York Tribune*, a leading and fairly conservative newspaper of the day, *Variety*, the weekly trade paper of the vaudeville industry, and the glossy specialty magazine, *The Theatre: Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Dramatic and Musical Art*.

The Cultural Hierarchy

To this end, I consider the *Ziegfeld Follies* within the larger cultural milieu of shifting class positions early in the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, people in positions of influence and power—some wealthy individuals, artists, and other arbiters of taste—increasingly saw art in opposition to commerce. They equated art with genius, and thus considered it above and apart from market forces; in other words, they wanted to see art as something that was beyond being commodified. Those patrons who financed cultural institutions, which they intended for the preservation and what they deemed proper appreciation of art, by and large had gained their money through the very market that they sought to separate from art.[4] Furthermore, the cultural hierarchy that developed out of their efforts was directly related to the desire to achieve and/or maintain class

[4] See, for example, William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 164; and Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 201. Leach notes: "Today we have come to accept the alliance between museums and business as a commonplace and as a reflection of the intimate relationship between art and market forces. This relationship began, for all intents and purposes, in this earlier period, with four museums in particular—the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum, the Newark Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, all but one endowed by businessmen with extraordinary gifts to their collections, the most lavish of which were the donations to the Metropolitan from investment banker J. P. Morgan and by department store merchants George Hearn and Benjamin Altman," 164.

status, for as Pierre Bourdieu writes, "art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences."[5] Cultural theorist John Frow elaborates on this dynamic as follows:

> The point of this is not to establish the truism that different classes adopt different lifestyles, but to explore the process by which differences in cultural preference become socially functional. It is a question not of differences in themselves but of the ability of the dominant class to impose the value given to these differences: to impose a recognition of the distinction between 'good' taste and 'vulgar' taste, between legitimate and illegitimate styles. Aesthetic judgements, then, do not obey an autonomous aesthetic logic; they transpose distinctions of class into distinctions of taste, and thereby strengthen the boundaries between classes.[6]

In *Highbrow/Lowbrow* historian Lawrence Levine traced the development of this cultural hierarchy and persuasively demonstrated that it is indeed historically contingent, debunking the universalist, formalist notion that art equals high culture. However, although he acknowledged the constructedness, the power, and the persistence of the cultural hierarchy, Levine ultimately presented it as such a rigid binary by the beginning of the twentieth century that the division between highbrow and lowbrow seemed practically immutable. I take issue with Levine on this point just as he did with previous historians: the situation continued to be much more unstable and open to negotiation than he acknowledged. After all, there were strong class antagonisms at the turn of the century, and if class relations were not stable it follows that the culture of those classes was unstable as well. Indeed, the emergence of the professional managerial class (PMC), the growth of the entertainment industry, and the burgeoning scope of advertising in the

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[5] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 7.

[6] John Frow, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 29.

first decades of the twentieth century all worked to destabilize the hierarchy that the financial and cultural elite worked to establish.

Given its defining place within early twentieth century theatre, the *Ziegfeld Follies* series is a significant case study through which to complicate Levine's binary and to explore the nature of the cultural hierarchy—particularly the influence of the PMC—in the United States during the first three decades of the twentieth century. During this period of tremendous cultural transformation, Ziegfeld's substantial successes make clear that when he was not leading the way, he was at least keeping up with and incorporating those changes into his shows. Indeed, the number of changes that occurred in the United States during the run of the *Ziegfeld Follies* is overwhelming; among them were the widespread use of advertising and mass marketing, the codification of narrative film and the building of Hollywood, World War I, Prohibition, Women's Suffrage, the mainstreaming of jazz, the invention of radio, the spread of the automobile and air travel, flappers, the invention of sound film, the stock market crash, and the onset of the Depression. Even this admittedly partial list indicates the unprecedented level of change taking place during these twenty-five years. Furthermore, because the *Ziegfeld Follies* combined theatre, song, music, design, fashion, and technology, as well as topical subject matter, it is a particularly rich subject for investigating developments in American culture.

Just as American society was introduced to and incorporated many new and different elements during the beginning of the twentieth century, so too did the cultural hierarchy. When the *Follies* started, American society was still very much Victorian in many ways; it certainly was not that way by the end of the series which came after the

exuberance of the 1920s and the desperation brought on by the stock market crash of 1929. It is not surprising, then, that what constituted highbrow and lowbrow shifted radically from the time the *Follies* started to their last edition under Ziegfeld. Let me be clear: opera and Shakespeare (to use Levine's two primary examples) were still most definitely at the top of the hierarchy, but below the top there were changes happening. And it was not that Ziegfeld himself was radical; rather, he used the radical changes in society to his advantage.

While striving to keep his revues current, Ziegfeld also energetically tried to shape and promote his shows as something much more artistic and elite than other variety entertainments, and in this way attempted to distinguish his product and attract the PMC. Ziegfeld had to differentiate his shows from a succession of would-be competitors: vaudeville, other big revues like the Shuberts' *Passing Show*s, the smaller, smarter revues of the 1920s, and finally sound film. One of his weapons as he faced this competition was the attempt to control the placement of his shows in the shifting cultural hierarchy, always arguing, however surreptitiously, that his shows were more sophisticated, opulent, and artistic, and thus simply of higher quality than anything else audiences could choose to see. In other words, not only did Ziegfeld work to keep his revues innovative and current, he also worked to keep the shows high in the public's esteem, to make them an ideal location for conspicuous consumption—even as what was considered worthy of high esteem was changing. I argue that Ziegfeld used marketing strategies to manipulate the placement of his *Ziegfeld Follies* in the American cultural hierarchy, and, furthermore, that the *Follies* and their promotion demonstrate the constructedness, the shifting-nature, and the manipulability of that cultural hierarchy.

The Professional Managerial Class

The PMC emerged during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and consolidated its gains during the first quarter of the twentieth. These fifty years witnessed, among other changes, radical development in New York's corporate structure, significant technological advances, the impetus toward higher education in the United States and the results of that increased education (i.e. the employment of all those new university graduates). The growth of the PMC quickly became a chicken-egg situation. More and larger corporations needed more and larger spaces, fueling not only real estate speculation but also demand for architects and engineers, in addition to the lawyers and bankers involved in corporate growth. This growing demand for professionals in turn fueled additional building and development to accommodate their housing and transportation needs. As they began living in "French flats," cooperative apartments, and suburban neighborhoods, and traveling to the business district by train, subway and car, the PMC literally changed the shape of New York both "horizontally and vertically."[7]

David C. Hammack offers statistics culled from the 1910 U.S. census which demonstrate the strength of the PMC's presence in the New York metropolitan region: "According to the quite complete and detailed figures of the 1910 U.S. Census, just short of 37 percent of all males who gave an occupation followed professional, managerial, clerical, or entrepreneurial pursuits." Furthermore, in 1910, 15.4 percent of people identifying their occupation as designers lived and worked in what Hammack identifies as Greater New York, and 13.6 percent of all architects in the United States lived and

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[7] Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1078, 1050. For more on PMC housing patterns, see Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 119-136.

worked in this area (more than the combined total of that of the next four largest cities). Likewise, 12.6 percent of the authors, editors and reporters in the United States worked in New York, and 10.24 percent of the nation's bankers and brokers lived and worked in the vicinity. Just under ten percent of all lawyers and 8.35 percent of those employed in the professional and managerial aspects of the insurance business worked in New York City. Finally, more than seven percent of the nation's engineers were based in the metropolitan region.[8]

In their history of New York City, Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace devote an entire chapter to the rise of the professional managerial class and reference the PMC throughout the remainder of this volume, which chronicles the ongoing impact and ever-growing influence this group had in shaping New York City to 1898. These authors begin by saying that the misperception that the city did not have a middle class was "understandable, given the glaring visibility of the city's social extremities, but wrong. Somewhere between a quarter and a third of the population were middle class, an amorphous strata encompassing a wide range of conditions and occupations." Burrows and Wallace then offer a list of PMC professions very similar to those of Ohmann and Hammack. However, at the end of this list they note that the boundaries of the class were "fuzzy," and that it was "only when looking at the *mentalité* of this new middle class—its

[8] David C. Hammack, *Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 80-81, 45. Similarly, Richard Ohmann writes, "I take this class to have included professional workers themselves, those who did similar mental work but without the benefit of formal professionalization (including writers, editors, advertising men, and others…), mid- and upper-level corporate managers, their counterparts in government and other institutions, and highly skilled people who worked with numbers and technical processes. This aggregate amounted to somewhat over 1 million people, or one-fifteenth of the workforce, in 1880 and about 3.5 million, or one-tenth of the workforce in 1910," 118-119.

values and ideologies, rooted in changing patterns of work and culture—that its contours come more sharply into focus.[9] It was this *mentalité* rather than the precise constituency that was important to Ziegfeld's box office, and thus of primary concern here.

Somewhat ironically, the PMC was heavily invested in perpetuating the capitalist class structure and the cultural hierarchy it created. As Barbara and John Ehrenreich define it, the PMC consisted of "salaried mental workers who do not own the means of production and whose major function in the social division of labor may be described broadly as the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class relations."[10] These scholars argue that the PMC, created by a surplus of capital, was employed by capitalists to help them maintain and grow that capital while simultaneously serving as a buffer between the capitalist class and the working class. Indeed it was of great importance to the industrialists that the PMC *not* identify with the working class. And as such, mirroring (and reinforcing) this political-economic role, the members of the PMC, as diverse as they were, were united in their desire not to be seen or be considered as members of the working class. To this end, the PMC valued works with prestige, with

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[9] Burrows and Wallace, 966. For further background on the class divisions and concerns, see Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850 – 1896* (1993; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Beckert writes, "[b]y the 1870s and 1880s, however, bourgeois New Yorkers articulated a consciousness of separate class identity. In a process that accelerated during the depression of the 1870s, upper-class social life and politics increasingly manifested a new and greater distance from other groups—especially from workers, whom the economic elite perceived as a double threat to their economic and political power," 5.

[10] Barbara and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class" in *Between Labor and Capital*, ed. Pat Walker (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 12-13, 18. See this chapter for an extensive exploration of the rise of the PMC and its relationship both to the working class and to the capitalist class as well as distinctions between it and what the Ehrenreichs identify as the "petty bourgeois."

status in the cultural hierarchy to help associate themselves with those with more cultural and financial capital and by doing so mark themselves as having good taste. As I discuss below, class is intrinsic to notions of taste: the need to establish and maintain class distinctions works to naturalize taste, making taste appear as though it is a matter of breeding rather than a construct. Thus, according to Ohmann, the PMC "went where they would see and be seen by others of their own class, or better"; they had "aspirations" and "status to create and protect, in an urban world very different from the walking city with its clear social ranks and face-to-face relations."[11] Theatre, then, as a public place where members of the PMC could be judged on their preferences, on their taste, was an important site of what contemporary writer Thorstein Veblen identified as conspicuous consumption. Veblen explained that "In order to gain and to hold the esteem of men it is not sufficient merely to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence."[12]

While the PMC functioned as a buffer between capitalists and labor and while in "the modern economy, ownership is increasingly separated from management," the PMC and the financial/social elite were interconnected, and this fueled the PMC's aspirations for upward mobility. Hammack notes that "The investment bankers, law firms, railroads, and national manufacturing corporations that increasingly crowded New York's merchants to one side recruited about 60 percent of their own leaders from those merchants' sons and from the sons of the merchants, bankers, and lawyers who had dominated eastern cities and towns, including New York, during the middle third of the

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[11] Ohmann, 158, 122.

[12] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899. Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 24.

century."[13] Not surprisingly, then, the ethnic makeup of the PMC looked much like that of the elites:

> In 1900, when fewer than 25 percent of the city's male residents had been born in the United States of American, Canadian, or British-born parents, over 55 percent of its bankers, wholesalers, and professional men were the sons of parents born in those English-speaking nations. Germans contributed the next largest group to the economic elite; in 1900, when 25 percent of all males who gave an occupation were of German parentage, 19 percent of those in highest status occupations had German-born parents.[14]

So the PMC emerged from connected and financially secure and socially respected circles, functioned on behalf of the interests of the financial elites, looked like the elites, and aspired to be themselves considered elite, culturally and socially if not financially. And if the PMC was defined by its relationship to the capitalist class, that class in turn found itself increasingly dependent on the PMC. As Hammack notes, "while their wealthy clients and employers limited the range of options that the experts were free to propose, those same clients and employers found that reliance on specialized experts limited their own power in turn."[15]

In the context of these privileged classes, I want to comment on the *New York Tribune*, a newspaper I returned to repeatedly during my research. As I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, I also used *Theatre Magazine* and *Variety* extensively in my research, and I discuss those publications in more detail in the chapters that follow. The *New York Tribune*, however, was my access to the daily lives of Ziegfeld's busy,

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[13] Hammack, 51.

[14] Ibid., 66.

[15] Ibid., 312.

well-to-do audience. Cultural historian David Nasaw summarized the New York morning newspaper scene at the end of the nineteenth century as follows:

> Joseph Pulitzer's *World*, a two-cent paper, reigned supreme with a circulation of around 250,000. Its major competitor was James Gordon Bennett, Jr.'s *Herald*, also priced at two cents, with a circulation of just under 200,000….Charles Dana's venerable *Sun*, now at two cents, remained a lively, well-written paper, though its circulation languished at under 100,000….The remaining morning dailies drew on a more established, solidly Republican, middle- and upper-class audience. Whitelaw Reid's *Tribune*, still the most literary of New York's papers, had never regained the stature it had enjoyed under Horace Greeley; its circulation remained close to 75,000. The *New York Times*…continued to languish. While it looked for new owners, its circulation hovered around 10,000.[16]

While the position of the *Times* improved in the decade between the moment described above and the beginning of the *Follies*, the *New York Tribune* remained the newspaper of status among the "solidly Republican, middle- and upper-class" and as such its political and cultural slant is significant to my research.

A glimpse inside the *Tribune* gives even more of an idea of this readership. For example, a regular advertising section masquerading as a daily column entitled "These Columns Answer the Vacation Question" signaled that the *Tribune*'s subscribers clearly had vacation time, money to take vacations, and social expectations about where they took a vacation. The Saturday, July 4, 1908, issue of the *Tribune* gave further indication that this was a privileged readership: here a "Special European Columns" section advertised European travel and resort services, and on the second page (where there were rarely advertisements), a small box ad read "When In Germany Be Sure To See Grünfeld's Linen Store / 20,21 Leipziger Street, Berlin, W. / Own Mills: Landeshut,

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[16] David Nasaw, *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* (New York: Mariner Books, 2001), 98.

Silesia. / Ask For Illustrated Price List / No Agents anywhere."[17] The newspaper and this advertiser in particular must have expected that enough of the *Tribune*'s readership would have planned European travel to make such ads worthwhile.

The Advertising Environment

Within the context of these class changes, the rise of other amusements, and tremendous technological developments—all impacting the way the PMC spent its time and leisure dollars—I consider marketing practices, particularly that of branding, then rapidly spreading through the United States manufacturing and retailing sectors, and explore its impact on the *Ziegfeld Follies*. Advertising became big business during this time period, including the founding of the Advertising Federation of America in 1904.[18] William Leach reports that "[i]n 1880 a total of $30 million was invested in advertising; by 1910, new big businesses such as oil, food, electricity, and rubber were spending more than $600 million or 4 percent of the national income."[19] Leach calls the PMC a brokering class and advertising was/is the brokering profession *par excellence*.[20] That Ziegfeld used advertising to reach the PMC then was all part of a whole. And he did so by using many of the new marketing practices to brand his product—or, rather, series of

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[17] *New York Tribune,* 4 July 1908, 9, 2.

[18] Leach, 43. For an excellent study of the growth of the advertising industry in the United States, see Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). While the scope of Marchand's study overlaps with only the latter part of the *Ziegfeld Follies* series, his first chapter in particular surveys the developments in advertising prior to 1920 and was crucial to my understanding of both the profession and advertisement copy at the turn of the century.

[19] Leach, 42-43.

[20] Ibid., 9.

productions—as something with a greater value of cultural capital than other variety entertainments available to his audience, despite the *Follies*' obvious similarities to those forms, and in doing so served both the PMC's status-conscious needs and his own entrepreneurial efforts.

Despite its growing size and professionalization, the advertising industry did not develop without controversy, and, at times, Ziegfeld had to be cautious with his use of marketing. In my archival research, I have not found any documents outlining Ziegfeld's marketing strategy, only surviving pieces of that marketing. Whether Ziegfeld formally mapped out his marketing on paper or not, it is not surprising that Ziegfeld would not want to talk about advertising given the contemporary concerns about separating art from commerce. For example, in the first *Follies* there was a number called "Home of the Murad" (Murad was a brand of cigarettes with status aspirations as evidenced by relentless advertising in *Theatre Magazine*) as well as a song in which the performer proclaimed his friendship with Budweiser.[21] These product placements, as we might call them, were not well received in all quarters. The review of the first *Follies* in the *New York World*, July 9th, 1907, was titled "Needless Folly in 'Follies of 1907'" and subtitled, "Cleverness of Review at Jardien [sic] de Paris Marred by Some Violations Of Taste." These transgressions centered precisely on the incorporated advertising, and the *World* critic began by commenting that

> After "The Follies of 1907" a new review presented at the Jardien [sic] de Paris last night had been boldly employed to boost a brand of cigarettes and a much advertised brew of beer, the show took on life and ended in capital summer entertainment. The beer and cigarettes were exploited in two of the worst songs to which a patient public has ever been asked to

[21] *Follies of 1907* program, Ziegfeld Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin (hereafter referred to as HRC).

> listen this season. Even two well-rehearsed claques failed to make them go.[22]

These interesting examples of advertising within live performance did not sit well with the critic who labeled them "violations of taste." In other words, the critic did not find these numbers appropriate to the class level of the audience in attendance. Here at the beginning of the *Follies* series—especially since there was no guarantee that the show would turn into a series—Ziegfeld had to feel out his audience; the PMC may have been a brokering class in which ad men figured prominently, but being subjected to direct advertising within their live theatre clearly transgressed their notions of decorum, bringing the marketplace uncomfortably close to their culture.

It was not just advertising within live performance that concerned people. *Variety* at this time included a special motion picture page, "The Moving Picture Field" with reviews and industry information, and in the June 20, 1908, issue this section included the following assessment:

> THE MIRROR's reference last week to Edison and Selig films that apparently had been made with a view to advertising a patent medicine and an automobile, has occasioned considerable comment in film trade circles, and the general opinion is expressed that film makers should carefully avoid even the appearance of selling advertising publicity of this kind. At one large film establishment the head of the company complimented THE MIRROR highly for taking the matter up.
> "I do not believe," said he, "that either the Edison company or the Selig company received any money for the advertising mentioned, but that makes no difference in the effect such incidents must have on the moving picture business. There is no surer way of cheapening and discrediting moving pictures than to have it believed by the public that they can be used for advertising.[23]

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[22] "Needless Folly in 'Follies of 1907,'" *New York World*, 9 July 1907.

[23] "The Moving Picture Field," *Variety*, 20 June 1908, 8.

The clear implication was that, professionalism aside, advertising was a dirty business, "cheapening" those who used it too flagrantly.

Exponentially more common than advertisements during live or filmed performances were print advertisements. Even print advertisements were watched with some concern, especially when they promoted people or places instead of simply products. For example, the February 4, 1911, issue of *Variety* contained an extended editorial warning against newspaper advertising in vaudeville (both on the part of the actors and on the part of the management). The editorial noted that managers were encouraged to advertise: "They were not promised 'good reviews,' but just told that if they advertised, their houses would have to be enlarged to hold the crowds." The editorial continued:

> They changed the advertisement every day, the paper printed the picture of the theatre, wrote editorials about it and its manager; told the people to patronize the house; that vaudeville was a healthful enjoyment—and the manager kept on watching. Before the daily paper had stopped telling him what a great manager he was and informing the public what a great vaudeville theatre he had, the advertising contract ran out—the season was over.[24]

According to *Variety*, this unnamed and possibly apocryphal manager lost every penny he invested in advertising. Managers, warned the editors, were not the only ones at risk:

> The advertising men found another way to increase their revenues. They called upon the actor, told him that he or she was great, so great in fact it was a shame that so and so with but one half if even that much talent should be getting twice as much money. Was it not a pity, if not a shame and some other things….Then advertise. To advertise is the way to show your drawing powers.[25]

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[24] *Variety*, 4 February 1911, 7.

[25] Ibid.

The perception evident here was that ad men and the daily newspapers were taking advantage of both managers and performers, and this situation was to blame for the decline in vaudeville. The editorial concluded by directly addressing the actors taking part in these activities: "Don't believe anyone who tells you he can increase your salary, unless it is an agent. Don't believe that a claque will help you, that advertising will help you, that a good notice will help you or bad notices harm you if you haven't got 'the act.'" It is interesting to note that *Variety* was seemingly so opposed to such efforts, since the publication itself devoted so much space to (and presumably to some degree was financially dependent on) the promotions of vaudeville acts, whether those ads were placed by the performers themselves or by those in the industry affiliated with them.

This editorial joins the ranks of the piece in the June 20, 1908 *Variety* against using moving pictures for advertising purposes and the 1907 *New York World* review which strongly criticized the *Follies of 1907* for embedding advertisements in the show. What all three of these anti-advertising statements had in common was a firm resistance against marketing making in-roads into new mediums (here, summer roof shows and motion pictures) and being used for purposes that previously had not been associated with advertising (to promote individuals rather than goods and services, and thus commodifying individuals—playing into modern industrialization fears). It seems that all three were efforts to fortify cultural guardians against the encroachment of advertising and the onslaught of marketing. Ironically, such critics also had much invested in believing that audiences of their own class were resistant to this advertising, that it was not in good taste and thus people of privileged classes, people of education could see through these efforts. These particular critics and editorial boards seemed to think that

because of their tastelessness these ads did not work and even that they actually had the opposite of the intended effect, despite the fact that the very periodicals for whom these writers worked were heavily invested in perpetuating advertisements of all ilk. With these examples, I suggest that branding and selling the *Follies* was no small task for Ziegfeld. He ran a real risk of alienating the very audience he sought to entice.

An Evening's Entertainment

How, then, and why did Ziegfeld establish and brand his shows as something different than vaudeville? First, there was a need for such a distinction from Ziegfeld's point of view and from the audience's point of view: the members of this upwardly mobile professional class who were very concerned with appearances needed an entertainment that was distinguished from vaudeville for it to be socially acceptable to attend. However, the rigid binary set forth at the end of Lawrence Levine's *Highbrow / Lowbrow* did not allow for entertainment. What did people who cared about what others thought, who were and wanted to be identified with the upper strata of society do for light entertainment? What could those who were clearly supposed to be appreciative of highbrow culture do on an oppressively hot summer evening in New York City? What could the professional classes do for entertainment after a long day? There was a need for some flexibility in the cultural hierarchy—and an opportunity for someone willing to provide it.

Levine cites a description of this need and an explanation for it that appeared in *Munsey's Magazine* in January 1903: "The fact that the men who are doing the real work of the world should find themselves in a mood for melodious tomfoolery, rather than for such an intellectual diversion as the representation of *Hamlet*, argues not that their brains

are defective, but that business is brisk."[26] Levine continues by quoting from another article, this one written in 1898: "Our audiences do not want ideas in their plays…they want costumes, and tricks of stage-carpentry, and farcical situation; they are hugely delighted by a catchy song or an utterly irrelevant dance…but ideas they will not have on any terms." Levine concludes that American theatre accommodated these entertainment desires, to theatre's detriment, and that it was the case "so long as heterogeneous audiences dominated the stage."[27] Two points interest me here. First, this very type of show—with catchy songs and irrelevant dances—was almost exactly what Ziegfeld offered just under a decade later, so clearly Ziegfeld did not break new ground with his program alone. It was some other aspect of Ziegfeld's productions that made his shows cultural phenomena.

Secondly, I do not agree with Levine's last point here: concern for art certainly became part of the discourse, but the stratification of the audience did not diminish the desire for light entertainment on the part of these same businessmen who were in no mood for *Hamlet*. Note that this citation was from 1898, well into the period Levine cites as that for the marking of highbrow from lowbrow in the arts and the separation of theatre audiences. Indeed, there was still a market (and a healthy one at that) for the "lavish and impressively dazzling" shows, even among self-identified cultured populations. Early *Follies* audiences, after all, potentially still remembered when their serious theatre had been served to them with entr'actes and an afterpiece. If only someone could find a way to satisfy that appetite in a socially acceptable way. This opening in the cultural

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[26] Levine, 76.

[27] Ibid.

hierarchy was an opportunity for Ziegfeld. Of course performances of *Hamlet* and the like were not the direct competition for Ziegfeld, at least not in the beginning. Those productions had closed for the summer and it was mostly other shows that fell under the category of what the *Tribune* called "Musical Plays" or "Variety Houses" that were Ziegfeld's direct competition in the summer months.

Stephen Johnson's study of theatre rooftop gardens makes it clear that Ziegfeld was not doing anything new in his first *Follies* production, at least on the surface. Revues were popular on the Casino roof in the 1890s, and Ziegfeld's Sandow act performed at the Casino during that time. Charles Frohman, one of Ziegfeld's financial backers via the Syndicate, was already involved in rooftop variety entertainment, at least tangentially. Furthermore, the space Ziegfeld used for his first *Follies*, the roof of the New York Theatre, had already been used for revue-type entertainment. And Ned Wayburn, later Ziegfeld's director and choreographer, and others were already using choruses to link evenings of variety together.

What was new, however, was that Ziegfeld saw a potential market and provided a service: niche marketing. Essentially, he sold Cadillacs instead of Fords. Ziegfeld provided a socially acceptable—and ultimately socially fashionable—way for upper class audiences to indulge in a little lower-brow entertainment. And what he offered was different from slumming on the Bowery or heading to Hammerstein's for the weekly vaudeville bill; what he offered was the promise of fashionable entertainments in an exclusive venue among people of similar socio-economic status. So it was, for the audience, the best of both worlds: Ziegfeld presented enjoyable light, lower-brow

entertainment that one could feel smart watching and that one could watch in fashionable environs.

Previous attempts to break into the variety market by other producers with "Advanced" or "Refined" vaudeville (or the other various names employed) to target this different type of audience failed, I argue, because they still used vaudeville as their reference, as their starting point—indeed, as part of their name and identity. Ziegfeld needed to distinguish his shows from vaudeville in order for them to have a chance at success. Because refined vaudeville was still perceived as vaudeville and not something different entirely, it could not succeed with these potential patrons. The name still referenced vaudeville, but the referent for the *Follies* was perceived as much more stylish and urbane—the referent for the *Follies* was European, it was French. To cross Ziegfeld's targeted class lines, revues were marketed as sophisticated: vaudeville was considered clean and entertaining but not really sophisticated. Ziegfeld sold his revues as mature, cosmopolitan entertainment for the upper crust adult sensibility—and those who aspired to such—and, thus, above the heads of children and out of the price range of the lower classes.

Significant to the dominant discourse of the "magical Ziegfeld touch" were the concepts of fashion and sophistication—both of which were ways of indicating the *Follies*' tastefulness and social acceptability. Sociologist Richard Butsch notes that

> Respectability, grounded in restraint, was ultimately incompatible with commercialization and the growth of consumption. With consumer culture, status and identity were defined through consumption. Restraint was replaced by self-indulgence. The new middle-class standard of public status would become "fashion." "Fashionable" was no longer exclusively

> a synonym for the upper class, but began to refer to whoever could afford the approved clothes and furnishings.[28]

According to Leach, the effect of fashion was "often to stir up restlessness and anxiety, especially in a society where class lines were blurred or denied, where men and women fought for the same status and wealth, and where people feared being left out or scorned because they could not keep up with others and could not afford the same things other people had."[29] Similarly, using "sophistication" as a descriptor, as many critics and contemporaries did, was less descriptive of the content of the *Follies* than it was flattering (prestige-enhancing) to the person who pronounced the show as such (i.e. one who declared a cultural product sophisticated must himself/herself be sophisticated to make that recognition). My premise that the *Ziegfeld Follies* series was fundamentally repackaged vaudeville sold as something much more upscale to the newly emergent, status-conscious professional managerial class complicates the narrative of the fashion and sophistication of the *Ziegfeld Follies* by exploring marketing as the location where vaudeville became revue, and, furthermore, questions the way in which we consider and teach the history of United States theatre during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The chapters that follow proceed in roughly chronological order, but they are organized not in terms of strict time divisions but according to changes in Ziegfeld's business practices or changes that impacted those practices—and the response of the professional managerial class to such changes. Specifically, in the first chapter I

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[28] Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 67.

[29] Leach, 91-92.

investigate the implications of the switch from the original title of "*Follies*" to "*Ziegfeld Follies*" as well as the series' coverage in *Theatre Magazine*. In this chapter I also explore how Ziegfeld differentiated the *Follies* through print advertisements from both vaudeville and the other competition he faced on Broadway.

In the second chapter, I consider the significance of places and spaces, especially that of Times Square and the different performance spaces within this New York theatre district. Here, Ziegfeld's changes in venue are the primary focus, first the move from the Jardin de Paris on the roof of the New York Theatre to the downstairs auditorium of that same building in 1912, and then from the New York Theatre to the New Amsterdam Theatre in 1913. Theatrical business factors such as Ziegfeld's competition and the Syndicate's concerns combined to force or enable, depending on one's perspective, these moves, all of which impacted the social and cultural status-climb of the *Ziegfeld Follies*.

Then in the third chapter I shift from Ziegfeld's changing placement in the cultural hierarchy to changes within the hierarchy itself. In particular I examine the way noted Austrian designer Joseph Urban and his work with the *Follies* were discussed in the advertising and media coverage of the shows beginning in 1915. Many responses to Urban's work referenced the "Tired Business Man," and I consider the invocation of this segment of the PMC by theatre critics to excuse or to justify the diminishing strength of the cultural status quo at this time. Similarly, in the fourth chapter I examine the implications of cabaret culture and the dance craze of the nineteen-teens on the social status of Ziegfeld's audience as well as his productions. Here I investigate the notion of branding and brand extension more closely since Ziegfeld increased the number of productions bearing his name beginning with the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies cabaret in

1914, and continuing in the years that followed, most notably with the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic,* a midnight revue performed in that cabaret space. What Ziegfeld sold to his privileged audiences with these name-branded products, I argue, was a quality guarantee of social acceptability, and even of social enhancement. I conclude with thoughts on the significance of incorporating business practices, political economy, and class into writing and researching theatre history.

Chapter One:

"Way Up Where Breezes Blow On Broadway's Greatest Musical Show":

Establishing the Ziegfeld Brand, 1907 – 1911[1]

In July 1909, Florenz Ziegfeld hired Eva Tanguay to replace fellow vaudevillian Nora Bayes as the female star of the *Follies of 1909* just two weeks after the opening of the show. Bayes had had disagreements with the *Follies* producer, regularly reported and denied in the press, since the first year of the *Follies* in 1907, so her departure was not a complete surprise.[2] It is somewhat more surprising that Ziegfeld agreed to pay Tanguay significantly more than what he paid Bayes—perhaps more than twice as much—since Bayes' primary complaint concerned her salary, but this discrepancy could be explained satisfactorily as a frustrated Bayes leaving her producer in the lurch, and Ziegfeld, desperate to keep his show going, paying what was demanded to hire a suitable replacement.[3] What is most surprising about this cast change, however, is the fact that Tanguay accepted the offer at all.

For Tanguay's appearances in the *Follies* the vaudeville superstar was paid a salary variously reported as $1000 or $1200 per week, a substantial cut from her

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[1] *Follies of 1909* advertisement, *New York Tribune*, 27 June 1909, sec. V, p. 6.

[2] See Robinson Locke Scrapbook, ser. 2, vol. 301, p. 217, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (hereafter cited as NYPLPA).

[3] Robinson Locke Scrapbook, vol. 46, pp. 6-10, NYPLPA. Bayes, paid $450 a week appearing in the *Follies of 1908* and her new husband, Jack Norworth, paid $250 for appearing in the same show, were dissatisfied with their renegotiated joint salary of $800 a week for the *Follies of 1909*. With the huge hit "Shine On Harvest Moon" among their many numbers, the couple decided to leave the *Follies* and strike out on their own.

vaudeville contract, and she stayed with the production despite much legal maneuvering between Ziegfeld and Bayes, including the court-ordered return of Bayes to the *Follies* briefly in December 1909. As *Variety* reported:

> The graciousness of Miss Tanguay in her dealing with Ziegfeld, when it was reported she could secure $2,500 weekly in vaudeville as against $1,000 the [*Follies*] production pays her, has led to a report that the further inducement for Miss Tanguay to be tractable was a promise that the new winter revue proposed by Ziegfeld would be wholly written and built around her.[4]

The implications here are fascinating. If the *Follies* would not or could not match Tanguay's vaudeville contract, then another revue produced by Ziegfeld—even one "built around" Tanguay—would not have much of a chance of matching her previous salary. What was it about this possibility that enticed her to be "tractable"? Furthermore, since the gulf is very wide indeed between the possibility of a show and its realization, Tanguay had no guarantee that this other revue would ever open.[5] Thus, it has to be considered that appearing in the *Follies*, even for as little as one thousand dollars a week, was the primary attraction for Tanguay in her negotiations with Ziegfeld, but numerous questions remain. What made appearing in the *Follies* and the possibility of being in another revue, even her own revue, worth the additional $1300 to $1500 Tanguay could have earned weekly in vaudeville? What exactly did she gain by appearing in the *Follies*?

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[4] Robinson Locke Scrapbook, vol. 46, p. 26, NYPLPA ("Kept Out Of Theatre," *Variety*, 11 December 1909, n.p.). The *Follies* was touring at this point in the year, so the desire to be in New York and off the road could not have been the sole selling point for Tanguay.

[5] In fact, this revue did not materialize. According to the *New York Tribune*, Sunday, 19 June 1910, sec. V, p. 6, Tanguay was back in vaudeville, appearing at the Alhambra in New York City.

One answer to these questions is that while vaudeville may have paid top performers more, there was more prestige to be gained in Broadway revues; the *Follies* was essentially a step closer to legitimate theatre than vaudeville.[6] In other words, revues in general, and the *Follies* specifically had greater cultural capital than did big-time vaudeville, enabling Ziegfeld to hire Tanguay away from her successful vaudeville tour by offering her status.

Around this time, changes were made in the *New York Tribune*'s theatre listings. For example, in June1908, this newspaper divided its theatre listings into two sections, "The Stage" and "Variety Theatres," and by July, all theatre announcements were listed together under the category "Summer Amusements."[7] The next summer, however, the *Tribune* began dividing the Sunday theatre section into categories appearing in this order down its columns: "Comedy and Drama," "Musical Plays," "Variety Houses," and "Beach and Park."[8] Of interest here, in neither system of categorization were the *Follies* listed under "Variety Houses" despite the fact that Ziegfeld hired vaudeville headliners—

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[6] In using the term "legitimate" to describe part of the theatre business and entertainment industry, I acknowledge the term's complexity as well as its complicity with the received cultural hierarchy. David Savran writes, "The word 'legitimate' has since the nineteenth century been a key term used to position various theatrical practices (for good or ill) in the hierarchy of cultural forms. It represents not an unprejudiced descriptive but a value-laden metaphorical concept—one of the most loaded metaphors in the theatrical vocabulary. And while it produces itself strictly in opposition to a historically contingent other, its imprecisely defined antagonist would never dare self-identify as 'illegitimate.'" Furthermore, as Savran explains "The legitimate theatre then represents a relatively elite cultural practice which, from the nineteenth century to the present, is linked to European forms and coded as strictly literary and text-based, unlike 'spectacle, opera, pantomime, etc.'" David Savran, "The Struggle for Legitimacy," unpublished manuscript, 4, 5-6.

[7] *New York Tribune,* 14 June 1908, sec. IV, p. 2; 21 June 1908, sec. IV, p. 2; and 5 July 1908, sec. IV, p. 2.

[8] *New York Tribune,* 13 June 1909, sec. V, p.6, and 3 July 1910, sec. IV, p. 13.

people widely known to be vaudeville performers—and that what plot there was in the *Follies* was loose enough that it could absorb different headliners with their various specialties as needed, as seen in the personnel issues outlined above Instead, the *Follies* was included under the legitimate heading of "The Stage" in 1908 and in the new, more specific category—the new genre—"Musical Plays" in 1909.

These two seemingly unrelated events—the hiring of Tanguay and the reorganization of the theatre section of a newspaper—both reflected the emergence and codification of changes within the theatrical hierarchy. These changes made plain the relative value assigned to each category with legitimate theatre on top, the *Follies* in the middle, and vaudeville (which, granted, had its own hierarchy as well) below the *Follies*.

The *Follies* and Vaudeville

If the *Follies* became something other than vaudeville—or at least were perceived as something other than vaudeville—it is important to remember that vaudeville is exactly where the *Follies* started.[9] Ziegfeld's career prior to beginning his famous series indicated that some of his marketing strategies and certainly his focus on bringing in a more economically privileged audience developed before he came to New York. In Chicago in the 1890s, when he was producing his first success, the Great Sandow act and the variety bill that accompanied the strong man, Ziegfeld sent society ladies formal

[9] Gerald Bordman, in his history of the revue form, acknowledges a close relationship between vaudeville and revues; however, instead of exploring the cultural implications of this relationship, Bordman bemoans the attention paid to vaudeville at the expense of revues by theatre historians as well as the general public and often uses "vaudeville" as a pejorative term, dismissing some shows which called themselves revues as "little more than an artfully mounted vaudeville." While Bordman's comments may be an extreme example, they nonetheless illustrate the point that genre, class, and taste are implicated in each other and that scholars themselves perpetuate these taste distinctions. Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Revue: From The Passing Show To Sugar Babies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) v, 11, and 61.

written invitations to come backstage to touch Sandow's muscles, and at least some took him up on the offer as duly recorded by the press.[10] The result, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, was that "under Manager F. Ziegfeld, Jr. the Trocadero has accomplished in a comparatively short space of time what it has taken New York…many years to achieve—namely: the *securing of a high class of patronage* for a *refined vaudeville* and music hall amusement enterprise" [emphasis mine].[11] It may seem somewhat strange that a strong man turn was considered "refined," but it is clear that Ziegfeld's unique sales pitch was key to the way the bill was received. And when he went to New York, Ziegfeld continued to package his productions in pursuit of a fashionable and well-heeled audience.

The organization of the vaudeville industry at this time, however, had an impact on the way Ziegfeld pursued his ambitions in New York City; B. F. Keith, Edward F. Albee, and their business partners together held an almost total monopoly on vaudeville bookings which made touring a variety show virtually impossible without the United Booking Office's approval and scheduling. However, if Ziegfeld produced something other than vaudeville—or at least convinced others it was something different—he would be able to sidestep the Keith–Albee machine. From this perspective he had two options: work within the burlesque booking structures or work with one of the two legitimate theatre producing and booking organizations, the dominant Theatrical Syndicate or the

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[10] Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., "The Showman's Shifting Sands," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1923, 171. Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., "What Becomes of the Ziegfeld Follies Girls?," *Pictorial Review*, May 1925, 12-13. Richard Ziegfeld and Pauline Ziegfeld, *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.* (New York: Abrams, 1993), 23.

[11] Cited in Ziegfeld and Ziegfeld, 24.

upstart Shubert brothers.[12] Ziegfeld set his sights on the more prestigious option, and after briefly playing the two sides off each other, Ziegfeld cast his lot with the Syndicate.

Despite the fairly rigid business divisions listed above, these various competing (or parallel monopolizing) theatre interests used rooftop gardens in a more flexible, relaxed way, a fact that Ziegfeld was able to use to his advantage. As Stephen Johnson explains, "leading producers of the entertainment industry used these roof gardens to perfect and showcase their performers, in preparation for touring in the vaudeville and legitimate theatre circuits."[13] Thus, in the spring of 1907, for example, the Syndicate attempted to break into variety with "advanced vaudeville" by hiring Ziegfeld and recruiting promising performers. This meant that immediately prior the opening of the very first edition of the *Follies* in July 1907 Ziegfeld was producing a variety show with these performers on behalf of the Syndicate on top of the New York Theatre, a location that he had already renamed "Jardin de Paris."[14] The *Follies* grew out of this enterprise, but it was not interrupted when the Syndicate signed what amounted to a non-aggression

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[12] For an excellent examination of burlesque's own complicated and dynamic relationship to the cultural hierarchy, see Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*: *Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). For information on the Shubert brothers and their enterprise, see Foster Hirsch, *The Boys From Syracuse*: *The Shuberts' Theatrical Empire* (1998; reprint, New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), and Brooks McNamara, *The Shuberts of Broadway*: *A History Drawn from the Collections of the Shubert Archive* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). For a concise summary of the rise of the Theatrical Syndicate and the way in which it both spawned the Shuberts and fueled the music industry (Tin Pan Alley), see Stephen Burge Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres, 1883-1942* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 105.

[13] Johnson, 5.

[14] Jardin de Paris program, 17 June 1907, Ziegfeld Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin (hereafter cited as HRC), and Ziegfeld and Ziegfeld, 40.

treaty with the U.B.O. This agreement included a pledge by the Syndicate "not to allow vaudeville into any of their theatres for a period of ten years."[15] While it certainly was not beyond the Syndicate to break such a treaty, what is demonstrated here instead is that the roof gardens and the shows appearing on them operated under different rules of engagement and thereby provided Ziegfeld with an ideal creative and transitional space.

The vaudeville roots of the *Follies* are especially clear when the program for this June 1907 roof-top variety show is compared with the program for the July debut of the *Follies of 1907*. Physically, the layout is very much the same. Indeed, the layout, print style, and information given in the first seven lines on the first page of the bill are exactly the same, apart from the date:

> JARDIN DE PARIS
> (The Garden of Paris)
> Atop the New York and Criterion Theatres,
> Broadway from 44th Street to 45th Street.
> Management of F. Ziegfeld, Jr.
> Week Beginning Monday […] 1907.
> Every Evening Commencing at 8.30.[16]

In both programs, this information was followed by an announcement that "Fresh Novelties" would be added on a weekly basis. Both programs numbered the turns in the same manner with the same type, and, notably, it was not until item number three on the *Follies* bill, more than halfway down the page, that the program identified the show as the *Follies* rather than its predecessor. These similarities are more than coincidences;

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[15] Johnson, 96.

[16] Jardin de Paris program, 17 June 1907, and *Follies of 1907* program, 22 July 1907, HRC. The programs do have differences; most notably, while all the turns on the vaudeville program are in the same size type, the *Follies of 1907* in its program, despite the fact that it is more than halfway down the page (following the number one, the overture, and number two "Selection"), is as large as the name of the theatre across the top of the page.

they indicate that Ziegfeld instructed his printer as if he were changing bills rather than changing shows—much less genres—and in so doing saw the one form emerge from the other.

A "change of bill" was exactly how the *New York Tribune* described the *Follies*' opening the day before it occurred:

> There are now six roof gardens bidding for public favor—Hammerstein's, the Jardin de Paris, Madison Square, New Amsterdam, Alhambra and Metropolis. At the Jardin de Paris, on the roof of the New York and Criterion theatres, there is to be a change of bill to-morrow night, the much heralded "Follies of 1907" being the offering. Mr. Ziegfeld describes this as a "midsummer diversion" and "a satire on everything timely that has a burlesque side."
>
> There are more than twenty musical numbers, new dances and a chain of droll stage novelties in the piece….[17]

The fact that the Ziegfeld show was described first of the six roof garden productions, with quotations from the man himself, along with a paragraph describing the show in considerable detail, reflected a significant publicity push on behalf of the show. Nonetheless, by ending with the cast list—especially with "David Abrams, the animal impersonator"— the final impression left by this description was decidedly one of a variety show.

The producers, location and program of the first *Follies* were not the only characteristics that the *Follies* shared with vaudeville; the principal performers in the *Follies* were big-time vaudevillians, indicating a similarity in content as well. Often the turns or numbers these recruits from vaudeville performed in Ziegfeld's revues were the very same as those they performed in vaudeville, or only slightly modified to better suit the theme of the revue. In fact, the dancer Mlle. Dazie moved directly from Ziegfeld's

[17] "Theatre Season's End," *New York Tribune*, 7 July 1907, sec. IV, p. 2.

roof top variety show, in which she was featured in the prized position just before the intermission, to the *Follies*.[18] Similarly, according to the *New York Telegraph*, singer and comedienne Nora Bayes, mentioned above, was "one of Klaw & Erlanger's advanced vaudeville recruits, and was assigned to the review instead of the regular vaudeville houses."[19] This account of Bayes' hiring makes clear that Klaw and Erlanger—the Syndicate—saw their investment in Ziegfeld's production as a continuation of their efforts in "advanced vaudeville," U.B.O. treaty or no.

Nor was this cross-over between vaudeville performers and those hired for the *Follies* limited to the first year; it continued throughout the *Follies* series, though sometimes more visibly than other times. In 1910, for example, Bert Williams took out his own advertisement announcing his appearance in the *Follies*, a standard practice for variety performers. The ad itself was very straight forward: "BERT WILLIAMS Begs to Announce His Appearance under the management of F. ZIEGFELD, JR. at the JARDIN DE PARIS for the Present Season and for Several Seasons to Come."[20] Ziegfeld's ad on the same page, on the other hand, did not mention Williams; instead the names of Ziegfeld's cast were listed in the various press releases as seen above and which, in this case, did mention Williams along with the many other performers. In placing this ad, Williams, or his agent, wanted to make sure that the prestige Williams gained by

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[18] Jardin de Paris program, 17 June 1907, HRC.

[19] Robinson Locke Scrapbook, vol. 46, p. 6, NYPLPA.

[20] *New York Tribune*, 19 June 1910, sec. V, p. 6. This link to vaudeville is only a small part of Williams' story; as Bordman explains, "In his unprecedented hiring of Williams, Ziegfeld broke the centuries-old color barrier and allowed a significant black artist to appear for the first time in a regular, white musical," 37.

appearing in the *Follies* was properly publicized. The catch, of course, was that by so doing, Williams also plainly identified himself as a variety performer.

The *Follies*' relationship to vaudeville was further demonstrated by its coverage in *Variety*, a trade paper for variety performers and producers, but which at this time included special sections dedicated to burlesque and motion pictures. The review of the *Follies of 1908* in the June 20, 1908, issue of *Variety* appeared on the same page as reviews of the shows at the 125th Street house, the Brighton Beach Music Hall and the Colonial theatre—all variety houses.[21] In other words, the *Follies* was grouped together with variety houses indicating that this trade journal, at least, recognized it as a variety show. The one significant difference separating this review from those of the shows at the other houses was the fact that the review appeared under the title of the revue, *Follies of 1908*, rather than the name of the house, Jardin de Paris.

Nor was the connection between the *Follies* and vaudeville lost on theatre critics in daily newspapers. The *New York Tribune* review of the 1909 edition made explicit the continuing relationship between vaudeville and the *Follies* by describing the *Follies*' performers as the "flowers of the variety stage."[22] Likewise, the *New York Tribune* review the following year described the show as a "series of vaudeville acts, some of which are good and some exceedingly poor."[23] Ten days later, the paper took note of Ziegfeld's continuing efforts to improve the show: "Miss Mindell Kingston of the vaudeville team of World and Kingston has been engaged by F. Ziegfeld for the 'Follies

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[21] "Follies of 1908," *Variety*, 20 June 1908, 16.

[22] "'Follies of 1909' a Success," *New York Tribune*, 15 June 1909, 7.

[23] "'The Follies of 1910' is Presented at New York Theatre," *New York Tribune*, 21 June 1910, 7.

of 1910.' She will make her appearance at the Jardin de Paris next Monday night."[24] Not only was vaudeville the source of Ziegfeld's performers, then, it was still the guiding structure—allowing for the incorporation and removal of scenes and acts—and, since the new act started on a Monday, vaudeville was still influencing the way this revue timed these changes.

Given these substantive connections and similarities, why did audiences of the time—and why do we theatre scholars—consider the *Follies* to be something very distinct from vaudeville? Of course there were some specific differences between the *Follies* and big-time vaudeville. The differences, however, were more in style than in substance because, ultimately, charging higher prices because of the presence of a book, no matter how thin the plot, or that of an elaborately costumed chorus would not have mattered if Ziegfeld's targeted audience had not accepted the *Follies* as something distinct from big-time vaudeville, as something more than just another summer roof show. In other words, we consider the *Follies* to be something distinct from the entertainment context from which it emerged because Ziegfeld did his marketing job so well.

Branding the *Follies*

In the development of vaudeville, impresarios emphasized cleaning up the acts and the environs to make this form of entertainment acceptable for women and families, thereby expanding its appeal beyond variety's traditional male audience. Ziegfeld applied this idea of changing the reputation associated with variety theatre to target a specific audience differently. Like vaudeville, revues were presented as socially acceptable, but

[24] "Theatrical Notes," *New York Tribune*, 1 July 1910, 7.

they were clearly not marketed for the whole family. Take, for example, this comment from a review of the *Follies of 1909*:

> And the entire performance is as clean as a whistle. There is nothing slow about it, and it is coined of the happenings of upper Broadway, with dialogue and 'business' most familiar about Times Square, but there is nothing to which the thin-skinned could take strong exception. It wasn't intended for old ladies, but if you've got good red blood in you and a sense of humor you'll enjoy it from the first scene to the sixteenth.[25]

This passage begins by describing the show as clean, a word audiences would recognize from more than two decades of use assuring variety audiences of respectability.[26] As in vaudeville, however, the term carried more weight as a designator of social acceptability than as a descriptor of anything that actually happened on stage. As such, having proclaimed the show clean, the critic qualified his statement by adding that the show's focus on show business and its accompanying humor was not for everyone. Those deemed unlikely to enjoy the show, however, were cast as outside the intended readership of this review and were derided and feminized as "thin-skinned" "old ladies." To be part of the audience who was able to appreciate this show—the "us" instead of the "them"—was not only posited as desirable, it also signified the audience member's sophistication,

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[25] Ziegfeld Follies of 1909, Clippings File, NYPLPA.

[26] The term "clean" was rarely used in other *Follies* reviews. The fact that it was here both speaks to the vaudeville orientation of *Variety* and confirms Erdman's thesis that the term was used to assure audiences rather than to reflect actual happenings on stage. See Andrew L. Erdman, "Blue Vaudeville: Sex, Morals, and the Mass-Marketing of Amusement, 1895-1915" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2001). See also Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor*: *Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Contemporary usage of "dirty" in the press to describe theatrical performances was much more focused on narratives (i.e. stories of the seedy side of life or those that indicated the difficulty of, departure from, or dissolution of morals and institutions like marriage and motherhood), rather than with the amount of skin shown or sexual innuendo implied on stage. For a fascinating contemporary example, see "Dirty Dramas," *New York Tribune*, 1 June 1909, 7.

youth and modernity—his or her ability to keep up with the ever-increasing pace of fashion and the changing times.

As seen here, variety, as a form, was able to adapt to the needs or interests of specific audiences. As vaudeville historian Robert Snyder explains, "From Times Square to South Beach, vaudeville entrepreneurs recognized that New Yorkers were not one people who could be easily entertained under one roof. New Yorkers were too divided by class, race, ethnicity, and gender to find satisfaction in one standardized vaudeville theatre. Vaudeville, like the people of New York, spoke in many dialects."[27] As the critic quoted above indicated, there was an opening for a vaudeville that spoke the dialect of the PMC—one that audience members would feel sophisticated attending. And, as I discuss in the introduction, I use the word "sophisticated" intentionally to invoke the inherent bias in the term, which has to do with class status, refinement, and cultural cachet.

The catch for expanding vaudeville in this direction was that to appeal to the PMC this particular dialect of vaudeville could not call itself "vaudeville" or anything else with variety (read lowbrow) connotations, for as Richard Ohmann explains, the PMC "often adopted a critical posture toward the banality and promiscuity of working class leisure."[28] Thus, presenting the *Follies* as fashionable and sophisticated was accomplished in part through branding the *Follies* as a different form of entertainment from vaudeville altogether. Branding involves creating a name, an identity, and an image associated with

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[27] Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (1989; reprint, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 103.

[28] Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996) 170.

a specific product in order to distinguish that product from the competition and enhance its appeal to targeted consumers, and marketing is the process of creating and selling a product, and encompasses any branding efforts. [29] As Andrew Wernick persuasively argues in *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression*, promotion is incorporated into the very creation of a product.[30] Accordingly, I am specifically arguing that Ziegfeld built into the *Follies* distinctions from vaudeville from the beginning; these distinctions were part of the creation of the *Follies* as well as their promotion. And for the *Follies* this primary promotion, the promotion that is part of the genesis, involved the various ways the new show was labeled and identified. Instead of emphasizing—if not limiting the advertising exclusively to—the location and the acts, as was standard newspaper advertising practice for vaudeville at this time, Ziegfeld gave his new show a title and branded the show as his own form of entertainment, as if to say that this is not vaudeville, that this is something different *because* it is a Ziegfeld show.

Despite advertising claims that branded items assured consumers of quality, brand names mostly reassured those who cared about the respectability of the product. As such, a product conveyed the associative respectability of others who purchased that brand and even transferred some of the respectability of the source of the advertisement. For

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[29] For current industrial definitions of these terms see Mark N. Clemente, *The Marketing Glossary* (Glen Rock, NJ: Clemente Communications Group, 2002). Clemente defines marketing as the "complex series of activities involved in creating products and services, promoting their existence and attributes, and making them physically available to identified target buyers," 236. A brand is the "combination of symbols, words or designs that differentiate one company's product from another company's product" and branding "can build a strong seller image, attract loyal and profitable consumers, and help in segmenting markets," 47, 49.

[30] Andrew Wernick, *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression* (1991; reprint, London: Sage Publications, 1994).

example, purchasing Onyx hosiery from Lord & Taylor made one like others who did so and, more generally, made one like the readers of *Theatre Magazine* (in which a Lord & Taylor / Onyx ad appeared prominently each month). Ohmann makes this relationship between the PMC and branding explicit: "brand name commodities lay along the new axis of respectability that helped unite PMC awareness."[31] Thus, establishing a recognizable brand name was a crucial component in Ziegfeld's marketing efforts to reach this potential audience.

Ziegfeld distinguished the *Follies* from other vaudeville and rooftop entertainments initially through his designations of the title and venue. Here Ziegfeld's careful manipulation of the language used to label his shows is apparent, exemplifying the way that he built the promotion of his product from the beginning. The title of his show, of course, was the "Follies" which was named after, at least in part, the Folies Bergere in Paris. Furthermore, by including the year, the title implied at least the possibility of annual installments rather than weekly changes of bill. While "Follies" was the most obvious identifier of the series, it was used in much the same way from year to year. The same cannot be said of three other elements key to this brand's identity: the generic designation "revue," Ziegfeld's own name, and the *Follies* chorus. These three elements were employed in dynamic ways and thereby provide insight into the way Ziegfeld constructed the image of the *Follies*.

The "Revue" Genre

Indicating its relative importance, "revue" was included in every advertisement I found for the *Follies* throughout these first years. This term had already been used in New

[31] Ohmann, 172.

York, but it still indicated some degree of European origin. As Johnson points out, on Broadway "respectability was not enough to guarantee patronage. A new entertainment form also had to be fashionable, which at that time meant, simply, European."[32] Of course the eye-appeal of "revue" over its homonym "review" reinforced the French connotations Ziegfeld sought and appears to have been selected with an eye, so to speak, toward print advertisements. Bordman traces the nineteenth-century use of the term "review" back to such shows as *The Dramatic Review for 1868*, but Ziegfeld's more immediate predecessors preferred different terms altogether, like George Lederer whose *The Passing Show* opened in 1894.[33] The critic for the *New York Times* dismissed such alternate choices, writing "We do not know what a topical extravaganza is; neither do they. That makes no difference. It might as well have been called an articulated burlesque or a desiccated variety show."[34] In the decade plus between this *Passing Show* and the beginning of the *Follies* some shows used "review," others "revue," and some adopted such labels as "topical burlesques," though, according to Bordman, "[c]ritics also called them vaudevilles and musical comedies." [35] While Bordman insists that this confusion reflected the ignorance of the critics, I suggest instead that the interchangeable use of terms at this time reflected the fact that there was, in fact, very little structural difference among these theatrical forms.

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[32] Johnson, 26.

[33] Bordman, 9-10. Bordman calls "revue" a "later, slightly pretentious borrowing," 12.

[34] Ibid., 18.

[35] Johnson, 80, and Bordman, 25.

With such confusion, Ziegfeld had to promote a more prestigious genre, a more specific, higher rung in the hierarchy, because without a different genre by which to understand and consider the *Follies*, audiences and critics of the time would have placed the show in the more familiar and not entirely inappropriate category of vaudeville. Classifying his shows strictly as revues and insisting on the francophone spelling, then, was important to distinguishing the *Follies* from vaudeville, whether refined, advanced, or otherwise.

Ziegfeld laid the groundwork for using this term in a very early ad for the *Follies of 1907* which appeared at the end of his roof garden variety show bill:

> In Active Preparation.
> Mr. F. Ziegfeld, Jr., will shortly present a New Satirical Musical Revue.
> THE FOLLIES OF 1907
> Touching Upon Social Fads and Foibles, and the Dramatic and
> Lyric Successes of the Season."[36]

Here Ziegfeld specified that the show would be a revue and he modified the term with "satirical" and "musical" to clarify for the reader what that genre entailed. Thus, even if one were unfamiliar with "revue," Ziegfeld made it easily decipherable by essentially defining it with modifiers. He added to this information by giving the subject matter of the satire and the music, and in so doing associated his new show with more highbrow theatre, the "Dramatic and Lyric Successes" of the legitimate theatrical season. Ziegfeld was generous in promoting this different genre here, providing in this first year an explanation for the ad's readers. Once defined, however, he changed tactics, and in ensuing years, he promoted the revue classification through prominent placement and repetition rather than explanation.

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[36] Jardin de Paris program, 17 June 1907, HRC.

As early as 1908, he began to have some success in getting the term used. For example, in the Sunday, June 14, 1908, *New York Tribune*, the article "New York Roof and Herald Square Open To-morrow" began with "The opening of the Jardin de Paris, the roof garden on top of the New York Theatre and the re-opening of the Herald Square Theatre will take place to-morrow. At the former 'The Follies of 1908,' a new musical review, will have its first Manhattan presentation." Eliding all connections to vaudeville, the writer added, "'The Follies of 1908' has no plot but is patterned after a style of entertainment now in vogue in Paris."[37] This article shows that Ziegfeld had some early success with his branding efforts: while in the article the location was referred to as the roof of the New York Theatre, that location was also identified as the Jardin de Paris, and while the show was still called a "review," its Parisian origins were mentioned. Likewise, the *New York World* identified the show as a "review" from the very first *Follies*, and in 1909, the *Dramatic Mirror* still referred to the *Follies of 1909* as a "review."[38] The monthly magazine *Theatre* called the show a "revue," at least as early as 1909, but did so with quotation marks around the term; however, as I discuss later in this chapter, this magazine was itself invested in the social prestige of Ziegfeld's productions.

By 1911, the term and spelling "revue" had taken hold, but not necessarily to Ziegfeld's advantage. In the June 1, 1911, *New York Tribune* "Amusements" advertising section, two shows—neither of them the *Follies*—described themselves as "revues:" the show at the Folies Bergere (a new establishment in New York) and the Shuberts' latest attempt to compete with the *Follies*. The Folies Bergere advertisement was not detailed,

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[37] "The Stage," *New York Tribune*, 14 June 1908, sec. IV, p. 2.

[38] *Ziegfeld Follies of 1907*, Clippings File, and *Ziegfeld Follies of 1909*, Clippings File, NYPLPA.

but it clearly delineated the three kinds of the entertainment services it offered: "Restaurant," "Revues & Ballet" and "Cabaret Show."[39] "Revue" clearly had become accepted as the signifier of a genre. Of even greater interest is the direct competition produced by the Shuberts, called simply, *The Musical Revue of 1911*, and described as "Ballet, Spectacle, Musical, Variete & Comedy."[40] Here while the Shuberts did not steal Ziegfeld's title, they appropriated his brand's genre as their title. Both of these competitors also clearly were striving to enhance the French associations of their shows, in the one case with the name "Folies Bergere" and in the other case, with the inclusion of "Variete," both of which, like "revue" itself, sound the same, but go beyond "Follies" and "variety" in terms of visual impact.

In the face of competition employing his own tactics, Ziegfeld shifted course. The *Follies* ad in the Sunday, June 18, 1911, *Tribune* is the earliest I have found that did not include the word "revue."[41] Since "Follies" and "Revue" were used in other ads, what Ziegfeld had left to distinguish his brand of entertainment from the competition was his own name.

Ziegfeld's Name

From the beginning, Ziegfeld worked to make sure that "Follies," "revue," and "Ziegfeld" were almost interchangeable, and that they all pointed directly to his show. It is very difficult to find any instance of "revue" in *Follies* advertising without "Ziegfeld's" or some other variant of his name modifying it. Ziegfeld made himself, his

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[39] *New York Tribune,* 1 June 1911, 14.

[40] Ibid.

[41] *New York Tribune*, 18 June 1911, sec. V, p. 3.

name, a key component of the brand. The *Follies* plug at the bottom of the Jardin de Paris's vaudeville ad in the *New York Tribune* is but one example of this point: the bottom line in bold letters gave the title, "The Follies of 1907," but the line above it established the brand, "Ziegfeld Musical Revue."[42] Thus, Ziegfeld was branding the *Follies* as his even before the first edition opened and long before they officially became the *Ziegfeld Follies*. Similarly, the last four lines of the advertisement from the Wednesday, July 3, 1907, *New York Tribune* read:

> SEAT SALE TO-MORROW
> For the Ziegfeld Musical Revue,
> THE FOLLIES OF 1907,
> Which Opens Next Monday.[43]

It was as if one title was not enough to distinguish this effort from advanced vaudeville. Ziegfeld worked hard to distinguish this type of entertainment by branding it as his own. Indeed, during the first two weeks in July 1907—the weeks immediately preceding and following the premiere—every ad for the show in the *Tribune* included "Ziegfeld Musical Revue."

Ziegfeld perhaps was motivated to closely associate the *Follies* with his own name by two potential—and mutually beneficial—factors. First, Ziegfeld had his own salary and job security issues to worry about. When the first edition of the *Follies* opened, Ziegfeld was a salaried employee of the Syndicate with some success but not a tremendous amount of leverage.[44] After all, he was not the writer, director, composer, or choreographer, and he had already alienated the Shubert interests. In other words, he was

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[42] *New York Tribune,* 1 July 1907, 12.

[43] *New York Tribune,* 3 July 1907, 8.

[44] Ziegfeld and Ziegfeld, 40. They say his salary at this point was $200 a week.

replaceable. By so closely affiliating his name with the product, then, Ziegfeld increased his own value; if the Syndicate wanted to continue to profit from this successful series—and indeed have it be received by audiences as part of the same series—they needed to have Ziegfeld's name attached to the project.

Ziegfeld also could have benefited from the close association between his name and the show in so far as it contrasted his venture with the entertainment industry, and, more generally, with industrialization. The implication of the presence of one controlling artistic vision—whether or not it was an accurate portrayal—contrasted sharply with the monopolies in control of much of theatre in the United States at this time. Given contemporary anxieties about the dehumanizing impact of industrialization, this implication could have appealed to audiences, particularly the affluent and professional middle classes, who desired a more Romantic notion of genius artiste. To this end, the Syndicate was not referred to in *Follies* ads as it was with most of their other shows; it was always "Ziegfeld's Revue" rather than "Klaw & Erlanger Presents…" or some other such Syndicate identifier. This suggestion of authorship perhaps also gave Ziegfeld an edge over the competition. In contrast, advertisements for *The Mimic World* identified the show as "The Sam S. & Lee Shubert and Lew Fields' Musical Review;" the fact that the first man listed, Sam Shubert, died three years earlier did little to encourage an image of individual attention. [45] The ad two weeks later failed to improve the situation: "SAM S. & LEE SHUBERT (Inc.) and LEW FIELDS offer Their New Musical Review"[46]

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[45] *New York Tribune*, 21 June 1908, sec. IV, p. 3.

[46] *New York Tribune*, 5 July 1908, sec. IV, p. 3.

sounds even more corporate and dehumanized. Even in the active voice the impact was not the same as that of having one man at the helm.

Since ads were different each Sunday and weekday ads likewise varied from week to week, Ziegfeld had the opportunity to experiment with the presentation and layout, and through these ads we can see him getting closer to what the name of the show would eventually be. Like many of the early *Follies* ads, the Sunday, June 6, 1909, advertisement included "F. Ziegfeld, Jr.'s" over the title, but in this ad, the print size and prominence were exactly the same in both lines, giving the appearance that the title was "F. Ziegfeld Jr.'s New Revue Follies of 1909."[47] After the 1909 show opened, the advertisements changed slightly; the day after opening, the weekday ad for the *Follies* included the line "Best of All Ziegfeld Shows." Since the show was also labeled "F. Ziegfeld Jr.'s New Revue," Ziegfeld's name appeared twice in this small weekday ad.[48] In the following Sunday's *Tribune* ad, "Ziegfeld's Revue" was printed in relief against a dark banner across the middle of the ad, making it the most prominent, eye-catching type in the ad, even more so than the title.[49]

Then, on June 27, down one side of the ad "ZIEGFELDS REVUE" appeared, and up the other side "FOLLIES OF 1909" balanced the ad. [50] The graphic design used, however, had the effect of emphasizing the first word of each side. Thus, glancing at the ad, one read "Ziegfelds Follies." Apparently what kept Ziegfeld from adopting outright

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[47] *New York Tribune*, 6 June 1909, sec. VI, p. 7. The ad the following Sunday, June 13, 1909, repeated this extended version of the title.

[48] *New York Tribune*, 15 June 1909, 12.

[49] *New York Tribune*, 20 June 1909, sec. V, p. 7.

[50] *New York Tribune*, 27 June 1909, sec. V, p. 6.

this name-branded title was the word "revue." It seems as though he insisted on keeping that word active and present in the advertisements, as if he feared "revue" would be lost if he simply used his name to modify the title. As it is, with "revue" in the advertisement, not only were the *Follies* his, but so too was the entire classification of entertainment.

Press reports from the time indicate that Ziegfeld was successful in creating the impression that this form of entertainment was his. Thus, when the *New York Tribune* reviewer of opening night wrote, "The newest form of entertainment is "The Follies of 1907," to be seen at Mr. Ziegfeld's Jardin de Paris on the roof of the New York and Criterion theatres," Ziegfeld was simply given credit for the performance space.[51] The next year, the same newspaper credited the show much more directly to Ziegfeld: "The season of hilarity on top of the New York Theatre was opened last night and F. Ziegfeld, jr. [sic], presented there an amusing bit of gayety called 'The Follies of 1908.' Like all of Mr. Ziegfeld's shows, it is light and airy, and to all appearances, it does not fail of its purpose, which is to amuse." To this the critic added, "For the rest Mr. Ziegfeld's show is a good one and will likely have a prosperous season."[52] Here, despite the fact that Ziegfeld did not write, compose or direct the show being reviewed, he was mentioned three times, including twice in the possessive. Ziegfeld's affiliation clearly was seen as integral to the show. The *Dramatic Mirror* likewise identified Ziegfeld with the *Follies* with the possessive in its review of the 1909 show. This critic ended the review with "Mr. Ziegfeld's entertainment makes it clear that 1909, as far as it has passed, has abounded in pleasing foolishness. But the greatest folly would be to miss The Follies of

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[51] "The Follies of 1907," *New York Tribune*, 9 July 1907, 4.

[52] "'Follies of 1908' Pleases," *New York Tribune*, 16 June 1908, 7.

1909."[53] Ziegfeld's name was being associated closely with this whole realm of entertainment, and not just in his own advertising.

By 1911, however, since "revue" and even "Follies"—albeit in the slightly altered, and in even more French-inflected forms—were being used elsewhere on Broadway, the remaining uniqueness of Ziegfeld's brand was that it carried his own name. Thus, it is not surprising that the ad in the June 18, 1911, Sunday *Tribune* included "Ziegfeld"—no "F." or "Jr."—in type as bold and as large as "Follies." The only thing separating these two bold lines was the word "Real" in a box between them.[54] The stamp of "Ziegfeld" on the show indicated that it was the genuine, the authentic product. This layout was repeated one week later in the June 25th ad.[55] And by the following Saturday, July 1, in the smaller advertising format, the word "real" was eliminated, and the title read simply "Ziegfeld Follies."[56] This new title was repeated in the next day's larger Sunday ad, in which "Ziegfeld Follies of 1911" appeared in relief in a dark box, emphasizing that it should be read as a unit. Underneath this new title was the information "The Best of the Follies Series Ever Presented By Ziegfeld."[57] Ziegfeld's name was reinforced twice here—he was the producer, he was the guarantor of quality, he was the brand.

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[53] *Ziegfeld Follies of 1909*, Clippings File, NYPLPA.

[54] *New York Tribune*, 18 June 1911, sec. V, p. 3.

[55] *New York Tribune*, 25 June 1911, sec. IV, p. 3.

[56] *New York Tribune*, 1 July 1911, 16.

[57] *New York Tribune*, 2 July 1911, sec. IV, p. 3.

The Chorus

Then as now, the most memorable image associated with the Ziegfeld brand was the *Follies* chorus. It was a standard element of the advertising, and its representation in the marketing of the show changed significantly during these first years as the Ziegfeld brand was taking shape. Although much has been and still could be said about this famous chorus, my focus here is specifically its function in Ziegfeld's promotion of the shows and the image of his brand.

In 1907 the chorus in the first edition of the *Follies* was advertised as the "50 Anna Held Girls," and was mentioned in advertising with almost as much regularity as "The Ziegfeld Musical Revue." Choruses of attractive women were not unique to Ziegfeld nor were they new to musical theatre. Indeed the original *Follies* chorus was imported from another Broadway show, *The Parisian Model*, where it had been a hit and where it received its name after the star of that show, Anna Held. Thus the first *Follies* chorus had an existence before the *Follies* opened, and as such it was more like another one of the acts than a defining characteristic of this revue.

The first appearance of the *Follies* chorus in the *Tribune* advertising was in the Sunday, July 7, 1907, newspaper—the day before the opening of the first edition of the show. Here "50 Anna Held Girls" appeared in much larger type underneath a list of some of the stars appearing in the show.[58] This emphasis reflected the chorus's anticipated drawing power even from the beginning. Furthermore, while these stars were not mentioned regularly in the advertising, the chorus was, indicating its relative

[58] *New York Tribune*, 7 July 1907, sec. VI, p. 3. Bordman, 34, argues that the number may be an exaggeration since "no surviving photographs confirm this." In this case, the appeal is in the idea, the abundance represented by fifty chorus members rather than in their reality.

promotional value. On opening day, for example, the small weekday ad was large enough to include "Great Cast and 50 Anna Held Girls," but by the end of that first week, the cast reference had been dropped and the chorus of "50 Anna Held Girls" was the only specific attraction mentioned—here appearing directly under "The Ziegfeld Musical Revue."[59] In this manner, the Anna Held Girls remained a constant and prominent feature of advertising throughout the summer of 1907.

Ziegfeld's insistence on calling—branding—the chorus the "Anna Held Girls," as he did throughout these first years, served cross-promotional purposes: Held was Ziegfeld's common-law wife and star of the show from which this chorus was imported. Ziegfeld was also Held's manager and so had a professional as well as personal interest in keeping Held present in the mind of audiences. In addition, Bordman argues that associating the chorus with Held's personality raised the appeal of this particular chorus, "imparting to them some of his wife's exotic [French] allure," thereby working in tandem with Ziegfeld's labeling efforts described above.[60] Thus, years before the advent of the "Ziegfeld girl" signifier, the *Follies* chorus served a unique dual marketing function—enticing prospective *Follies* audiences and promoting the career of another of Ziegfeld's interests.

The "50 Anna Held Girls" reappeared in the advertising for the *Follies of 1908*, but the chorus' representation changed dramatically in the course of this summer. The impetus for this change was the direct competition from the Shubert brothers in the form of *The Mimic World*, as was evident in the ads for the *Follies* as that other show's

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[59] *New York Tribune*, 8 July 1907, 12, and 12 July 1907, 12.

[60] Bordman, 34.

opening approached. For example, instead of mentioning the Anna Held Girls in the Sunday, June 21, 1908, *New York Tribune* advertisement, under the title of the show, Ziegfeld put the claim "Universally Conceded the Greatest Musical Entertainment Ever Seen on Broadway." To further establish and maintain his position at the top, he added, "The Most Beautiful Chorus in the World."[61]

The *Follies* advertising continued in this vein. Two weeks later, the *Follies* brand was abbreviated to "Ziegfeld's Revue," and the title was followed with "In a Class Wholly By Itself." The chorus was, of course, part of this superlative revue, here promoted as "The World's Handsomest Chorus." Finally, just in case there was any question, across the bottom of the ad was a claim that eliminated all competition: "The Greatest Show Ever Produced on Broadway."[62] To deal with the competition, then, this ad denied that there were any shows worthy to be considered competitors: Ziegfeld's revue was in a category, a class, all its own, superlative to all other productions, past or present.

In case the most handsome chorus in the world was not enough, the ad on July 12 took these women out of competition with other choruses, claiming instead that they comprised "All the Prettiest Girls In America."[63] This statement was significantly different than "50 Anna Held Girls," not just in degree, but in essence—it literally signified differently. The one was just the name of an act which promoted the name of another performer, while the claim involving women across the country implied a

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[61] *New York Tribune,* 21 June 1908, sec. IV, p. 3.

[62] *New York Tribune,* 5 July 1908, sec. IV, p. 3.

[63] *New York Tribune*, 12 July 1908, sec. IV, p. 3.

signature quality, something that permeated the entire show. Indeed, looking at these ads, it seems as though this was a moment—if not the moment—when the chorus became more than just a popular part of Ziegfeld's show and was recognized as a crucial part of Ziegfeld's brand. These, then, were the elements of the *Follies* brand identity, and the advertising persistently repeated the message that the best revue with the best chorus was made possible by Ziegfeld.

The Ziegfeld Brand Environment

The *Follies* series was already known for its scenic effects, particularly those involving the chorus members such as the ships at harbor effect in the *Follies of 1908*; Ziegfeld paid similarly detailed attention to the effects created within the auditorium. The promotion of the *Follies* as something different from vaudeville was reinforced by the experience of attending the show, if not by what was found on stage, then by the atmosphere of the performance space. Here, like the dining-out phenomenon in lobster palaces of the same period and the movie palaces of the 1910s and 20s, Ziegfeld worked with the idea that something newly established could increase its cultural capital by associating itself with other highly esteemed times and places.[64] The environment in which the *Follies* appeared was so important to Ziegfeld in his efforts to control the image of his shows and the effect he wanted to create that he continued to remake the

[64] See, for example, Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (1981; reprint, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), and David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993). Also note that the *Follies* moved inside other theatre spaces once the summer was over each year and on tour, but it was the summer performance space and its image that generated and was reflected in the press and, thus, his primary concern until the *Follies* took up a more permanent residence in the New Amsterdam Theatre in 1913, as I discuss in the next chapter.

Jardin de Paris, renovating and redecorating it at least every other year during the period the *Follies* were housed there.

Given Ziegfeld's apparent concern with an appropriate environment for his product, it was a clear marketing victory when the *Variety* review of the 1908 show opened with commentary on the Jardin de Paris: "One doesn't have to wonder why the people are flocking to the New York Roof this summer. F. Ziegfeld, Jr., has put a legitimate, clean, highly amusing and tuneful piece over the plate in the 'Follies of 1908,' which opened last Monday night at the 'Jardin de Paris,' that name being the only resemblance to the Roof of last summer."[65] The critic went on to add that a "decorative scheme suggesting yachting" had been used to a "cooling" effect. The socio-economic status implied by "yachting" lent Ziegfeld's space certain cultural cachet—especially combined with the theatrical descriptor "legitimate," a word rarely used in connection with roof-top performances. To this was added the magic word "cool," an adjective all roof gardens vied for during these pre-air-conditioning New York summers, all combining to be very high praise indeed for Ziegfeld's endeavor.

Two years later when the Jardin de Paris was once again altered, Ziegfeld promoted the change. The advertisements for "Amusements" in the Sunday, June 19, 1910, *New York Tribune* included a large ad for the opening of the *Follies* the next evening in which top billing went to the Jardin de Paris, newly transformed, according to the ad, into "America's First Summer and Winter Garden."[66] As the layout of the ad reinforced, with the theatre space featured so prominently and the announcement of its

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[65] "Follies of 1908," *Variety*, 20 June 1908, 16.

[66] *New York Tribune*, 19 June 1910, sec. V, p. 6.

transformation centered above the title, it is difficult to overstate how important the environment in which the *Follies* appeared was to Ziegfeld and the brand image he was working to create.

Just as in 1908, the press took note of these changes. In the Sunday, June 19, 1910, *New York Tribune* theatre column, the first listing under "Musical Plays" was the *Follies*. Then, as now, these Sunday-before-opening pieces were almost all publicity. This particular listing concluded with these paragraphs:

> The plot of the play has not been divulged. One of the novelties will be a reproduction of the earth and comet in motion, showing an animated Anna Held as the comet and Harry Watson as the earth.
>
> The chorus is said to be the largest and prettiest of all the "Follies." The gowns for most of the young women were made in Paris.
>
> A number of changes have been made on the roof since the close of last season. The decorations have been completely changed, comfortable chairs have been provided and the wisteria grove has been beautified.[67]

Several details stand out in this passage: first, while the show was identified as a play with a plot, the structure was still loose enough to accommodate the described novelty along with others. Then the chorus received its own paragraph, reflecting its importance to the brand identity and the French associations of the entire show. Following this information about the structure and the chorus—and thus metonymically related to them—was information about the roof garden, once again extensively redecorated. Thus, the location was part of the attraction and part of the brand identity, and therefore worth noting in the article along with the headliners, novelties and chorus.

One significant dimension of the Ziegfeld-brand environment was the cost of admission. The program for the *Follies of 1908* at the Jardin de Paris for the week of

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[67] "The Theatre," *New York Tribune*, 19 June 1910, sec. V, p. 6.

June 29, 1908, listed these prices: "Orchestra, Reserved…$2 and $1.50;" "Promenade…$1;" "Boxes…$15;" and "Admission…$1.00."[68] Similarly, the prices for *Follies of 1909* at the Jardin de Paris in June 1909 ranged from one to two dollars, with boxes going for fifteen.[69] These prices contrasted with, for example, those of Hammerstein's Roof, a roof garden competitor, which in the summer of 1910 were listed ranging from twenty-five to fifty cents, though for one dollar, one could get "Good Seats."[70]

These differences in cost were commented upon by *Variety* in a 1911 review of the opening of the Folies Bergere. Here, *Variety*'s editor wrote:

> Vaudeville is going into distinct divisions, say even some vaudeville managers. The divisions will be big and little, or divided by the difference between fifty cents as the top price and two dollars.
>
> The "$2 vaudeville" while never called "vaudeville" will be that, with musical embellishments, pretty, handsome, fancy and gaudy costumes, tights (and "legs" if you will)—in fact "The Black Crook" of modern times, modernized in everyway—a burlesque-vaudeville-musical comedy show that represents an investment of from $40,000 to $50,000 in the production, and costing from $5,000 to $10,000 weekly to operate.[71]

While vaudeville clearly had been moving in two different directions for at least five years at this point, the arrival of the Folies Bergere gave *Variety* the opportunity to comment on the state of the variety entertainment profession. What stands out here is how clearly *Variety* recognized shows like the *Follies* as variety shows; ticket prices, pretty choruses, "musical embellishments" and bigger budgets did not change the fact

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[68] *Ziegfeld Follies of 1908*, Programme File, NYPLPA.

[69] *Ziegfeld Follies of 1909*, Programme File, NYPLPA.

[70] *New York Tribune*, 3 July 1910, sec. IV, p. 13.

[71] "The Folies Bergere," *Variety*, 6 May 1911, 23, 25.

that these shows were vaudeville. These elements did mean, however, that these shows never called themselves vaudeville, as this writer acknowledged. To make all these elements pay, to entice the audiences willing and able to pay two dollars a ticket, the managers in this realm of vaudeville had to distance themselves from the working class associations of "vaudeville." On the flip side of that coin, Ziegfeld and other like-minded managers had to create an entirely different image for their shows, which charging higher ticket prices helped them to do. As Thorstein Veblen explained, charging more for a product encouraged people to value and to appreciate that product more, to hold it in higher esteem.[72] In other words, to attract an audience that could pay more, Ziegfeld had to charge more.

Cultural Capital and *Theatre Magazine*

That Ziegfeld was successful in creating such a different image and that the *Follies* had accrued greater cultural capital compared to big-time vaudeville circuit can be seen in its inclusion in *The Theatre: Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Dramatic and Musical Art* (often referred to and catalogued as *Theatre Magazine* or just *Theatre*). Magazines such as *Theatre* were a large part of the PMC experience at this time, and the relationship between the two was cyclical: the PMC's interest in magazines helped this sector of the publishing industry boom while the magazines both shaped and reinforced the PMC's image of itself. As Ohmann argues, magazines

> constituted a figurative yet very real cultural space homologous to the literal spaces that came more and more to define the PMC's understanding of itself and its world. Magazines circulated nationally to people with common values and interests; they entered similar homes everywhere, and were part of what made those homes similar. And of course magazines

[72] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899. Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 81.

> helped shape the values and interests of PMC people, including an interest in the brand named commodities advertised there.[73]

Becoming part of that landscape was a huge success for Ziegfeld.

Theatre began its coverage of the *Follies* with a review of the second edition in its August 1908 issue.[74] Since this magazine's regular scope included the New York opera scene, imported European art theatre, and productions of Shakespeare's plays—including those by Ivy League drama clubs—this attention paid to the *Follies* indicated Ziegfeld and his revue were on the PMC's social and theatrical radar.[75] However, while *Theatre* was indeed a marker of a certain level in the cultural hierarchy, the inclusion of the *Follies* did not mean necessarily that the show already was accepted at this level. Instead, specific economic forces helped Ziegfeld gain this advantageous foothold. With precious few new productions to review in the summer months, the magazine turned to features as diverse as "Where Shakespeare Set His Stage" (August 1907) and "Maxine Elliott's Advice to Stage-struck Girls: 'Don't'" (August 1908). Coupled with the widespread exodus from New York City during the summer months by anyone who could afford it, including many theatre goers and *Theatre* subscribers, these seasonal

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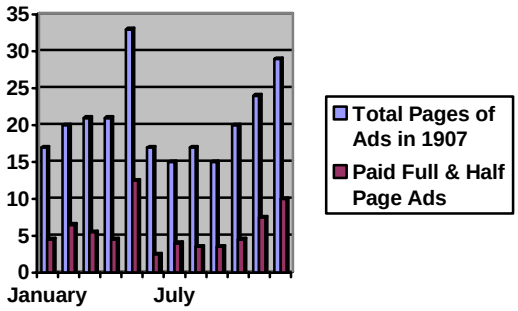
[73] Ohmann, 160.

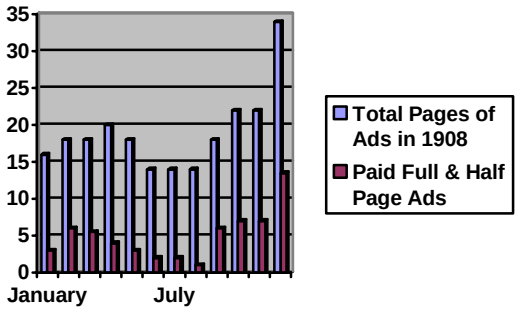
[74] For this research, I used *The Theatre: Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Dramatic and Musical Art*, vol. VII – X, no. 71 – 106, (January 1907 – December 1909).

[75] While the magazine did publish occasional articles on lowbrow entertainment, the *Follies* shows were reviewed by the magazine and photographs were included in various photo spreads, not segregated as special features as the other lowbrow inclusions were, thus indicating an editorial policy distinguishing the *Follies* from vaudeville, unlike, say, the editorial policy of *Variety* indicated above.

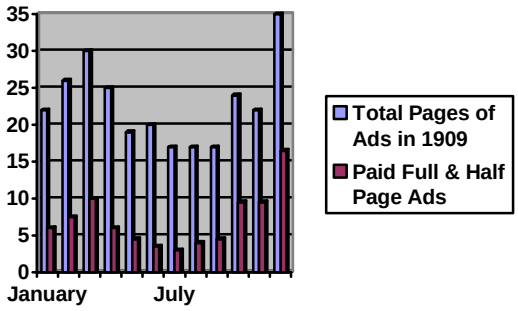
factors meant advertisers had little motivation to buy ads in the summer issues of a magazine specifically devoted to "dramatic and musical art."[76]

The number of pages of advertising—specifically the full and half page ads, representing those paying the most to reach the *Theatre* readers—bears out this assertion. Consider the graphs below charting advertising during the years immediately before and after the magazine began covering the *Follies*.





[76] For a contemporary reference to this summer travel, see "About People and Social Incidents," *New York Tribune*, 5 July 1908, 6: "As for New York itself, the city is entirely deserted to-day [sic], from the social point of view. Familiar faces are missing from fashionable restaurants and from the smart clubs, and not until to-morrow [sic] afternoon will men be drifting back into the city, to remain here until they go away once more on Thursday evening or Friday morning."



As is shown above, August, 1908, was the magazines' worst month for advertising revenues in this 1907 - 1909 period. Out of only fourteen pages of ads in that month's magazine (tied with June and July that summer for the lowest total in this three year period), there was only one paid full-page advertisement, and no paid half-page advertisements. For the entire summer of 1908, advertisers bought only five full and half page ads. Furthermore, in 1908, there were only 228 pages of advertisements, down from 249 the previous year. Clearly the magazine needed to generate some excitement and revenue in the summer months, if only to keep up appearances; it was, after all, a monthly magazine. Thus, I argue that it was not mere coincidence that the worst advertising month in this three year period is also the first month that *Theatre* reviewed the *Follies*.

The magazine extended its coverage of the *Follies* the next year beginning in the July issue, which included a photo spread titled "Nora Bayes and Show Girls In 'The Follies of 1909.'" This photo spread consisted of a collection of portraits of performers, not photographs from the actual *Follies*; the 1909 *Follies* had not yet opened when the magazine was printed. The August issue made even greater use of the *Follies*. Here the cover was "Portrait in colors of Nora Bayes in 'The Follies of 1909'," the show itself was

reviewed, and there was another photo spread, this one entitled “Scenes in ‘The Follies of 1909’.”

Coverage in *Theatre*, then, reflected both the magazine’s summertime dearth of topics and advertisers as well as the success of the *Follies*; this coverage, in turn, increased the status of Ziegfeld’s production. Through the magazine, Ziegfeld and his *Follies* had access to the subscribers and the opportunity to present themselves as important theatre to those subscribers. Specifics about this particular subscriber-audience become clear when the magazine’s advertisers are considered. In the chart below are all of the full and half-page advertisers, by category and listed in number of pages, for the years 1907-1909:

Advertiser	**1907**	**1908**	**1909**	**Total**
Actor’s Fund Fair	1	-	-	1
Advertising Services	0.5	-	1.5	2
Automobiles	6.5	5.5	9	21
Baths	-	1	-	1
Beverages	5.5	1	1	7.5
Booklets	-	1	-	1
Cigars/cigarettes	4	-	2	6
Clothing – General	-	3	2	5
Clothing – Women’s	9.5	12.5	18	30
Health and Beauty Aids	11.5	18	2.5	32
Household Goods	3	1	1.5	5.5
Industrial Goods	1	-	-	1
Insurance	4	4	6	14
Jewelry	2.5	0.5	-	3
Magazines / Subscriptions	1.5	0.5	-	2
Pens	1	-	1	2

Phonographs and Records	1	1	5	7
Pianos	9.5	-	14	23.5
Prints	0.5	-	-	0.5
Restaurants	-	1	0.5	1.5
Retail	1	2	3	6
Silk Goods / Manufacturers	-	0.5	12	12.5
Theatre Magazine (services and promotions)	13	21.5	19	53.5
Theatrical Productions	1.5	3.5	3	8
Travel	4	4	2.5	10.5

Of course, there is no one-to-one correlation between the socio-economic level of the readership and that depicted in the advertisements.[77] Still, proceeding cautiously, I argue that the most persistent, most reoccurring advertisers would not have bought as much space as they did in *Theatre* if they were not aiming their products generally at the type of person who subscribed to this particular magazine. That said—and setting aside the *Theatre* self-promotions—the number and type of advertisements sold in these three years suggest a primarily female readership as indicated by the number of advertisements for health and beauty aids, thirty-two out of 203, or 15.7 percent, and by the number of ads for women's clothing, thirty or 14.7 percent. Furthermore, the readership had at least some potential to buy big ticket items like pianos, with 23.5 pages of ads or 11.5 percent, and automobiles, with twenty-one ads or 10.3 percent. So these four largest categories of advertisers represent 52.2 percent of the total full and half page advertisements and

[77] As Ohmann notes, "One might construe an 'upscale' ad in *Atlantic*, *Harper's* or *Century* as addressing people who had already achieved affluence and social standing, and as confirming their sense of superiority while showing it to be compatible with the use of common, branded goods. In the cheaper magazines, such an ad assumed the wish to emulate, and to rise. Either way, it took the social hierarchy for granted, constituting its audience as one that valued prestige," 208.

indicate an economically advantaged female readership for the magazine. No other category comes close to these four sets of numbers. For these women with discretionary cash who subscribed to *Theatre,* even those who summered away from the city, the *Follies* became a regular part of their theatre year.

Taken together, the advertisements indicate that what this magazine did out of desperation for articles and advertisers in the summer worked to legitimize Ziegfeld's *Follies,* normalizing the *Follies*' presence with a respectable female audience and thus achieving an elevated status in social and cultural hierarchies. In turn, the magazine's situation shows that the cultural hierarchy, in fact, was constructed at least in part by the very market that the hierarchy was supposed to separate from art. And while few people during these early years referred to the *Follies* as art, these market forces helped make the *Follies* acceptable entertainment for people who otherwise would have been unlikely to attend something so very similar to lowbrow variety entertainments.

And attend they did. While audiences are notoriously difficult to handle historiographically, varying as they do from section to section within an auditorium and even from day to day during the run of a show, a *New York Tribune* review offered a glimpse of the *Follies* audience. This critic began his favorable review of the *Follies of 1909* by commenting directly on the make-up of the audience:

> The town made it known last night that the summer season was officially opened. Every avenue led to the Jardin de Paris, atop the New York Theatre, and by the time the curtain went up on the first of a numerous array of novelties that aerial playhouse was filled. And the assemblage was not an ordinary one. Here and there the eye accustomed to the sight of celebrities, local and national, beheld the flower of the several professions. Well known physicians, lawyers, merchants, architects,

> writers, actors and officials of the city mingled with the "regulars" of first night performances.[78]

This description stated explicitly that the audience for this show was unusual for rooftop gardens or for variety entertainments featuring "novelties." Indeed, the audience was remarkable—perhaps more remarkable than any other part of the production, given its prominence in the review—not just for the presence of celebrities but even more so by the significant representation of New York's professional classes.

New York's Big Summer Show

The *Follies of 1911* included several self-reflexive scenes indicative of Ziegfeld's achievements in the course of these first five years. The show began with a scene in which all the *Follies* editions were represented by show girls and Ziegfeld himself was represented by one of his actors.[79] Reflecting the strength of the *Follies* brand identity, in this number the editions were meant to be recognizable in and of themselves, but also as part of the whole, part of the series, and Ziegfeld was represented as being part of it all—right there with the parading chorus members. The first act also included a scene set at the Jardin de Paris itself. This performance space, the home of the *Follies* from the inception of the series, at this point was also a big part of the brand identity. There was a dizzying reflexivity at work here: the location in which the show was performed was represented on the stage in that very location.

Then, the second act included a scene set on the "H.M.S. Vaudeveel" with characters listed as "Sailors, Marines, Midshipmites, Chickens, Broilers and Squab."[80]

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[78] "'Follies of 1909' a Success," *New York Tribune*, 15 June 1909, 7.
[79] "'Follies of 1911' Here," *New York Tribune*, 27 June 1911, 7.

[80] *Ziegfeld Follies of 1911*, Programme File, NYPLPA.

Naming the ship the H.M.S. Vaudeveel makes plain the way in which the *Follies* were repackaged vaudeville, and that Ziegfeld was secure enough with his revue that the word "vaudeville" and Ziegfeld's insistence on francophone spellings could be acknowledged playfully on stage. Likewise self-referential was the crew of this vaudeville ship: chickens, broilers, and squab were all slang terms for different categories of women in the chorus. Thus, this *Follies* ship was really just vaudeville with a crew of chorus girls, and Ziegfeld's brand identity was strong enough five years into the series to have fun with that fact with the audience.

In the course of an evening, then, on the Jardin de Paris' stage, the *Follies*' editions, its chorus women, its source material and structure, and Ziegfeld himself were all represented, were all acknowledged as *the* components in the show itself—the first edition branded *Ziegfeld Follies*. Unlike the traditional literature on Ziegfeld which has posited Ziegfeld as the genius behind the creation of the *Follies*, claiming magic inherent in his name, I argue that Ziegfeld's name worked within marketing discourse to serve as a marker of distinction within this period and to negotiate product differentiation from vaudeville. The show, the series, and the brand were now all Ziegfeld, a name that now registered with "the flower" of New York's rising professional managerial class, and a name that now meant something within New York's social hierarchy. Ultimately, Ziegfeld marketed his revues to such an extent and in such a way that he made *Ziegfeld Follies* the brand name for Broadway revues, a brand desirable for consumption by the newly emergent, status-conscious PMC. By 1911, then, everything had changed: the *Follies*—that close relative of vaudeville—was indeed established as a distinct New York

institution. As the *Variety* critic commented in his review of the 1911 show, "It is New York's big summer show."[81]

[81] "Follies of 1911," *Variety*, 1 July 1911, 20.

Chapter Two:

Locating the Ziegfeld Brand:

Performance Space, Place and the Cultural Hierarchy

Inside the cover of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1912* program for opening week a full-page advertisement pictured in the foreground a man and woman in evening dress (a tuxedo and top hat on him, a fur drape and feathered head piece on her) approaching a car with a similarly well dressed couple close by looking at the car. Behind them is a theatre clearly marked in each of the four lit doorways as the Moulin Rouge. On the marquee large lit letters spell out "ZIEGFELD / FOLLIES / OPEN / OCT 21" on the left side and "ZIEGFELDS MOST WONDERFUL CHORUS" on the right side. Inside other similarly dressed patrons are visible milling about in the lobby.

Using the familiar clip-coupon approach to entice potential customers to participate in trials of the product, the copy at the bottom of this ad claimed there was

> Only one way to go to theatre. Only one way to get away without vexatious delays. Don't wait in draughty corridors after the show; let your car do the waiting. Don't spoil the evening's enjoyment and lose your temper waiting for the carriage call. Try our way once—the Detroit Electric way. We'll take the trouble and expense. Sign your declaration of independence. It's that coupon above.[1]

In addition to encouraging active participation and involvement with the product advertised—a method of moving passive potential consumers toward the action of purchasing—this ad went a step further in connecting this auditorium full of potential Anderson Electric Car owners to the automobiles. It incorporated as natural—and used

[1] *Ziegfeld Follies of 1912* Programme File, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center (hereafter cited as NYPLPA).

to its advantage—two significant changes in Ziegfeld's established *Follies* pattern: in 1912, the show opened mid-autumn instead of in the summer, and it opened in the New York Theatre underneath the Jardin de Paris, a theatre that had been renamed the Ziegfeld Moulin Rouge.

The image in this advertisement also represented an event that was qualitatively different from the image of a summer roof show. The attendees depicted here are far from tired businessmen whiling away a hot evening; instead the mixed-sex audience is dressed to indicate a clearly high socio-economic level. Furthermore, the fact that they were there on opening night indicated that in addition to having financial advantages, they were fashionable. They knew what *the* events were around town and had access to those events. It flattered both the audience on the first night (by depicting them in an elevated socio-cultural way) and those audiences on subsequent nights by associating them with this fashionable first night audience. While, again, there is no one-to-one correlation between the people depicted in an ad and those targeted by the advertisers, being at fashionable events and being envied for owning an automobile were largely part of the same impulse for the status-conscious professional managerial class (the PMC).

The message of the image and text combined was that the Ziegfeld audience was sophisticated and wealthy and that it was desirable to be part of this privileged audience—and further that to be set above even this enviable audience was to have the convenience of this car. The advertisement, then, encouraged the audience there on the opening night (and the whole first week during which this program was used) to identify with the couple approaching the car, as a way of enticing them to try the car for themselves. The ad thus sold an image of the *Follies* and the *Follies*' audience as much

as it did the car, and Ziegfeld clearly gained from being seen in such light. Furthermore, since this ad illustration of course had to be drawn in advance of opening night and the *Ziegfeld Follies* had had no comparable opening night—that is, during the fall theatrical season and inside a legitimate auditorium—the scene had to be entirely imagined (or at least made to look like other fall season openings). This was a complicated form of cross promotion because if one already had this program, then she or he had already purchased the one product, the show. And of course the primary goal of this ad was to sell automobiles. In doing so, however, it attempted to influence the way the audience saw itself, and thus it was also selling an image (and/or reinforcing an image) of the show itself that was crucial to the way Ziegfeld wanted his production to be seen.

As established as the *Ziegfeld Follies* were in 1911, how had they made such a seemingly significant jump by the sixth year of the show? How had Ziegfeld moved his production from an annual summer offering in a roof garden to a legitimate Broadway house, named after him no less, opening at least potentially with the fashionable first-night set in the crowd, and certainly up against the full onslaught of the new theatrical season? In this chapter, I examine how issues of place combined with theatrical business factors to impact the status-climb of the *Ziegfeld Follies*.

Location, Location, Location

Underlying Ziegfeld's business successes and changes in venue are the issues surrounding the meaning of location, especially class associations of place. As Marvin Carlson writes, "[t]he way an audience experiences and interprets a play, we now recognize, is by no means governed solely by what happens on the stage. The entire theatre, its audience arrangements, its other public spaces, its physical appearance, even

its location within a city, are all important elements of the process by which an audience makes meaning of its experience."[2] As such, the location within the city (New York City), within a particular district (Times Square), the building itself (the New York Theatre, the Jardin de Paris on its roof, and, later, the New Amsterdam), and the environment created within those buildings were significant to the public perception of the *Ziegfeld Follies*. Such issues of place are outlined by Carlson in *Places of Performance*, contextualized by the contributors to *Inventing Times Square*, and are the subject of study in the growing discipline of critical geography.[3] Indeed, critical geographers have focused attention on how broader political-economic social forces driven largely by the forces of capitalist accumulation shape the architectural formations of cities which often serve to propagate the power relations that reinforce that capitalist exploitation; in other words, critical geographers are concerned with how the politics of place facilitated class hierarchies in locations such as, in this case, the Times Square theatre district.

Crucial to the work of all these scholars is the idea that no particular space is neutral or void of significance. It is not just that Times Square signified as an entertainment district within New York City, nor that Times Square grew out of the specific historical context of land speculation, newspaper competition, railroad regulation

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[2] Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 2.

[3] William R. Taylor, ed., *Inventing Times Square: Commerce and Culture at the Crossroads of the World* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1991). For critical geography, see, for example, James Duncan and David Ley, eds., *Place/Culture/ Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1993) along with the many works of Neil Smith and David Harvey. In addition, Richard Ohmann examines place and the Professional Managerial Class in *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996).

and subway construction. All of that is true. On a more micro level, however, individual streets and even buildings within the Times Square district conferred different cultural values on the enterprises taking place within, values reflecting the history of particular buildings, the entrepreneurs and businesses backing them, and those of the neighboring enterprises surrounding the building on the block. Even within the same building there were comparatively legitimate spaces and more liminal ones, imbuing performances appearing within those spaces corresponding levels of cachet. Here, theatres were clearly markers of the power dynamics that existed, and all these aspects shaped the theatergoer's experiences and positioned them within these hierarchical class relations.

Of course, even prior to the advent of Times Square, New York City was the theatrical capital of the country. The development of the railroad made touring theatrical productions a profitable enterprise and New York was the place where such productions were assembled and sold. As the result of this positioning (which in turn reinforced the situation), B. F. Keith and Edward F. Albee moved their United Booking Office there from their New England starting point, Marc Klaw and A. L. Erlanger centered their Theatrical Trust there, and Sam, Lee, and J.J. Shubert relocated to New York from where their business began upstate. It was not unusual, then, that after Ziegfeld's start in Chicago with the success of his Trocadero show during the World's Columbian Exposition and his subsequent tour with the Great Sandow, he too relocated to New York to advance his producing career.

Many historians of theatre and of this city have traced the move of theatres uptown as the city grew. The move of theatres to Times Square, however, differed from the other moves; instead of following the trade, the move to Times Square was a jump

ahead of audiences and other related businesses. Indeed, the move of these theatres was more about real estate speculation than the flow of audience and fashion. As geographer David Harvey notes, "Times Square in New York City was built up as a pure piece of real estate and business speculation around the creation of a new entertainment district in the 1890s."[4] The speculation continued in subsequent decades, as commented upon in the *New York Tribune* in 1912. Here "Theatres on the Jump" began with a narrative of speculation: a theatre considered by many to be a "losing venture" because of its location at the northern edge of the Times Square district had, with a long run of a successful play, not only proved detractors wrong but had spawned even more growth. As the paper reported, "[a]nother theatre on the same street is now almost ready for opening, and two more are being built." The article continued, "[i]t is interesting to note that there are now thirty-five theatres either finished or in the course of construction, in the district between 38th and 48th streets and Sixth and Eighth avenues, not counting the Hippodrome, which is across the street. According to A. H. Woods, proprietor of the new Eltinge theatre, this is four more than could be found in all New York a dozen years ago."[5]

Fueling this theatre boom, in 1904 the new subway system began to feed the district with people ready to be entertained. Harvey writes, "Times Square rose to prominence as the modern metropolitan New York of five boroughs and sprawling suburbs began to take shape. Its rise coincided with an extraordinary boom in real-estate speculation; with the coming of mass-transit systems which changed the whole nature of

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[4] David Harvey, "From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity," *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, Ed. Jon Bird, et al. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 17.

[5] *New York Tribune,* 7 July 1912, sec. IV, p. 2.

space relations between people within the city."[6] Thus, despite the Anderson automobile ad cited above—or in addition to it—key to the development of Times Square was the subway. While of course the subway was not just the domain of the PMC, it did link the PMC commuters, who traveled daily to the traditional Wall Street business district and the new midtown business district, with this entertainment district. Times Square, in terms of infrastructure, was the place where the economic opportunities of the city intersected with the new respectability of the fashionable suburb.

Passing through the transportation facilities of this location was one thing; adding the location to the PMC's "axis of respectability" was another.[7] In *Selling Culture*, Richard Ohmann emphasizes the ways the PMC "negotiated, appropriated, created, were shaped by, and gave meaning to social space in these new urban matrices." Citing Richard A. Walker, Ohmann explains that

> "classes are necessarily constituted in and through the use of space," though of course not only in that way. Space, in this sense, is both a social product and a powerful determinant of social process; it is "the outcome of past actions," and "what permits fresh actions to occur," or prohibits them. This is obviously the case of, for instance, a factory or a school; but everywhere, social space "implies, contains and dissimulates social relations"; or, as another writer [Henri Lefebvre] puts it, everywhere "relations of power…are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life," just as people use the power they have to shape spatiality and conform it to their needs.[8]

Ohmann encourages thinking of the "ensemble" of "various settings of interaction – locales – from individual rooms to suburban homes, to the suburbs themselves and on 'out' to other urban and more distant sites frequented and made significant by PMC

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[6] Harvey, 18.

[7] Ohmann, 159.

[8] Ibid., 123.

people" and "the ways they are articulated into regions and zoned for social practices, their social definitions, their valuations, and their uses as a complex PMC social space, within the far more complex social space of whole cities, the nation, and the world."[9] The prestige to be garnered from legitimate theatre meant that the PMC would put Times Square on its map. Further enticing this status-conscious class was the opportunity to "see and be seen" at these theatres and the best restaurants in the area.[10]

This spectating spectacle was key to Times Square, a place Harvey describes where all the classes gathered, if not to interact with each other, then to interact with the spectacle in the presence of each other. This interaction was what Times Square meant to the city. Harvey writes:

> What seems to have been so special about Times Square in its halcyon days was that it was a public space in which all classes of society could intermingle: as a classless (or rather a multiclass) place, it had the potential to be the focus of a sense of community which recognized difference but which also celebrated unity. The demi-monde rubbed shoulders with the aristocracy; immigrants of all sorts could share the spectacle; and the democracy of money appeared to be in charge. But community in this instance was not shaped by face-to-face interaction: it was achieved by the act of a common presence in the face of the spectacle, a spectacle which was shamelessly about the community of money and the commodification of everything.[11]

Harvey writes that the crowds came

> throughout the year to sample the entertainments, watch people, eat out, survey the latest fashions and pick up gossip or information on anything from business and real estate deals to latest trends in entertainment and the private lives of eminent people. Soon the square became the centre of an advertising spectacle which in itself drew in the crowds. Times Square was, in short, created as a representation of everything that could be

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 158.

[11] Harvey, 18-19.

> commercial, gaudy, promotional and speculative in the political economy of place construction.[12]

A multiclass space the streets and sidewalks of the intersection may well have been, but despite Harvey's reference to the "democracy of money," money, of course, bought access to a greater variety of entertainments and resulting prestige within that space, from restaurants and theatres to roof-top combinations of the two. As Ohmann points out, "[d]isruption of an older spatiality left PMC people, like everyone else, to seek identity and distinction by using whatever resources they possessed in market transactions."[13] Indeed, despite Harvey's idealized community existing in the face of the spectacle of Times Square, social divisions were very much demarcated. For example, the Anderson car ad discussed above demonstrated that upper classes including the PMC could use their resources to avoid such shoulder-rubbing, choosing instead to enjoy the spectacle from the convenience and exclusivity of a private car.

Locating Burlesque, Vaudeville, and Cabaret

Despite its strong associations with the term "Broadway," legitimate theatre did not have a monopoly on show business in Times Square. In the first chapter, I argued that Ziegfeld repackaged vaudeville as the *Follies* to sell it to the PMC. By repositioning his productions within the cultural hierarchy, Ziegfeld could attract an audience less willing to attend even refined vaudeville. Nonetheless, big time vaudeville was also very much present in Times Square. As Robert Snyder writes, an "aerial photograph of the New York City vaudeville scene taken at its height, around 1915" would look like a "cultural nerve system" centering at Times Square, "site of the prestigious Palace Theatre, the

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[12] Ibid., 17-18.

[13] Ohmann, 127.

United Booking Office, and the Loew vaudeville offices."[14] Indeed, it was such a prime location that the businessmen of the U.B.O. negotiated numerous treaties with Oscar Hammerstein and other variety house owners and producers like Martin Beck to prevent damaging competition within the district.[15] Advertisements for these houses in the *New York Tribune* usually appeared below (and/or to the right of) advertisements for the Syndicate's and Shuberts' legitimate houses and productions. Here, again, the relative status of theatre forms was made clear visually by the relative placement of ads in this prominent newspaper.

Below vaudeville on the theatrical hierarchy was burlesque. While Patrice Pavis defines burlesque as an "exaggerated form of the comic, using trivial expressions to speak of the noble or elevated, making a travesty of a serious genre by using grotesque or vulgar pastiche," Robert Allen details how burlesque at the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States was very much a changed and changing form, having shifted from the days of the *Black Crook* in New York society of the 1860s (a production very much in line with Pavis's definition) to the shows attracting the working class male audiences of the Eastern and Western wheels (burlesque counterparts to the U.B.O.'s vaudeville circuits) forty plus years later.[16] At this point, burlesque did not yet have the strong striptease connotations now associated with the term, but it certainly was

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[14] Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (1989; reprint, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 82.

[15] See, for example, Snyder, 74.

[16] Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, trans. Christine Shantz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 40, and Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 192 and 237.

considered lowbrow variety, and thus was not on the PMC's axis of respectability. Nor was it prominent in either Times Square or the *New York Tribune*, with the notable exception of the Columbia, at Broadway and 47th Street, which made a point of advertising itself by emphasizing the difference between its audience and that of the remainder of burlesque: "Come and see the fashionable crowds that come to see these great shows!"[17] Burlesque became a noticeable—though still not respected—presence in this theatre district only later in the twenties and thirties as it filled many otherwise empty theatres after the theatre building boom and during the Depression.

Unlike vaudeville and burlesque, cabaret was a newcomer to the entertainment scene in Times Square. Despite the presence of cabarets and a café culture in Europe, Lewis Erenberg traces the development of cabarets in New York from origins in tavern shows and rathskellers. He writes, "The cabaret first reached beyond the vice districts to the attention of respectable New Yorkers in the spring of 1911 when Henry B. Harris and Jesse Lasky, two vaudeville entrepreneurs, opened the Folies Bergere Theater on Forty-ninth Street in the heart of the theatre district."[18] Defined first primarily by late night entertainment in an intimate setting, cabarets became inseparable from the new dance craze, mixing performances with opportunities for patrons to dance and thereby creating what Erenberg identifies as an "action environment" in which entertainment becomes

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[17] *New York Tribune*, 20 October 1912, sec. V, p. 4. Also, see the advertisement for the Columbia in the *New York Tribune*, 4 June 1911, sec. V, p. 2.

[18] Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 114 - 115.

active rather than passive.[19] Cabarets quickly became a big part of the entertainment offered by restaurants and hotels in Times Square and the midtown area, joining big-time vaudeville and the Columbia's "advanced" burlesque as Ziegfeld's neighbors in the ever expanding Times Square theatre district.

Locating the Revue Competition

Ziegfeld's move downstairs and inside the renamed New York Theatre was not without some precedent from his revue competitors. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ziegfeld worked to make the environment in which the *Follies* appeared match and reinforce the brand image he was establishing; he did this initially by renaming the roof garden in 1907 and then by renovating and redecorating the Jardin de Paris regularly while it was home to the *Follies*, demonstrating an awareness of the importance of environment on audience perceptions. Meanwhile, Ziegfeld's competitors provided models for different performance environments. The Shubert brothers used their Winter Garden Theatre—advertising it as a roof garden on the ground floor—as a venue for their various revues instead of their primary roof space on top of the Casino. These Shubert decisions combined with the Syndicate's increased use of the New Amsterdam's main auditorium for theatre aimed at summer crowds, with shows like Frederic Thomson's *Girlies*, ultimately made Ziegfeld the odd man out in maintaining a roof location.

It was not that Broadway roof gardens were no longer popular; however, they did have real limitations.[20] For example, in adapting to new trends in 1911, Ziegfeld attempted a cabaret at the end of the evening as part of that year's *Follies*. The *Tribune*

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[19] For an in depth explanation of "action environment" see Erenberg, 132.

[20] See Stephen Burge Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres, 1883-1942* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985).

gave the cabaret portion of the show a mediocre review: "About the best was Fred Brown singing 'Whip-Poor-Will,' with difficulty, the Roof being too large. The size of the up-stairs theatre affected considerable [sic] in the performance, especially the singers."[21] Why would a space suitable for a revue be unsuitable for a cabaret? Cabarets involved more interaction, more intimacy, and differed from revues, especially roof-top revues, which were more about catching a breeze and relaxing while watching the spectacle. There was more at work here than just the size and atmosphere of the Jardin de Paris. Cabarets, as I discuss in more detail later in this dissertation, were disruptive to the status quo; they did not fit neatly into the burlesque – vaudeville – revue – musical theatre – comedy – drama hierarchy. Ultimately, renaming and redecorating the roof garden and even attempting a cabaret stopped short of the status Ziegfeld wanted.

Meanwhile, the short-lived Folies Bergere in 1911 raised the bar for performance environments, competing much in the way Ziegfeld aspired to by using its surroundings to enhance its status. The May 6, 1911, issue of *Variety* included a review of the newly opened Folies Bergere, critiquing the show, the establishment, and the type of variety entertainment. In general, the critic thought that both of the shows, the evening "revue," which consisted of "two burlesques and a ballet," and the late night "'cabaret' or vaudeville performance," needed additional work, but he liked the concept of the theatre and the style of the establishment. He wrote:

> The theatrical profession, knowing of burlesque and "Advanced Burlesque" (as the better class of that style of entertainment has been termed for the past few years) will call the new show at the Folies Bergere burlesque, also. But it is a burlesque show of the highest type. The idea of the Folies entertainment at the Folies is…a smattering of musical

[21] "Follies of 1911," *Variety*, 1 July 1911, 20.

> comedy, vaudeville and burlesque under the captions of "revue," "travesty," "burlesque" or even "cabaret."
>
> The "revue" sort of show, familiar to Paris where it has become recognized as an institution, has been introduced to New York this season for the first time. That is excepting the series of "Follies by years," as practiced by F. Ziegfeld, Jr., …the former light shows given at Weber & Fields' music hall, and the very old, but still remembered (and talked about) Koster & Bial's.[22]

The critic continued by calling the revue type of entertainment a "very good thing." This passage, especially the description of revues as burlesque shows "of the highest type," underscores the essential emptiness and arbitrariness of these labels and classifications of variety entertainment. Here especially, they have little meaning other than associative—that is, reminding people of previous entertainment categorized by the same label, and as such, clearly the "revue" sort of show is not new to New York despite this establishment's hyperbolic claims otherwise. In particular, one Folies Bergere number, "March of the New York Clubs," drew direct comparisons with a *Ziegfeld Follies* hit from two years previous: "It's a companion member to the 'Battleship' march from 'The Follies of 1909.' With the 'Battleships,' 'Colleges,' and 'Clubs,' perhaps the series is exhausted."[23] Thus this number in addition to indicating an audience that would even recognize what the clubs were was merely a variation of a Ziegfeld original. The progression is fascinating: these marches became significantly more exclusive in their subject matter requiring increasingly specialized, hierarchical, inside knowledge.

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[22] "The Folies Bergere," *Variety*, 6 May 1911, 23. Of note, at the end of the review, the critic gives various credits for the Folies Bergere, one of which is "Walter J. Kingsley, who with much judgment created the great interest in the venture before it opened, is the press department," 25.

[23] Ibid., 25.

Just as this number pointed to a rarified audience, many of the details in this *Variety* review point to an image of exclusivity created to surround that audience in the Folies Bergere. The cost of admission to the 700 seat Folies Bergere varied from box to restaurant chairs (of which there were only 286) to balcony, and from the first show to the cabaret. In general, however, the tickets were more expensive than those charged by Ziegfeld and his counterparts. More intriguing than the relatively few seats and the correspondingly higher ticket prices was the menu which was "wholly printed in French," assuming as it did that the patrons were French literate and thus flattering even to those who were not.[24] And as I mentioned in the previous chapter, associations with French culture were pervasive in lending prestige to clothing, food or entertainment.

In addition to the intimate space, the high prices and the French menu, the decoration added to the image of sophisticated exclusivity: "The ground floor of the Folies, with its dainty furnishings, pretty coloring and a general tone which leads one away from the 'theatre,' gave the impression of a large house party."[25] With such an impression, proprietors Harris and Lasky were beating (or attempting to beat) Ziegfeld at his own game: they somewhat dubiously claimed originality while simultaneously emphasized French origins, and they used terms, charged prices and created an environment which signaled exclusivity and sophistication.

Such an environment had an impact on audience expectations, expectations that in this case were not met. The production as a whole did not deliver, despite the *Variety* critic's assessment that "[b]etter or more lavishly costumed productions have never been

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[24] Ibid., 23.

[25] Ibid.

shown." For example, this critic reported that "Brice and King slipped down hard. Their style was too reminiscent of others to win out among the '$2.50' crowd on hand."[26] The audience and the expectations generated by such an exclusive and sophisticated place were clearly higher than elsewhere in variety, and anything reminding the audience of older variety formats potentially burst the fashionable status bubble created by the environment the Folies Bergere backers had spent so much to generate.

The implications of location extend beyond the literal geographic location within the city and beyond the physical environment created at that geographical location: the location of an offering within a newspaper's many entertainment advertisements also had an impact on audiences' expectations. On June 4, 1911, the Folies Bergere ad was included in the "New York's Leading Theatres and Successes"—the Klaw and Erlanger advertisement box.[27] This placement indicated that the Syndicate was invested, at least to some degree, in the Folies Bergere. Its advertisement here implied that at the very least some sort of deal had been made because the Klaw and Erlanger box occupied prime advertisement space in the *New York Tribune* appearing first, followed by the Shuberts' box. If the Folies Bergere operated outside either of these two production realms, the ad would be placed literally below the Shuberts' with Hammerstein's and others, a much less desirable location on the page and one that indicated that it was a lesser choice than the many other options available to the potential audiences.

Despite its bold attempt at leap-frogging into a place of stature in the New York social landscape, the Folies Bergere did not last long as a threat to Ziegfeld; the

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[26] Ibid., 25.

[27] *New York Tribune*, 4 June 1911, sec. V, p. 2.

establishment did not make a go of it, hemorrhaging money and closing rather quickly.[28] Before it did, however, this enterprise raised audience expectations for the atmosphere in which revues were performed, and it is probably not a coincidence that just one year later Ziegfeld moved his *Follies* downstairs and inside.

Ziegfeld's Change in Tactics

Ziegfeld's competition, most notably from the Folies Bergere, and the new dance craze demanded a response from Ziegfeld. Still located for the time being on the roof of the New York Theatre, Ziegfeld flirted with changes in the structure of the *Follies* as a way of answering the up-market competition. First, in May 1911—shortly after the Folies Bergere opened—he announced that the *Ziegfeld Follies* would be different that year because it would have a "sustained" plot, as opposed, one assumes, to the loose and often abandoned plot of most *Follies*. The presence of a plot automatically placed a production on the theatrical hierarchy closer to legitimate theatre and away from variety performance. The announcement in *Variety* called the upcoming *Follies* "practically a musical comedy" though still "interspersed with a series of novelties accumulated for some time past."[29] While such a change was an intriguing attempt by Ziegfeld to increase his show's status, the promised plot did not materialize when the show opened in June.

Instead, as I mentioned above, Ziegfeld attempted a different structural change. The June 18, 1911, *Ziegfeld Follies* ad in the *Tribune* announced a "Cabaret Show," beginning at "11:15 Sharp," described as "Not From Paris But The Real Thing From San

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[28] Erenberg, 116.

[29] "The Ziegfeld Show," *Variety*, 10 June 1911, 4.

Francisco 'The Barbary Coast.'" A large box at the bottom of the advertisement explains "One Ticket For Both Shows. No Increase In Regular Prices—$1, $1.50, $2."[30] This change is clearly in response to the Folies Bergere, which then was advertised as "More Parisian Than Paris." Ziegfeld copied the late night cabaret format but distinguished his product by emphasizing the San Francisco point of origin of many of the currently popular dances, rather than the Parisian origin of the cabaret.[31] In other words, Ziegfeld was responding to the competition by both copying its successes and simultaneously positioning himself as an innovator.

The note under the "Musical Plays" subhead in the *New York Tribune* the next week provided more information. Sounding like it was straight out of Ziegfeld's publicity machine, the note, in part, read:

> What is said to be a genuine novelty is "The Barbary Coast," depicting life in the San Francisco slums. In addition to these features, Mr. Ziegfeld will provide two distinct entertainments for one admission, with no advance in prices. Besides the regular "Follies," beginning at 8:20 p.m., there will be a cabaret show, starting at about 11 p.m. This feature is said to be the real thing from San Francisco—not Paris.[32]

I do think this reporter got it wrong in making the Barbary Coast number (a "novelty") sound separate from the Cabaret Show; it is my understanding from the program that they were one and the same. At any rate, this novelty-cabaret did not achieve the intended effect. The *Variety* critic wrote, "Closing came what had been press agented as a 'Cabaret Show,' running about eighteen minutes. It was the last scene of the regular performance with a ten-minute intermission to make the 'Cabaret' billing good. Called

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[30] *New York Tribune,* 25 June 1911, sec. IV, p. 3.

[31] See, for example, Erenberg, 163.

[32] "Musical Plays," *New York Tribune*, 25 June 1911, sec. IV, p. 3.

'New Year's Eve on the Barbary Coast,' the 'Cabaret' was a 'rag' jubilee, with little doing."[33] Note that Ziegfeld did not quite manage the cabaret format successfully; instead, in this reviewer's assessment, he took his last scene, inserted an intermission, and simply attached the word "cabaret" to the whole project. The critic concluded then with his comment about the garden being too large for the singers, cited above. Besides a fascinating use of "press agent" as a transitive verb, this review made clear that while Ziegfeld had renovated and renovated, the Jardin de Paris was not suited for the direction entertainment was headed at this point: cabaret. It was not intimate enough for this newly popular form of entertainment and a move was needed if Ziegfeld was to carry these attempts at change through successfully.

The *Passing Show*

Despite the Folies Bergere and the numerous attempts by the Shuberts and others to compete with the *Ziegfeld Follies*, it was not until 1912 that Ziegfeld had regular, successful opposition for the *Follies*—the Shuberts' *Passing Shows*. Just looking at the years one might assume that the Shubert show was good enough in 1912 to launch a series, something they had not been able to do before. However, Ziegfeld indirectly aided the Shuberts' efforts here because he did not directly compete with their revue until the third week in October.

Both the Shuberts and Ziegfeld were busy in the summer of 1912, but the publicity war was definitely won by the Shuberts, or rather by choreographer Ned Wayburn, one of the Shubert weapons in the launching of the *Passing Show*. The 1912 summer publicity featured Wayburn as the epicenter of the chorus girl scene. For

[33] "Follies of 1911," *Variety*, 1 July 1911, 20.

example, much was made of the Shubert chorus girls learning to swim so as to accompany Annette Kellerman in a burlesque of the harem in *Kismet*, including a cartoon of men in suits and shirtsleeves instructing chorus girls from the edge of a pool.[34] In another example, a lighthearted article headed "A Ned Wayburn Séance" reported on the creation and preparation of the *Passing Show*. It was not a particularly informative article but was conspicuously placed just beside the "Amusements" ads in a Sunday *New York Tribune* to reinforce the ad for the show. In it, the writer used "art" with a wink and a nudge, as in "There was a lot of art on the stage. There were Claras and Mays that had so much of it in their systems that they just couldn't help playfully kicking it around." Of Wayburn, the writer noted, "Mr. Wayburn has such a widespread reputation for inventing odd musical feature effects that the Shuberts have found it expedient to protect themselves from possible loss by conducting the rehearsals behind tall screens."[35]

In Wayburn, then, the Shuberts had stiff competition for Ziegfeld. Ziegfeld's production of *A Winsome Widow* was a success, but there was little buzz about it that summer; Wayburn and the *Passing Show* were getting all the attention. Even after the *Passing Show* opened, the Shuberts found it useful to keep Wayburn at the center of publicity. In the Sunday, August 18, 1912, *Tribune*, an article titled "Asked 2,000 Girls To Call On Him" was entirely about Ned Wayburn recruiting and selecting chorus members for future Shubert shows.[36] Eventually Ziegfeld hired Wayburn to his side, but at this particular moment, Ziegfeld was not in charge nor was he the focal point of revue discourse. And despite the *Follies*-esque "75—Wonderful Chorus—75" in the *Widow*

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[34] *New York Tribune*, 5 July 1912, 7, and 14 July 1912, sec. IV, p. 2.

[35] *New York Tribune*, 7 July 1912, sec. IV, p. 3.

[36] *New York Tribune*, 18 August 1912, sec. IV, p. 2.

advertisements and the one announcement in the *Tribune* about *Follies* chorus auditions, Wayburn was out-showgirling Ziegfeld.[37]

Venue and venue changes

Nonetheless, the year had been a busy and successful one for Ziegfeld. All during the spring and summer of 1912, he was occupied with the extended run of his production at the New York Theatre—now renamed the Ziegfeld Moulin Rouge, both in keeping with the French-themed Jardin de Paris on its roof and as an indication of the producer's successes at that location.[38] Apparently the structure of *A Winsome Widow*, a new version of *A Trip to Chinatown*, was loose enough to incorporate new novelties regularly, including a crowd-pleasing ice skating number, along with an attractive chorus, and thus served as the light summer variety fare Ziegfeld was known for providing.[39]

The *Follies* were not completely forgotten, though the show's profile was very low during the months it usually ran. This passage from the Saturday, July 6, 1912, *New York Tribune* was the only reference to the *Follies* in the *Tribune's* "Theatrical Notes" column in the 1912 summer months:

> F. Ziegfeld, jr., will begin on Monday the selection of the chorus for his 1912 "Follies," which are expected to succeed "The Winsome Widow" [sic] at the Moulin Rouge. Mr. Ziegfeld's personally selected choruses are always renowned for their beauty.[40]

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[37] See for example, *New York Tribune*, 7 July 1912, sec. IV, p. 3.

[38] "Theatres on the Jump," *New York Tribune*, 7 July 1912, sec. IV, p. 2.

[39] See, for example, "Musical Plays," *New York Tribune* 7 July 1912, sec. IV, p. 2. Charles Hoyt wrote *A Trip to Chinatown* (1891) and Raymond Hubbell was credited with the music for *A Winsome Widow*: Richard Ziegfeld and Paulette Ziegfeld, *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993), 237.

[40] "Theatrical Notes," *New York Tribune*, 6 July 1912, 7.

Ziegfeld had producing successes with other shows before the *Follies* series began; what was different with the success of *Widow* was that *his* reputation was growing as opposed to that of his former star Anna Held—who essentially disappeared—and this increase in Ziegfeld's stature was reflected by the theatre being at least unofficially named after the producer himself. The New York Theatre was now the Ziegfeld Moulin Rouge, and though Ziegfeld probably renamed it himself, he would have had to have the blessing of his backers (and theatre owners) in the Theatrical Trust.[41] Combined with the *Follies* now also bearing his name, this theatre name change demonstrated both that his star was rising and that he intended to keep his name in the public eye.

This "Theatrical Notes" piece, then, announced the winding down of the *Widow* as much as it did the gearing up of the *Follies* and served as a reminder to prospective audiences how Ziegfeld garnered a name for himself. One additional motivation for this *Follies* announcement should be mentioned. Shubert productions, particularly revues, regularly got Ziegfeld into a very competitive spirit, as detailed in the first chapter, and it was very likely that all the publicity about the first edition of the *Passing Show* complete with its swimming chorus was too much for Ziegfeld to let pass without answer. This passage then served to remind the public of Ziegfeld's past successes producing the *Follies*, whetted the appetite for a new *Follies*, emphasized Ziegfeld's controlling artistic touch, increased the desire to see his newly handpicked chorus, and responded to the challenge—at least in part and for a start—presented by the Shuberts with the *Passing Show*.

[41] See, for example, the ad for *A Winsome Widow*, *New York Tribune* 1 May 1912, 16.

Likewise the subject matter of the passage, the selection of the *Follies* chorus, refreshed the memory of those likely to attend the *Follies*' new edition. It was not an accident that Ziegfeld's personal involvement in the selection of the chorus became a standard part of the *Follies* discourse from roughly this point forward. Perhaps this part of the Ziegfeld discourse was more important at this point since Ziegfeld had become the brand name and a theatre name: he needed to emphasize through blurbs like these that his personal artistic touch was at work in the making of these shows—to prove that they had not become depersonalized or corporate. After all, the *Follies* were key to the Ziegfeld brand and the chorus was key to the *Follies* brand. What were the *Follies* without the chorus? What were the *Follies* without Ziegfeld?

Ziegfeld's successful production of *A Winsome Widow* continued its run well into the time when the sixth edition of the *Follies* would have been expected, or at the very least would have been in preparation.[42] This announcement, however, which was at least as much publicity as it was a call for chorus auditions, made clear that the chorus had not been selected and thus that any production preparations were in nascent stages. Further, even at this relatively early point in the summer, it made clear that Ziegfeld was planning on moving the show inside downstairs. The announcement, however, was not about this seemingly significant change, and indeed included the information as merely a clause, a further detail, to the subject of the announcement, the famous Ziegfeld chorus.

What would it mean to have a successful summer rooftop show open amid the full onslaught of the new fall season as opposed to the remains of the past season and other

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[42] See "Musical Plays," *New York Tribune*, 7 July 1912, sec. IV, p. 2: "'A Winsome Widow,' at the Ziegfeld Moulin Rouge, continues to attract record breaking audiences….Besides the principals mentioned there is a typical Ziegfeld beauty chorus."

summer revues as was the case in the summer months? What would it mean to have the audience seated in a regular auditorium instead of the varied and less formal seating of the roof?

As seen in the Anderson Car Company advertisement, this 1912 October opening put the *Ziegfeld Follies* squarely in *the* New York season, thereby potentially increasing its credibility and its status. The *New York Tribune* ran a very positive review of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1912* which finally premiered October 21, 1912. Conspicuously, the *Tribune* critic made no comment about this summer show being out of place this late in the fall. Nor was there any reference to the show's opening downstairs in the New York Theatre instead of on the roof. It is as if it were perfectly natural for the *Ziegfeld Follies* to open at this time and in this location.

Even while the timing and location of the opening of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1912* seemed to underscore the legitimacy of the production, or perhaps because of this movement toward legitimacy, the review in the *Tribune* commented on the relatively lowbrow source of the show, even referring to it in one of the sub-headlines of the article as a "Burlesque de Luxe." As the *Tribune* critic explained:

> So the follies are not only those of our own year of grace—or disgrace, as the burlesquers pointed it out to be last night. For 'The Follies of 1912' is a burlesque show, a burlesque de luxe. Some keen eye in roving up and down Broadway and along the outskirts of theatredom has detected the joy that prevails among audiences at the burlesques. It was snappy work to plan a first class edition of the same kind of show, dress it gorgeously, flood it with splendor, sparkle it with a more grown-up kind of fun, people it with youth and cleverness and turn it loose. It went like wildfire last night, and without a doubt in the world will continue to do so as long as the inimitable producer, Mr. Ziegfeld, chooses to keep it on the boards.[43]

[43] "Follies of 1912," *New York Tribune*, 22 October 1912, 9. Note that the critic predicted that the length of the run was Ziegfeld's choice, no doubt a position of envy among theatrical producers of all types.

Even though the critic acknowledged the repackaging of the material, he used four variations on the word "burlesque" in just this passage alone. Especially noteworthy here, in the context of location and place, is the reference to "outskirts of theatredom," presumably referring to some place real or imagined outside both the Times Square theatre district and the PMC's axis of respectability. The "keen eye" of Ziegfeld repackaged and relocated burlesque so it was acceptable for the PMC's consumption; he took it from its place of origin in neighborhoods and districts intolerable to the PMC and brought it to a place acceptable for them to see and be seen seeing it.

These *Tribune* references were not condescending labels, however; instead the use of burlesque in the show seemed to be considered refreshing. Later in the review, the critic added this assessment: "It has the impromptu spirit and puts every one in the café-cabaret-general-roughhouse mood." This atmosphere was clearly what was desired. How did this depiction of the *Follies* as a "burlesque," a "cabaret," and a "roughhouse"—whether positively received and "first class" or not—contrast with the image of the *Follies* audience put forth in the car ad? And why did the critic not mention the legitimate location and the legitimately-timed premiere, but did mention the comparatively illegitimate lowbrow sources and associations of the show? Indeed, according to this review, the show seemed fashionable and upwardly mobile—at least in part—precisely because of its lowbrow origins.

The opening number of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1912* provides an opportunity to explore this high-low paradox. This *Follies* began when popular comedian Leon Errol came onto the stage in the role of the Manager and asked the audience what it wanted "in

the way of entertainment." A "first-nighter" answered "a song and dance!" and according to the *New York Tribune* theatre critic,

> This is supplied, after which criticism is hurled at the act from various parts of the audience. A gallery boy and a Frenchman in an orchestra chair become involved in a yelling match, which drowns out everything else, and the gallery boy starts to climb down the side of the house to strangle his foe. He is dragged back by his "girl." Both come downstairs and go on stage to give a Bowery dance, a bit of characteristic type work that is capital.[44]

While the *New York Dramatic Mirror* dismissed this opening bit as "a lot of noise about nothing," [45] I argue instead that it mirrored the relationship between Ziegfeld's annual revue and the reigning cultural hierarchy. The French audience member in an expensive seat can be seen to signify high culture and the Bowery boy to represent the low culture of popular entertainment; here, at least, the struggle ironically ended with the low culture performing or, rather, being performed for the benefit of the man from France and other fashionable higher-brow sophisticates in their orchestra chairs. The number was thus a witty and self-reflexive way to introduce variety show standards—a song and dance and a "bit of characteristic type work"—and in doing so offered a way to frame the *Follies*' particular form of variety so that it could be considered by those in the auditorium as above and apart from vaudeville, not to mention burlesque. The audience, caught between the French man in the orchestra and the Bowery Boy in the balcony, was neither

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[44] *New York Tribune*, 22 October 1912, 9. The cast in order of their appearance was "Manager" Leon Errol, "Theatre-Goer" Charles Scribner, "Song and Dance Men" Max Scheck and Charles Gilmore, and "A Gallery Boy" Harry Watson, Jr. Watson, a popular comedian, would have been recognizable by many in the audience, mitigating any genuine concern over the interruption and conflict that ensued. *Ziegfeld Follies of 1912*, Clippings File, NYPLPA.

[45] "Ziegfeld Follies," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, 23 October 1912, 6.

stereotypically high nor traditionally low, and Ziegfeld clearly assumed that they would side with this European and yet still want to see the Bowery dance.

Delaying the opening of the *Follies* until after the *Widow* ended its Broadway run, which it did in early September 1912, meant two changes in the revue business: first, it left the Shuberts free of any direct competition from Ziegfeld when they opened their first edition of the *Passing Show* series; and, second, it meant that Ziegfeld opened the *Follies* in the fall with the theatrical season in full swing, thus putting the *Follies* in direct competition with new dramatic fare. Ziegfeld's success with and distraction by the *Widow* gave the Shuberts a foothold, a chance to get the *Passing Shows* going without direct revue competition from Ziegfeld. So in the first year that Ziegfeld had direct competition by another big annual revue, Ziegfeld proved that the *Follies* could hold their own, not only against other revues, but in a legitimate auditorium against a full slate of Broadway productions.

The New Amsterdam

The move downstairs in the New York Theatre—the Ziegfeld Moulin Rouge—was just the first of two significant venue changes Ziegfeld made in two years. In 1913, eight months after the *Follies*' legitimately-timed opening at the Moulin Rouge, Ziegfeld moved the *Follies* to the New Amsterdam, Klaw and Erlanger's flagship theatre. Just as the 1912 move was motivated in part by business (i.e. the success of *A Winsome Widow*) and resulted in gains in stature, this second move advanced both the Syndicate's bottom line and Ziegfeld's class aspirations.

Despite the name changes and the relative legitimacy of a street level auditorium as compared to a roof garden, the whole New York Theatre complex was steeped in

variety history. Built by Oscar Hammerstein as the Olympia in 1895, a huge entertainment complex with a "rooftop, glass-enclosed theatre/cafe," it filled a block of Broadway frontage from 44th to 45th Streets.[46] This Hammerstein enterprise went under within four years (in typical Hammerstein fashion), and Klaw and Erlanger purchased the complex, renovating the auditorium into a conventional theatre with 1675 seats and renaming it the New York Theatre.[47]

The *Follies* could not have continued at the New York Theatre because William Morris took over the management in 1913.[48] It is not clear whether this lessee arrangement was made before or after the decision to move the *Follies* to the New Amsterdam, but in either case, the New York Theatre (as it was again called), home to the *Follies* whether on the roof or in the auditorium from the beginning, was no longer available to Ziegfeld. With Morris leasing that venue for another attempt at upscale variety, the mixed-bill associations of this particular location only could have been reinforced.

The New Amsterdam, in contrast, was built by Klaw and Erlanger as a legitimate theatre showplace. The New Amsterdam is a typical façade theatre as described by Carlson, differing only from other such theatres in that it also had a roof garden. Carlson writes that the façade of such theatres

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[46] William Morrison, *Broadway Theatres: History and Architecture* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1999), 25.

[47] Ibid., 26. Charles Frohman renamed a different part of the Olympia complex the Criterion and this complex was referred to by the Syndicate interests by these two different names and as two different theatres rather than the one structure it was originally.

[48] Ibid.

> might be not even a wall of the theatre proper but simply a public visual indication of a theatre's presence in the near vicinity, in fact giving access to a long passageway, as attractively decorated as the theatre could manage, leading to the actual theatre structure located, as it had often been from the seventeenth century onward, in the more open, inexpensive, and flexible space behind neighboring stores….This arrangement has often been used for façade theatres located on major thoroughfares where street space is in particularly high demand. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when Forty-second Street was booming, a façade on that street was so desirable that theatres (including the Liberty, the Lyric, and the Times Square) actually built on less fashionable and expensive Forty-first and Forty-third streets had extensions out to narrow facades to give them a Forty-second Street entrance.[49]

The New Amsterdam was just such a theatre, fronting the heart of the entertainment district, Forty-second Street just west of Seventh Avenue, and thus conveying the status of being in the center of the action. Opened in 1903 with 1702 seats, it was the "flagship of the Klaw & Erlanger empire."[50] As Stephen Johnson points out, Klaw and Erlanger rarely constructed theatres; rather, they took over the theatres of others (as was the case in the New York Theatre), or booked with other Syndicate members who owned theatres.

The New Amsterdam was different. It was built specifically to convey the stature, the power of the Klaw and Erlanger team, and as such its location on Forty-second Street was by very deliberate design. As historian Mary Henderson notes:

> The original lot owned by Klaw and Erlanger, measuring 150 feet wide and 100 feet deep, fronted 41st Street. By 1902, however, it was clear that 42nd Street was the preferred address for New York's best theatres. To secure the more prestigious location, the owners purchased an additional sliver of land on 42nd Street measuring 25 feet wide and 100 feet deep. By

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[49] Carlson, 108.

[50] Morrison, 41: "The New Amsterdam theatre complex had a unique arrangement, consisting of a narrow, ten-story office building on 42nd Street with auditorium and stage house in a separate structure 41st Street. The two buildings were linked by a hyphenlike one-story chamber at ground level and a bridge seven stories above the ground that gave access to the roof garden."

> connecting the two lots, it was possible to build straight through the 200-foot-deep plot from 41st to 42nd Streets.[51]

The building was not just a statement of the Syndicate's power, despite this prevailing narrative; it was a shrewd business investment. According to historian Betsy Blackmar, early in 1903 the *Real Estate Record and Building News* recommended office buildings "to offset the costs of development."[52] Given fire codes that "restricted the construction of theaters within multipurpose buildings," the two part design of the New Amsterdam not only garnered the prestige of a 42nd Street address, but also created a building structurally separate from the theatre, here a narrow ten story office building which could be revenue-producing office space.[53] In other words, again, business decisions worked hand in hand with and under the cover of what would otherwise be described as artistic decisions.

In addition to the desirable address, the interior of this theatre conveyed stature to all who attended or worked there. Morrison notes that "The stage was the largest ever designed for a legitimate theatre. It was sectioned into a series of elevator platforms and had a revolving turntable which allowed for spectacular scenic effects."[54] Such a stage allowed Ziegfeld and his production team to do much more with the staging and to

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[51] Mary Henderson, *New Amsterdam: The Biography of a Broadway Theatre* (NewYork: Hyperion, 1997), 22.

[52] Betsy Blackmar, "Uptown Real Estate and the Creation of Times Square," *Inventing Times Square: Commerce and Culture at the Crossroads of the World*, Ed. William R. Taylor, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 51-2.

[53] Ibid., 53.

[54] Morrison, 42.

increase production values as compared with the limited stage of the Jardin de Paris.[55] Furthermore, as Henderson notes, the auditorium and other public spaces were "among the most sophisticated, stylish, and technologically advanced in the world."[56] Decorated lavishly throughout in the art nouveau style (each box was adorned with designs based on a different flower), the New Amsterdam contained lobbies, lounges, and meeting rooms in rich wood and plaster painted in greens and golds.

The impact of such an environment on audiences can not be overstated. About such an enhanced experience attending theatre, Carlson writes, "Theatre has traditionally presented itself as a special experience set apart from everyday life, an experience not restricted to the actual performance but extending to the entire event structure of which the performance is a part, and the location of that event structure has often carried forward that image by displaying the symbols of elegance, pleasure, and high culture."[57] The theatre itself was a powerful promotion for the Syndicate: "Klaw and Erlanger had set out to build the best theatre money could buy, and the New Amsterdam announced to the world that they had had the resources and taste to do so."[58] The construction of the New Amsterdam, then, was a matter of conveying not just the power of money, but the power of "good taste." In demonstrating their taste, Klaw and Erlanger also gained distinction by going with art nouveau rather than the classical mode prevalent among

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[55] Such an increase in production values no doubt had an immediate impact on the perception of the *Follies*, but was particularly important beginning in 1915 with the addition of Joseph Urban to the Ziegfeld team, as I discuss further in the next chapter.

[56] Henderson, 11.

[57] Carlson, 164.

[58] Henderson, 37.

New York theatres; as such, they argued that they were powerful, sophisticated, and cutting edge.

Of course, a lavish environment on a fashionable street did not complete the experience of attending the theatre: finding the right match of production and location proved somewhat elusive. The New Amsterdam, according to Henderson, soon became both a source of pride and a source of difficulty for the Syndicate: "During the first few years of the New Amsterdam, the managers offered a wide array of productions, not merely to test the tastes of their audiences but also to discover what productions best suited the house."[59] Having such a beautiful building necessitated installing in it shows worthy of the surroundings; however, from opening night, the theatre itself received better reviews than did the performances on the stage. The Syndicate did not have sustained successes in the New Amsterdam and had difficulty knowing what to do with their showpiece.

The Syndicate's problem worked to Ziegfeld's advantage, assisting Ziegfeld's status climb by giving him a desirably lavish home for his *Follies*. This move worked much as in the case of *Theatre Magazine* discussed in the previous chapter by surrounding the *Follies* with a different environment, one that did not have variety associations and thus allowed the audience to see the show in a different light and on a higher position in the cultural hierarchy. Klaw and Erlanger's efforts to maximize its theatre resulted in Ziegfeld finding a more legitimate, beautiful, and technologically advanced home for the *Follies*, and this new home allowed him to extend his brand, as I discuss in the fourth chapter.

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[59] Ibid., 36.

From the beginning of the *Follies* in July 1907, the two Syndicate roof gardens, the New Amsterdam Aerial Roof Garden and the Jardin de Paris ("Atop New York & Criterion Theatres"), and the theatres below them were advertised together. The institutional hierarchy was obvious here, with the Aerial Garden ad more often appearing in the top of the Syndicate box with the Jardin de Paris ad covering the bottom half of the advertising box. I think that this was part of establishing the show—with the producers as well as with the audience. Once Ziegfeld demonstrated what he could do with the *Follies*, how he could get the show out and get the audience in year after year, the Syndicate let him have their primary house, their showplace, the New Amsterdam, and with it the top billing within their advertising space.

While Henderson makes it sound like part of a master plan, as if Klaw and Erlanger were just waiting for the right time to bring the *Follies* to the New Amsterdam, she does not acknowledge that the 1912 show proved it could play downstairs and inside nor does she mention that the New York Theatre was already leased in 1913.[60] She also does not account for the six years of successes the *Follies* had before they were moved to the New Amsterdam—a rather long try-out period, if that was what it was. Perhaps the Syndicate men still saw the show as variety and were reluctant to turn the New Amsterdam over to variety—since such a format change, despite the particular form and brand of variety, indicated a slip down the hierarchy and a business failure (or at the very least a lack of success). The situation in Times Square was changing, however, especially with the 1913 opening of the vaudeville showplace, the Palace Theatre. Despite whatever frustrated hopes Klaw and Erlanger had for the New Amsterdam, Ziegfeld and

[60] Henderson says that in 1913 the show "was deemed ready for its debut at the New Amsterdam Theatre," 81.

his backers could not have big time vaudeville presented in better surroundings than the *Follies*.

The Syndicate's reluctance to move the *Follies* to the New Amsterdam perhaps accounted for the seeming lack of fanfare associated with the change in venue. For example, in the *Tribune*'s "Theatrical Notes" on June 3, 1913, the announcement simply read, "The New York engagement of the 'Ziegfeld Follies' will this season be played at the New Amsterdam Theatre commencing on Monday, June 16."[61] And the subtitle of the *Tribune*'s review, "Sixth Annual Summer Show at the New Amsterdam," was the only mention of the new location. The description of "Ziegfeld's Summer Show at the New Amsterdam" in the Sunday, June 22, 1913, *Tribune*, ended with "The failure-proof 'Follies' has settled down to enliven another New York summer."[62] Indeed, Ziegfeld had settled into the New Amsterdam—and its associative showplace status— for the next fourteen plus years and the Syndicate settled on Ziegfeld's "failure-proof" status instead of continued experimentation with potentially less profitable ventures in its premiere theatre. The pairing of production and space proved to be a good match and was quickly naturalized, as seen in the *Tribune*'s assessment, "[w]ith the opening of the new 'Ziegfeld Follies' at the New Amsterdam Theatre last night, the summer amusement season in New York is now in full swing."[63]

While it does seem apparent that Ziegfeld had upward aspirations of his own, such aspirations are difficult to demonstrate conclusively at the time and only get

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[61] "Theatrical Notes," *New York Tribune*, 3 June 1913, 7.

[62] *New York Tribune*, 22 June 1913, sec. IV, p. 4.

[63] "Ziegfeld Follies," *New York Tribune*, 17 June 1913, 9.

slipperier with remove. What is easier to point to is Ziegfeld's response to competition by distinguishing his product from that of the competition by appearing in increasingly up market locations. While the New York Theatre—the Ziegfeld Moulin Rouge—was a legitimate Broadway house, it had a variety pedigree, built by Oscar Hammerstein, a quirky king in the variety world, and used by the Syndicate at various times for their variety experiments. The New Amsterdam, meanwhile, had a more prestigious position within the theatrical hierarchy, and thus provided Ziegfeld with increased legitimacy for his productions. Thus, I see the changes in these three years (1911, 1912, and 1913) fundamentally as responses to competition by attempting to push the brand image further upward—accomplished in part by changing the performance space and gaining status by doing so.

Location as Spectacle

A movement within critical geography looks at landscapes and locations as spectacle. I began this chapter with an ad using an image of the *Ziegfeld Follies* event to sell cars. This image imagined the spectacle of a legitimate theatrical opening night, the spectacle of a socio-economically privileged audience dressed for a fashionable evening event, using the timing of that event to its advantage (autumn allowed dress clothes and furs in a way a summer event would not, along with the copy emphasizing the avoidance of draughty sidewalks and hallways). I end this chapter with a look at another spectacle, that of Times Square.

Ziegfeld opened the first *Follies* at the New Amsterdam by calling attention not to the new house, but instead to the place within New York City that the audience had traveled to that evening: the opening scene in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1913* envisioned an

aerial view of the Times Square area. As described in the *New York Tribune*'s review, the "ingenious stage effects" included a "bird's-eye view of New York at night, from 34th street northward along Broadway and Sixth avenue."[64] In other words, the *Follies* opened following New York City's own development, looking uptown toward Times Square. Long before there were any skyscrapers in this neighborhood and before flyovers were accessible to any but a very few, the *Follies* provided the audience with a chance to locate themselves—no more Barbary Coast or Parisian nightclub copy, the Ziegfeld brand, the Ziegfeld show they had paid to see, was situated very specifically within Times Square in New York City.

Here, literally, Times Square was location as spectacle. Further, it was a defining moment when the establishment of New York City and the Times Square area specifically was pointed to as a destination in and of itself. Times Square in New York City now had weight as a cultural marker of distinction, and thus for Ziegfeld there was no longer the same need to point toward European sophistication for validation. Instead, he pointed to himself and his show, in the New Amsterdam theatre in this area of this city in the opening number to indicate the status reached by the *Ziegfeld Follies*.

[64] Ibid.

Chapter Three:

"The Thrill of Art": Joseph Urban and the Tired Business Man

In early 1915, Caroline White toured the United States not under contract with the Chicago or Philadelphia opera companies with which she had previously performed, but under the auspices of B. F. Keith, the vaudeville impresario. As an American-born opera singer (without even a fabricated European heritage), White's stature as a distinguished performer was already suspect, though one critic did concede that she was a "grand opera prima donna in spite of that handicap." While another critic dramatically described White as a "grand opera thrush in vaudeville captivity," a vaudeville tour presumably would have made whatever status within the world of opera she had achieved and whatever respect as a performer she had garnered all the more tenuous. Why, then, would she risk her professional and artistic reputation for a vaudeville tour? An article in *Musical America* explained that White had European contracts arranged for the season but that the war had forced these to be cancelled; Keith then seized the opportunity and told her to name her own price for the vaudeville tour instead. Such an offer was clearly an investment on Keith's part in publicity and status, bringing opera critics into the vaudeville houses, thereby practically guaranteeing newspaper coverage of the bill, and linking—however briefly—opera with vaudeville in the public's mind. And the dozen or so critics from eastern and Midwestern cities quoted in this article agreed that with her appearance, "vaudeville takes on an added dignity and, by virtue of its own intrinsic

merit, vies with highest-class entertainment offered at the high-priced playhouses."[1] In so doing, these critics equated exclusive and expensive venues, dignity, and class; however, with vaudeville thrown into this equation, the resulting slipperiness had important repercussions for the cultural hierarchy.

Indeed, White's venture into vaudeville had the potential to raise a variety of troubling questions for the cultural guardians. For example, what happened when an opera connoisseur paid to hear an acclaimed singer such as White perform in a Keith house instead of an opera house? Was it highbrow or lowbrow? What happened when those same audience members saw "niftynonsense" and "a happy combination," the turns immediately before and after White at the Majestic Theatre in Chicago?[2] Did the genre and the venue diminish or reinforce the class implications and cultural status of the performance? What about those who were regulars at the Keith houses? Did they become highbrow—or, at least, higher-brow—if they appreciated White's performance? Would opera critics and other culture gate-keepers even allow that this vaudeville audience *could* appreciate White's talents? In other words, the case of Caroline While demonstrates that one hierarchy does not account for the many factors involved in a theatrical performance. Further, while it could be argued that this case was not typical given the extraordinary events in Europe that precipitated White's vaudeville tour, I argue instead that this situation was but one example of multiple hierarchies at work at a time when, for example, Shakespearean plays and many operas were being performed

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[1] "Caroline White: At 4,000 Dollars a Week Triumphs in Vaudeville," *Musical America* 8 May 1915; Robinson Locke Scrapbook, ser. 2, vol. 306, pp. 38-39; Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (hereafter referred to as NYPLPA).

[2] Ibid.

regularly in a host of different languages below Houston Street, far off the status radars of those paying attention to the happenings represented by the Times Square image with which I ended the previous chapter.[3]

The cultural hierarchy often has been invoked (whether by contemporary taste-makers or latter day historiographers—myself included) as if it were a single thing, a definitive ladder on which every category had a rung, and, further, as if every form of cultural production fit into a clearly delineated category. In contrast to such prevailing notions, historian David C. Hammack argues in *Power and Society* that there were different elites vying for power in New York City at the turn of the twentieth century with several different combinations of clubs and other social interactions marking prominence in privileged circles. Hammack writes, "By the mid-nineties, Greater New York had five distinct social elites of comparable wealth and prestige," divided first and foremost on national origin and religion, and secondly on, different forms of capital. As such, the elite were divided between those of German ancestry and those of British-American ancestry. The elite of German ancestry were then subdivided into Christians and Jews, while the British-American group—all Protestants—were subdivided into "those who most valued wealth, ancestry, or cultivation." Significantly, even while all of these elite social groups agreed on the importance of national origin and religion, within these divisions there were differing values assigned to financial, familial and cultural

[3] For more information on such performances, see, for example, Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 47.

capital.[4] This discrepancy accounts for the variance in importance placed on different forms of cultural production, including, of course, theatre.

Hammack's work demonstrates that simply linking elevated status on a cultural hierarchy to the preferences of some sort of elite class or, alternatively, to the gate-keeping on behalf of that class—or even that of the would-be refined—is not so straightforward as it might seem at first glance, especially if there were multiple elites with multiple registers at work. Similarly, I suggest there were many different combinations of elements that indicated elevated status in the performing arts; indeed, rather than a single hierarchy at work, multiple registers indicated relationships among and within otherwise seemingly straightforward theatrical categories. As I have argued in the previous two chapters, theatre was—and is—positioned within a larger cultural hierarchy with other art forms—such as the new museums and classical music concerts Lawrence Levine discusses—and, more specifically, with other forms of performing arts

[4] David C. Hammack, *Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 65. Although such noted historians as Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace make liberal use of Hammack in *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, Hammack is not without critics. Sven Beckert writes, "Although Hammack's book has opened important new vistas on New York City history, I am not persuaded by his insistence on the existence of five distinct upper-class groups in New York. I am also not persuaded by his notion that the economic elite, lacking cultural and organizational resources and deeply fragmented by cultural preferences as well as ethnic heritage, experienced a relative loss in power." While Beckert disagrees with Hammack's conclusions, it is difficult to compare directly their perspectives on financially and socially powerful New Yorkers since Beckert's understanding of this class is based on the European bourgeoisie. See Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850 – 1896* (2001; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 349, and Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

like opera and modern dance, as Paul DiMaggio explores.[5] Theatre also contained a hierarchy within itself, as the early *New York Tribune* listings I discussed in the first chapter made explicit: drama was on top, followed by comic plays, musical theatre, vaudeville, burlesque and other summer or seasonal entertainments—not to mention the hierarchies within each of these categories. Other hierarchies had an impact on theatre as well, such as the relative values placed on different locations whether within a city or within a building, as noted in the second chapter.

Caroline White's vaudeville tour demonstrated some of the largest of these overlapping hierarchies at work: here the registers significant to the critics were those of genre, performer, and location. According to the prevailing status quo, opera was significantly higher than forms of variety entertainment on an aesthetic hierarchy; European opera singers were more distinguished than their American-born counterparts; and opera houses were more exclusive, expensive, and, thus, more respectable establishments than vaudeville houses. All of these assumptions fueled the expectations of critics, especially about the class makeup and relative aesthetic and intellectual capabilities of the audiences, as noted in compliments given to White for not singing down to her vaudeville audiences (despite the fact that another critic labeled vaudeville audiences the most demanding of all).[6]

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[5] See for example, Levine, prologue, and Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Boundaries and Structural Change: The Extension of the High Culture Model to Theater, Opera, and the Dance, 1900-1940," *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*, ed. Michéle Lamont and Marcel Fournier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[6] Robinson Locke Scrapbook, ser. 2, vol. 306, pp. 38-39, NYPLPA.

As is apparent in the case of White, the issue of boundary control is an inherent problem with hierarchies: namely, what if some form, performance, or person did not fit neatly between two other such things? Critics' desire for a straightforward hierarchy was clearly stronger than the reality of one, and this disjunction was a source of concern for many. As David Savran notes, "The primary source of anxiety for critics of the popular theatre was the difficulty of categorizing and ranking the many different theatrical offerings, drawing clear boundaries between variety entertainments and the legitimate stage, between 'whipped cream' and the 'roast.'"[7] Thus, questions such as those I listed at the start of this chapter were of great concern to cultural guardians at the beginning of the twentieth century—whether they were self-appointed (like collectors, connoisseurs, or status seekers) or socially-appointed (such as museum curators or newspapers critics). And these questions were not simply theoretical: they had real implications for everything from theatre leasings and newspaper advertisements to ticket prices and audience expectations. Indeed, Lawrence Levine points out that cultural critics at this time were adamant that "[l]egitimate plays needed to be housed in legitimate theaters and performed before discrete audiences."[8] In other words, the status of a cultural product was dependent on the corresponding status of its genre, venue and audience on their respective registers; these elements had to harmonize to create an appropriate, a decorous cultural event.

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[7] David Savran, "The Struggle for Legitimacy: Broadway in the Jazz Age," unpublished manuscript, 51.

[8] Levine, 76.

Joseph Urban

Florenz Ziegfeld's partnership with Austrian architect and designer Joseph Urban, beginning in 1915 and continuing throughout the remainder of their respective careers, did not correspond harmoniously in this desired way and thus fueled hierarchical boundary confusion and disrupted the status quo. The two men's collaboration on everything from the sets and costumes to the auditoriums and theatres made the contradictions of the contemporary hierarchies all the more evident. Indeed, what happened when lowbrow numbers (what would otherwise be labeled burlesque or variety) were performed in what would soon be considered a middlebrow venue (the New Amsterdam Theatre) against a backdrop created by a European artist (perhaps what could be considered a highbrow set design)? As with the other disruptions Ziegfeld faced (or encouraged) he was able to turn this one to his status-gaining advantage. For all the work Ziegfeld had done to distinguish the *Follies* from vaudeville and elevate the series to a position of being socially fashionable—and thus embraced by high society, if not necessarily respected artistically—a European artist with aristocratic patronage would seem to have symbolic and cultural capital even beyond that which Ziegfeld had attained.

The first part of Urban's career was spent in Vienna, Austria, working as an architect and artist under the sponsorship of the Austrian court in addition to other commissions. Part of the significant art nouveau movement known as the Viennese Secession, Urban made little distinction between art and design in his work on a wide array of projects, from country estates, interior and exterior, to opera backdrops. He first worked in the United States at the St. Louis exposition in 1904 and later worked with the

Boston Opera Company.[9] At the outbreak of the World War, Urban came to the United States permanently, and shortly after designing a (failed) Broadway production, he began working with Ziegfeld. As was the case with Caroline White, the war precipitated the dramatic juxtapositions of highbrow and lowbrow. I do not want to minimize the impact of the war, but I likewise do not want to suggest that these juxtapositions were simply attributable to the war. Instead, I suggest that the war created a situation in which these juxtapositions were perhaps more frequent and more noticeable than they had been previously, and perhaps the disruptions brought about by the war enabled people to be more open to these juxtapositions.

In Urban, Ziegfeld found an invaluable connection to European aristocracy and to productions with cultural status. Although Urban's career, which extended to his influential work with department stores, exemplified a more flexible cultural hierarchy that blended registers of commerce and art, Ziegfeld's promotions emphasized Urban's associations with Europe and opera (i.e. "scenic effect is by Urban, of Vienna")[10]

Urban first worked with Ziegfeld to revamp the New Amsterdam Aerial Garden for the inaugural edition of the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* in January 1915. Here his most notable contribution was what became known as the "crystal promenade," a narrow glass balcony over the heads of the audience on which chorus members walked.[11] While much more provocative in concept than in actuality (Ziegfeld apparently had strict

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[9] Richard Ziegfeld and Paulette Ziegfeld, *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993), 315.

[10] "New Productions" *New York Tribune*, 3 January 1915, sec. III, p. 4.

[11] Mary C. Henderson, *The New Amsterdam: The Biography of a Broadway Theatre* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 61.

undergarment regulations), this Urban design garnered considerable publicity but little in the way of distinction. When their partnership became more formal the following June, Ziegfeld used the opportunity to promote more directly and more vigorously the various forms of capital Urban brought to the arrangement. It was announced in the papers as follows:

> Joseph Urban, the Viennese scenic artist, and F. Ziegfeld, jr., have entered into a partnership agreement to establish in New York a scenic studio. The Urban United States branch, at present located in the Boston Opera House, is to be transported to this city. Before the agreement had been signed a contract was procured calling for the complete execution of the scenery and effects for a new Pavlowa production. A dramatic production to be made by Mr. Ziegfeld early in the fall will also be the work of the new firm. Since Urban's arrival in America he has executed the scenery for all of the Boston Opera Company's productions, "The Garden of Paradise," and the 1915 version of the "Ziegfeld Follies."[12]

Several details included here, such as mentioning the Boston Opera Company twice and the announcement of a dramatic production by Ziegfeld during the fall season, seem designed to elevate the partnership above and beyond merely announcing that Urban would design for the *Ziegfeld Follies*. In fact, one particular detail in this press release seems included solely for purposes of garnering cultural capital: Urban's contract with noted Russian ballerina Pavlowa had nothing to do with Urban's relationship with Ziegfeld, but it did sound impressive, and thus added weight to this announcement. Likewise, by referring to the arrangement as Urban's "United States branch," the existence of a European headquarters was implied, encouraging the impression of even more direct links to European art and nobility.

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[12] "News of Plays and Players: Joseph Urban and F. Ziegfeld, Jr., Combine to Establish Scenic Studio," *New York Tribune*, 14 June 1915, 9.

And indeed, Urban's work for Ziegfeld certainly did not hurt the perception of the *Follies* or Ziegfeld's cabaret shows. It was advantageous to Ziegfeld to have his productions so closely associated with what was more formally accepted as art. Not surprisingly, this collaboration became an important selling point for Ziegfeld, mentioned in publicity like the announcement of the opening of the new *Ziegfeld Follies* in the Sunday, June 20, 1915, *New York Tribune*.[13] Along with reference to a cast that was "even more numerous and more distinguished than in preceding 'Follies,'" Urban was listed as the "world's foremost scenic artist." Here, one of theatre's many hierarchies was invoked, and in it Urban was elevated to *the* top of all scenic artists.

Though decidedly not part of Ziegfeld's marketing package, Urban was also linked to the growing consumer culture of the American city, a new aspect of New York life discussed in detail in William Leach's impressive *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*. In pointing out that stage design and consumer culture influenced each other, sharing and developing use of color, lighting design, and the use of glass, Leach notes that "[w]hatever the origins of the central idea as a basis for interior decoration, by 1915 it was *de rigueur* for theaterowners, restaurateurs, and department store retailers to design adult fantasy environments."[14] "Adult fantasy environments" certainly could be used to describe Ziegfeld's productions: a place of no worry or stress, a place of beauty, youth and fashion—in other words, the ideal

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[13] "This Week's Ebb and Flow," *New York Tribune*, 20 June 1915, sec. IV, p. 8.

[14] William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 82. Leach goes on to link Urban to orientalist fashion in clothing styles, department stores, and theatre. Leach describes Urban as a "skilled decorative craftsman," but, not surprisingly, Ziegfeld and the publicity for the *Ziegfeld Follies* never referred to Urban as anything so pedestrian as a craftsman. Leach, 106, 143.

consumerist environment. Ziegfeld needed someone like Urban to enhance the environment of his productions to make them ever more fantastical and to keep people buying tickets. Furthermore, Leach writes:

> For Urban, music, decoration, and color all might blend into an experience of total pleasure….Until his death in 1932, Urban was a crossover artist *par excellence* for hotels, department stores, opera houses, cocktail lounges, commercial theaters, universities, and castles…Urban thought 'beautiful' architecture alone could make people happy. His interest in color, which he shared with a growing army of other commercial artists, helped make him one of the key builders of the commercial aesthetic. [15]

While we take varied and bold uses of color like those employed by Urban for granted now, Leach makes it clear that this was revolutionary in the nineteen-teens. Indeed, Pierre Bourdieu cites Kant as saying that color was considered too sensual with "its quasi-carnal seduction."[16]

With all this talk of glass, color, fantasy and art nouveau, what did Urban's designs look like? Arnold Aronson offers a description of one of Urban's scenes from the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1915*:

> The 1915 *Follies* included one of the most spectacular Ziegfeld scenes to that time – the bath scene, in which two smiling, golden elephants spouted water from their raised trunks into a pool of water surrounded by Jugendstil-like shrubbery. Kay Laurell as Aphrodite rose out of the pool to signal the start of a mermaid ballet. The staircase behind the pool was also the first hint of the soon-to-be-famous Ziegfeld staircase that would showcase the chorus of Ziegfeld girls.[17]

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[15] Ibid., 143-144.

[16] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 487.

[17] Arnold Aronson, *Architect of Dreams: The Theatrical Vision of Joseph Urban* (New York: Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University: 2000), 34 and fig. 47.

The idea of a mermaid ballet was not new, even in this pre-Esther Williams time; swimmer and diver Annette Kellerman was a favorite in big-time vaudeville and the Shubert brothers had made much of showgirls swimming in their *Passing Show of 1912*. Instead, the signature of Urban here can be found more in the elephants—in so far as they connoted orientalism—and the shrubbery. Urban's invocations of the far east and south Asia appeared regularly in his designs for the *Follies* but perhaps had more influence in his decorative schemes for department stores. The shrubbery in the mermaid ballet, however, was part and parcel of the organic design favored by those creating what was described as art nouveau. Such Urban work thus tied the set design to the art nouveau decoration of the New Amsterdam Theatre creating a world rich in organic-inspired detail with diminished separation between stage and auditorium, furthering the "adult fantasy" effect.

As opposed to Urban's work with the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic*, Urban's first work with the *Ziegfeld Follies* created both considerable publicity and cultural distinction. In the June 22, 1915, *Tribune* review of the new *Follies*, several registers of status were invoked. Referencing opera and European society, here, the opening of the *Follies* was equated to a "Caruso Metropolitan first night" and the "Grand Prix the June of Paris"—it was, in other words, both an aesthetic highpoint and a prominent, exciting social event. Urban was a significant part of this elevated status:

> And let it be said at the outset that in two respects at least "The Follies of 1915" surpassed any of its predecessors, surpassed indeed any musical comedy or revue of recent years, if not any in the theatrical history of New York. The scenery and costumes, designed by Joseph Urban, were beautiful in themselves, in color, in design, in harmony with one another. Mr. Urban's scenery for grand opera as evidenced in his production of 'The Jewels of the Madonna' found its critics, but there can be no critics

> of the work he displayed last night. It was art nouveau, of course, yet in the realm of the revue such art finds its proper field.

The critic concluded that the *Follies* "gave to last night's audience something which was both beautiful and amusing; and something—dare we whisper it?—which seemed preciously much like art."[18] The critic had already supported himself in making this claim first by the elevated comparisons to Caruso, opera, and Paris—not to mention by invoking all theatre ever produced in New York City. He then followed these comparisons by qualifying the claim first with the acknowledgement that Urban's work was art nouveau—clearly not the pinnacle on the art hierarchy, especially since it was highly decorative and gave little credence to the distinctions between art forms—and then by whispering the claim. The whisper concedes that such a claim will not be universally embraced and that it might make some people, some guardians at the cultural gates, very uncomfortable.

In the "Plays & Players" column the following Sunday, the *Tribune*'s theatre critic continued in this same vein, this time with less whispering. Here, the critic wrote:

> In the theatre, as elsewhere, we oftenest find where we do not seek. For the last ten years we have been seeking diligently, at times frantically, for the American art of the theatre…And the last season has apparently left it deeper than ever in the distance, a season divided, as far as the Americans went, between the ogres of melodrama and the clowns of farce. Then last week came 'The Follies,' the realm *par excellence* of the tired and bald-headed business man, the delight of the undergraduate, the stamping ground of Diamond Jim Brady—and, *mirabilis mirabile*, we received what all the writers of so-called legitimate drama had been unable to give us—the thrill of art![19]

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[18] "'Follies of 1915' Fly Into Town," *New York Tribune*, 27 June 1915, 9.

[19] "Plays and Players: The Unusual Mint of This Year's Follies," *New York Tribune* 27 June 1915, sec. IV, p. 8.

This passage is rich with details, including the critic's clear desire for an American art theatre and his frustration with "so-called legitimate drama." The writer also articulated part of the hierarchy existing within theatre with this elusive art theatre clearly above farce and melodrama on a scale of genre prestige (especially since both terms were here used in the pejorative). Most striking, however, is the very idea of art as thrilling. This excitement about art brings to mind Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of pure and popular aesthetics. Namely, in *Distinction* Bourdieu describes the relationship of these two aesthetics to the physical body of the person appreciating each form. Bourdieu writes, "'Pure taste and the aesthetics which provides its theory are founded on a refusal of 'impure' taste and of *aisthesis* (sensation), the simple, primitive form of pleasure reduced to a pleasure of the senses….a surrender to immediate sensation which in another order looks like imprudence."[20] As I noted above, color was considered one such easy element disdained as primitive and sensual, and Urban's well-noted use of color would have added to the difficulty of classifying his work. Bourdieu adds that

> At the risk of seeming to indulge in the 'facile effects' which 'pure taste' stigmatizes, it could be shown that the whole language of aesthetics is contained in a fundamental refusal of the *facile*, in all the meanings which bourgeois ethics and aesthetics give to the word; that 'pure taste,' purely negative in its essence, is based on the disgust that is often called 'visceral'…[21]

The very idea of labeling the *Follies* as art—and thus within the realm of "pure taste"—even while identifying the experience of appreciating that art as a "thrill"—a feeling experienced viscerally, not with the detachment deemed necessary for the highbrow appreciation of art—complicates Bourdieu's sociology of class and culture. Indeed it

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[20] Bourdieu, 486.

[21] Ibid.

seems possible here that commercial culture provides an opening to destabilize what Bourdieu theorized as the pure / popular aesthetic binary and Levine historicized as a high / lowbrow binary. In large part, the complicating factor was the presence in the *Follies* audience of what this *Tribune* writer identified as the tired business man.

The Tired Business Man

Like the *Tribune* editorial cited above, which just months before had identified the *Ziegfeld Follies* as the realm of the tired business man, in August, 1915, the *New York Tribune* review of the second *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* concluded wryly that the show "ought to do much to help while away the tedious hours of the tired business man from midnight until dawn."[22] In contrast, Ned Wayburn—a renown director and choreographer then working for Ziegfeld and labeled here as the man "who selects America's leading show girls"—commented in a 1916 *Theatre Magazine* article that the "show girls who attracted the Tired Business men—and there have been tired business men ever since business was invented—are no more." He continued, "In the old days the T. B. M. used to sit down front and try to appear unconcerned, even bored, as he gazed upon two or three rows of very large women in silken tights and satin or bespangled waists, who kept perfect marching step…"[23] These are but three of numerous references to this segment of theatre-going audiences in journalism of the time. Who was this tired business man and why would Wayburn (and by extension, Ziegfeld) want to distance himself and his showgirls from this population that the *Tribune* repeatedly indicated was very much in attendance?

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[22] Heywood Broun, "'Just Girls' Owes Much To Man," *New York Tribune*, 25 August 1915, 7.

[23] "Show Girls Yesterday and Today," *Theatre Magazine*, December 1916, 362.

The "business man" portion of that label was a common term at the time; Beckert notes that "capital-rich New Yorkers during the nineteenth century… preferred to refer to themselves as first by the specific line of business they engaged in and, later, as 'taxpayers,' or 'businessmen.'"[24] The designation was not universally respectable or even neutral, for as Levine reports, Henry James wrote of feeling "assaulted by the 'overwhelming preponderance' of the businessman."[25] For James and others, culture was "one of the mechanisms that made it possible to identify, distinguish, and order this new universe of strangers."[26]

As evident in James' concerns, the power relations were changing, and indeed these shifts in power dynamics both worked to relax hierarchies and resulted in defenders taking up arms to guard the gates ever more stringently. Power was definitely still based on capital controlled by men of northern European decent, but the way power was demonstrated was changing as is evident in Hammack's exploration of the different sets of powerful elite of the time. This situation was further complicated by the increasing dependency of the capitalists on legions of professionals and managers, the professional managerial class—many of whom would have identified themselves as businessmen. And not coincidentally, the PMC likewise were very concerned with creating hierarchies. As I have noted elsewhere in this dissertation, the emergence of the PMC disrupted the power dynamics; the PMC became capital's middleman protecting capital from dealing with labor directly. Barbara and John Ehrenreich note that key to this middleman's

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[24] Beckert, 6.

[25] Levine, 173.

[26] Ibid., 177.

function for capital was that the PMC had to identify with capital rather than identifying with labor; in hierarchical terms, capitalists needed the PMC to aspire up the financial, cultural and social ladders and not unite with those below them.[27] So, like the old social elite faced with the influx of new money in late nineteenth-century New York, members of the PMC were invested in maintaining hierarchies and policing them to prevent their position from being indistinguishable from those considered below them. As David Savran notes in "The Struggle for Legitimacy," "the ability to fashion a hierarchy (cultural or otherwise) and police its boundaries is far more important than the specific content of categories like highbrow and lowbrow."[28] And, further, that for many critics "the mapping of an ostensibly eternal order of civilization and culture thereby provided a way of asserting their own importance as intellectuals in a nation in which their leadership was being rapidly usurped by the captains of industry."[29]

Society, however, was just not so straightforward and was quickly becoming even less so. For example, In *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace note that

> With the advent of *The Social Register*, dictatorship [of Mrs. Astor and her list of the Four Hundred] gave way to an accommodating bureaucracy; now thousands could make the social grade. But with outspending one's rivals the only definitive route to preeminence, a steady inflation in extravagance ensued as members of opposing cliques scrambled to convert Wall Street revenue into Fifth Avenue social standing."[30]

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[27] See, for example, Barbara Ehrenreich and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class," *Between Labor and Capital*, ed. by Pat Walker (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 16.

[28] Savran, "The Struggle for Legitimacy," 12.

[29] Ibid., 13.

[30] Burrows and Wallace, 1073.

Here Burrows and Wallace offer some insight into how the multiple elites Hammack describes competed for social prominence as well as insight into the corresponding importance of fashion (along with the leisure time and surplus wealth necessary to follow it) in the social structures of the city. More important, however, this change in the social hierarchy represents significant development in the transformation of capital: these ever increasingly lavish social events demonstrated an increasing ability to exchange financial capital for social capital, and in the process shifted the social hierarchy—at least for some—away from ancestry towards finances. While this shift left social prominence still out of reach of the vast majority of New Yorkers including most of the PMC, it did encourage the relatively new idea that social mobility was possible.

If the social hierarchy was at least perceived to be more open—however slightly and remotely—then, the possibility of flexibility within other hierarchies followed. Hierarchies legitimize power and the hierarchies—or rather the nuances among forms valued within the different hierarchies—were definitely changing. In all of this, it was not that the culture of the United States was any less hierarchical; rather, what was valued, what was elevated on these various registers shifted—and more important than any particular form or fashion increasing or decreasing in status was the lessening of the strictness of the categorization. The result was a diminishing of the overall importance of any particular hierarchy, at least somewhat.

All of these pieces fit together in complex ways. As the authors of *Gotham* point out, there was a revolt against what was essentially a dictatorship governing the social hierarchy, and this revolt was fueled not by any sense of injustice felt by those already deemed the Four Hundred but instead was fueled by the industrial revolution with some

capitalists becoming unfathomably wealthy and the centralization of this new wealth in New York City. These changes within the social hierarchy had an impact on the cultural hierarchy in three broad ways: first, the increase in wealth and population with wealth in the city brought in new and different styles and preferences which opened up the cultural hierarchy; second, as I have discussed previously, many of the capitalists and their families used elements valued within the cultural hierarchy (such as opera patronage and art collection) as a way to increase their status as social elites; and finally, some of those who lost power on the social hierarchy—through its diffusion if not through any other means—saw the cultural hierarchy, or rather the policing and the protection of it, as a way to retain and/or maintain some vestiges of their power.

Meanwhile, the members of the PMC—essentially excluded from the upper echelons of the social hierarchy, though not from the aspirations of such—wanted to consolidate the status that they had and to try to get ahead. Even with the new openness, access to the social elite was too expensive for them and was thus out of their reach. Prestige as cultural elite, however, was more attainable; it could be gained, at least to some extent, through education and what deemed the proper appreciation of the arts. They could—and did—go to museums, symphonies, theatre, among other means of cultural consumption. This attendance put the PMC in many of the same venues as those cultural guardians who were ever watchful for improper appreciation of the arts. Of these cultural forms, however, theatre was enjoyed by attendees as both art and entertainment (though sometimes more one than the other), and this duality put the cultural police on a collision course with (some of) the PMC. It is at this intersection that the *Ziegfeld Follies* come into play.

If these businessmen and their wives were aware of the cultural hierarchy and concerned with their public image, then why were they patronizing productions that the critics deemed less worthy? Why were they patronizing the places of glass runways instead of those of polite applause? It was as if the PMC respected the hierarchy and had a stake in its perpetuation, but they were not the guardians at the gate. Theatre at this time was about the social and not just the cultural, and the critics did not seem to know what to do with that, primarily, I speculate, because it undercut what was their self-imposed border patrol. In other ways, the PMC resisted the hierarchy too—voting with their feet and their dollars not against opera and the like but instead for a more expansive notion of what was acceptable and enjoyable. Perhaps the "tiredness" was a way of giving them space for not guarding the cultural gate with zeal, a way of forgiving them the lapse of judgment that might otherwise condemn someone socially / culturally for attending what they were attending.

This brings us back to Wayburn's comment quoted from *Theatre Magazine* above: the way for the tired business man to view showgirls was with detachment (a characteristic of pure taste ala Bourdieu)—to do otherwise would be considered vulgar. Of course, thanks in no small part to Ziegfeld, the showgirl had changed from the larger, more mature chorus member of the 1890s who merely marched in time on stage.[31] But the PMC and its tired business man had also changed the world around them. Cultural

[31] For more information on the changing image of the showgirl and Ziegfeld's role in these changes, see, for example, Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Linda Mizejewski, *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); and Angela J. Latham, *Posing a Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920s* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000).

historian Lewis Erenberg explained the appeal of shows like Ziegfeld's production to the tired businessman this way: "The innumerable follies and frolics were perfect entertainments for tired businessmen and their wives, for their constant activity, their sense of liberation and fun filled with urban high life and sexual hijinks could easily make them forget the drudgery of the office and the isolation of the home."[32] However, the designation was more complex than Erenberg indicates; the "tiredness" implied a dismissal of the businessmen's tastes, a way of qualifying the theatre choices of this segment of the population. For example, Richard Butsch notes that "[t]heater critic Caroline Caffin…claimed New York vaudeville audiences were more than half men, the tired businessman who does not want to think."[33] The tired businessman designation could have been a way for the critics to call attention to this audience's status—or lack thereof. Despite being well-educated, the PMC were not financially independent and, conspicuous consumption aside, they worked on the clock and for a salary in a way that the financial elite did not. Was this why the businessman was always referred to as tired? Was "tired" a way for the critics to explain away the tastes of the professional managerial class?

Their behavior in the theatre was likewise troubling to critics. Butsch writes:

> Many criticisms were rooted in the fact that the fashionable went as a Saturday night ritual that had little to do with good drama….The central character in this orchestra audience was the 'tired businessman' who wanted a play that would make him laugh, nothing too heavy or thoughtful….They were criticized for seeking relaxing entertainment

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[32] Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 212.

[33] Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750 – 1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 115.

> instead of supporting dramatic arts. Their manners were upsetting as a reflection of the lightness with which they consumed plays.[34]

These folks were Ziegfeld's target audience. The tired businessman may have been tired, may have been more interested in social interaction, relaxation, and entertainment than refinement or elevation, but that did not make him unrefined, uneducated, or crass. And indeed this was in large part the problem. What if someone who "should" know better chose instead to enjoy something lower on a given hierarchy? Where did the tastes and choices of the PMC fit?

It was as if the critics wanted theatre to be about the cultural and the aesthetic and *not* the social. Labeling and indeed dismissing the habits of those tired businessmen and their wives worked to eradicate the social from the theatre experience and in so doing, it seems to me, perhaps worked to weaken theatre further in the face of movies and the like, changes explored in depth by scholars such as Paul DiMaggio and David Savran.[35]

The Thrill of Art

Thus, to return to the *Tribune*'s June 1915 editorial on art and theatre cited above and its clear hierarchy with melodrama and farce at the bottom, legitimate drama above them and an elusive art theatre at the pinnacle, the *Follies* were linked to the tired businessman

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[34] Ibid., 125.

[35] Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Boundaries and Structural Change: The Extension of the High Culture Model to Theater, Opera, and the Dance, 1900-1940," *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*, ed. Michéle Lamont and Marcel Fournier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and Savran, "The Struggle for Legitimacy: Broadway in the Jazz Age" and "The Triumph of the Art Theatre Over Show Business," unpublished manuscripts. In "The Struggle for Legitimacy," Savran writes, "what I am labeling the legitimate theatre became positioned during the 1920s as a middlebrow form, committed both to art and commercial success." Savran here offers a succinct definition of middlebrow not wholly dependent on the fraught terms of taste; instead, middlebrow is a form simultaneously dedicated both to art and commercial success. See Savran, 31 and 33.

as an indication of what had been their relatively lowly stature despite the comparatively respectable class of the audience. Then, apparently even to his own surprise, the critic suggested that American theatre had been looking for art in all the wrong places. What was radical here was that for this critic, the *Follies* were no longer in the position I discussed in the first chapter (in this particular situation, below both melodrama and farce since they have plots), but were instead the "American art of the theatre." The hierarchy had in essence been turned upside down. Instead of simply being tired, perhaps the PMC were changing the nature of theatre and what was considered art in the United States.

According to this *Tribune* critic, Ziegfeld's artistic achievement was attributable only in part to Urban. As he pointed out,

> Now, of course, Mr. Urban's scenery was partly responsible for this thrill, and Mr. Urban not being an American it will doubtless be argued unfits 'The Follies' for being judged as a purely American product. Yet the fact remains that only in America could Mr. Urban's art have been applied to a musical revue; and only in America could a musical revue have been produced with the luxury of the one now on view at the New Amsterdam Theatre. It would, of course, be idle to assert that all 'The Follies' contains is artistic…and yet the total effect was one of real beauty, both of idea and execution.[36]

Here again is a quick qualification to assure the critic will not be laughed out of town or countered with any one of a number of performances in the revue which did not go over, to use vaudeville terminology. And the critic was working with a fairly strong—and perhaps new—idea of what it was to make something American. No doubt due in part to the war and the resulting destabilization of all things European, there was now more of a need to embrace things distinctly American and to have a high American culture recognized.

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[36] "Plays and Players: The Unusual Mint of This Year's Follies," *New York Tribune*, 27 June 1915, sec. IV, p. 8.

While Urban was the new attraction here—and his presence, I argue, was the key factor that allowed the *Follies* to be discussed in the same breath as art—somehow this critic managed to bring it all back to Ziegfeld. After comparing Ziegfeld favorably to David Belasco and Winthrop Ames in terms of contributions to American theatre, the *Tribune* critic continued:

> But it is not Mr. [Bert] Williams nor even Mr. Urban who makes 'The Follies' what they are—it is the informing spirit of Mr. Ziegfeld. Now the uplifters may uplift and the Puritans may object, yet Mr. Ziegfeld remains an artist in spite of them. Perhaps he is not a moralist, and there may have been times when he might have drawn the lines of reticence a little tighter, but on the whole 'The Follies' have in them more genuine understanding of the wants of human nature and a keener sense of beauty than is possessed by nine-tenths of the so-called serious plays have projected upon the public.[37]

Ziegfeld was neither a Progressive—an "uplifter"—interested in social change nor a "serious" social conservative—a Puritan or moralist—predicting the downfall of society; the implication here was that most American playwrights of the times fell into one of these two camps. It is almost as if cultural guardians and playwrights wanted American theatre to be taken seriously so they assumed it then of course had to be serious theatre—as indicated by the hierarchies which shaped their understanding of art. This critic pointed out that theatre does not have to be serious drama to be beautiful or in touch with human nature. This was a radical reassessment of the way art functioned.

Three months later, *Theatre Magazine* joined the discussion of Urban's work for the *Ziegfeld Follies* and its hierarchical implications. In "The Art of Joseph Urban," by Willis Steell, much was made of Urban's qualifications. The article began with a contrast, however, indicating that Urban's work for the *Follies* was surely art because of

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[37] Ibid.

the inability of the uneducated to recognize it as such. Here, Steell wrote, "I could tell by the way the woman who sat next to me at the New Amsterdam Theatre wore her clothes that she had never visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art," thereby equating fashion with elevation, external with internal, and lower, crass tastes with women in general.[38] His suspicion was confirmed by the woman's reaction to one of Urban's scenes: upon its unveiling, according to Steell, she said, "That's an awful nice kind of a drapery." That *Theatre* readers would certainly have visited the Met—and be dressed to be recognized as such—and that they would respond to Urban's work more appropriately was clearly assumed, and the readership was implicitly congratulated on that fact.

Then, as if to reward the readerships' collective taste in this matter, the article skipped most details of Urban's work as an architect and instead included a lengthy list of all the operas and opera companies for which he had designed. Little attention indeed was paid to his actual designs for the *Follies* and no mention at all for those of the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic*. The only mention of the Ziegfeld name was when Steell qualified his experience at the *Follies* by writing "although it is a trifle difficult to connect mental improvement with the 'Ziegfeld Follies,' which frankly live up to their name, yet the stage settings now on nightly view at the New Amsterdam are compelling, as new impressions always are, and it should be interesting to observe how deeply their

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[38] Willis Steell, "The Art of Joseph Urban" *Theatre Magazine*, September 1915, p. 124. Butsch notes that "Blaming women for theater's shortcomings was part of a larger discourse equating mass culture with the feminine and art with the masculine. Women were widely associated with consumption of mass culture. Affluent women were particularly to blame; they had the opportunity of receiving education, yet exhibited middle-brow tastes….Mass culture was described in pejorative feminine terms. Art critics at the turn of the century argued that women made inferior artists. They spoke of women as a threat to 'Art,' claiming their consumer demand supported mass culture. Middle-class women who had once been identified as a civilizing influence amid rowdy male audiences were now characterized as undermining that civilization," 124.

effect will go and how long it will last."[39] Steell hedged his bets here by positing the work as something to observe with detached interest (a sign of pure taste) rather than either pronouncing it as something to be regarded by the ages or celebrating it as something to be appreciated and enjoyed. Even at its best, it was, after all, only "modern art." [40]

Despite the apparent dismissal of his shows, Ziegfeld's productions were the beneficiaries of this discussion. Namely, if *Theatre* readers were to keep up on what was happening both in the theatre world and the art world, then they had to attend the *Follies* and see Urban's designs for themselves. Their response to those "draperies," however, was a foregone conclusion because to respond in a way other than that Steell set forth was to put one in the same class as the poorly dressed who eschewed the opportunities available to her to learn about art. In other words, the PMC may have been changing, but cultural guardians like *Theatre Magazine* and Steell did their best to police the "proper" response to such changes.

The idea of art was used to sell the *Follies* as legitimate and simultaneously reinforce established legitimacy (i.e. enticing audiences and rewarding audiences as being connoisseurs of art). And despite the increasing prominence of Urban, it was Ziegfeld's name that was associated or was publicized as the artist. In an article "The Art of Flo Ziegfeld" from what is identified in the Robinson Locke Scrapbook as the *New Jersey Dramatic News* dated November 5, 1916, the columnist began:

> In a theatre that believes David Belasco, Augustus Thomas, Mrs. Fiske and Robert Edmond Jones to be in their several ways great artists, it is quite natural that a genuine theatrical artist, an artist of penetrating taste,

[39] Steell, 124.

[40] Ibid.

> fine feeling and delicate perception should be overlooked. And not merely overlooked, but shouldered aside, at the very thought of him with breezy derision….It is… difficult for the average American, who habitually confuses the egg with the hen, to persuade himself than an artist and a music show may in any way be related…There is no producer in existence who, in his field, to any degree approaches to the Ziegfeld. I have set under them all. Out of the vulgar leg-show Ziegfeld has fashioned a thing of grace and beauty, of loveliness and charm. He knows colors as a painter knows colors; he has form; he knows quality and mood. He has lifted, with sensitive skill, a thing that was mere food for lecherous baldheads and downy college boys out of its low estate and into a thing of symmetry and bloom…."[41]

Like the *Tribune* critic, this writer invoked Ziegfeld's name along with contemporary celebrated theatre practitioners, but unlike the *Tribune* critic, this critic went on to deride American tastes, in part, at least, because of the very stress placed on the hierarchical assessment of cultural products. This writer pointed out the cultural milieu in which art—the pinnacle of cultural production—and musical theatre—a middle ground of theatre, which was in turn considered somewhere in the middle ground of cultural production—could not be considered together. He then went a step further, linking Ziegfeld's and Urban's artistic creation, complete with its "grace and beauty," "loveliness and charm," and "symmetry," to a theatrical form considered much below even musical theatre: the "vulgar leg-show" of burlesque. Anyone could appreciate theatrical art, this critic seemed to say, when it appeared in recognizable forms and in expected places, forms and places frequented by the theatre artists of the day. It was something altogether different, however, to recognize something as art when it was located at an event that seemed as much about the social as the aesthetic, and when it was appreciated with popular taste as much, if not more so, than with pure taste. In other words, it was more of a "thrill" to consider art when its various positions on various hierarchies did not match,

[41] Robinson Locke Scrapbook, vol. 91 p. 45, NYPLPA.

were not decorous. Florenz Ziegfeld and Joseph Urban, in partnership with their PMC patrons, had disrupted the cultural status quo—a disruption all the more radical because it enhanced rather than diminished their cultural capital, and thus indicated the essential arbitrariness of the previously respected registers with which art was considered.

Chapter Four:

The Extension of Ziegfeld Culture:

Dancing Highbrows, Theatre Lizards, and the Changing Cultural Hierarchy

In a 1912 *Theatre Magazine* article "The Deadly Cabaret," the then thirty year old critic George Jean Nathan attacked every aspect of the increasingly popular cabaret entertainments and the "cabaret culture" surrounding them. He lambasted the performers as less than third rate, the programs as not worthy of ten-cent vaudeville houses, and the producers/restaurateurs as swindlers taking advantage of the public. The people who attended such entertainments in Nathan's view were naïve tourists, "lecherous, lickerish old men and grinning, evil-eyed, lubrical young ones" or the "overdressed demi-monde of the West Forties," leaving no room for people "seeking decent amusement in a decent way in decent surroundings."[1] Worst of all, according to Nathan, was the damage done to more traditional legitimate theatre. Not only could those "two and a half hours [be] spent in a respectable place of amusement witnessing a respectably amusing performance at half the price," but the promise of "the atmosphere of Paris" encouraged a "considerable portion of the visiting populace…into parting with its gold and silver through wine glasses instead of opera glasses" and in so doing drained "what blood was left from out the veins of the Great White Appian Way." Indeed, the deadliness referred to in the title indicated something much more sinister than the dullness Nathan believed these shows to be: to those who would dismiss his concerns, he posited the cabaret as the "meagre scratch of the pimple that leads to poisoned blood."

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[1] George Jean Nathan, "The Deadly Cabaret," *Theatre Magazine*, December 1912: 184, ix.

What did such a thorough attack mean to the readers of *Theatre Magazine*? To those like Nathan who resisted this development in the entertainment landscape, it was confirmation that change was dangerous. To those who had themselves attended—and enjoyed—cabaret entertainment, however, it was a harsh rebuke for failing to recognize this wolf in sheep's clothing. In either case, Nathan vigorously defended the cultural hierarchy and encouraged those with an investment in that hierarchy, as readers of *Theatre* undoubtedly had, to take arms against this cabaret threat. His call was clear: do not be fooled by claims of European fashion or by French menus. Instead, patronize those arts and entertainments sanctioned by the cultural status quo. In other words, he advocated attending opera and legitimate theatre and urged readers to recognize cabarets as vulgar, lowbrow entertainment.

Nathan's deep anxiety about change was evident in the fierceness of his critique. If he truly did not think that cabarets would last, as he claimed, then there was no need for this rallying cry in defense of theatre. And an unoriginal attack it was, declaring this new popular entertainment unsuitable for respectable women and families since they were the stomping ground of women of questionable repute and the fast crowd—an argument made against different forms of theatre for millennia. That the fast crowd and the fashionable crowd in many circles were becoming increasingly indistinguishable shows how futile Nathan's attack was. That cabarets and theatres successfully coexisted along Broadway when Nathan's article was published and continued to do so throughout the next decade, at least until the advent of Prohibition, shows that the threat he perceived was against something much larger than people's reputations and/or the legitimate theatre box office.

While never as stable as the cultural elites guarding the gates would have it be, the cultural hierarchy changed drastically in the first two decades of the twentieth century, as I have explored in the previous three chapters. It was as if neither the sheep nor the wolf represented what they once did, and it was becoming less important to tell them apart. In the first two chapters I looked at Ziegfeld's positioning of his shows in the existing (albeit flexible) cultural hierarchy through marketing and location; in the third chapter and continuing in this chapter I look at changes in the hierarchy itself, as it accommodated not only Ziegfeld's expanding list of enterprises but also wider changes in the Broadway entertainment culture of which Ziegfeld's work was a part. In this chapter, I take my markers of this shift from two articles; as I show here, in "The Deadly Cabaret" from 1912, George Jean Nathan attacked the development of cabarets as a serious threat to legitimate theatre. In contrast, a *Vanity Fair* article of 1917 applauded the changes theatre made during these years, claiming Ziegfeld and his collaborators were the real artists of the era. In the five years between these two articles, the previously dominant cultural hierarchy did not disappear as the many qualifications made by writers on the subject make clear; it was in large part, however, made less relevant by the sheer degree of change taking place.

The context for these changes was very stark: serious financial downturns followed by the first World War (even if the United States was not officially engaged during these years) facilitated changes that even five years earlier would have seemed unimaginable, as the case of Caroline White described in the previous chapter demonstrated. And while the economic downturn now is less well known than the more

obviously prominent war that came later, it was central to the development of the cabaret that Nathan so vigorously opposed. In *Steppin' Out,* Lewis A. Erenberg explains that the

> economic depression of 1911-1912 had created a slump in the restaurant business, and any idea that might bring in new business seemed worth trying. Restaurant managers, moreover, could be convinced by the success of the restaurant portion of the Folies [Bergere], which continued to make money even as the overall enterprise failed. The Folies proved that in the right setting, informal entertainment could blend nicely with the sale of food and drink.[2]

This same economic slump provided context for the enthusiasm Nathan noticed in cabaret patrons "getting something for nothing." A night out had a higher cost for customers, changing the behavior of those salaried professionals for whom a visible social life was important even if now it was more of an expensive luxury. And while the "cabaret" invoked fantasies of cosmopolitan European bohemianism, Erenberg explains, "In New York City, the elegant cabarets were not bohemian because, rather than being a rejection of the values of success, the cabaret was pictured as its reward."[3]

Indeed, class relations can be seen at the heart of the cabaret fashion: Antonio Gramsci theorized that in order to stay in power, the financial elites had to win the consent of those in the other classes upon whose labor (white or blue collar) and consumption the economy depended.[4] Thus, as the Erenreichs explain, one reason the professional middle class did not organize against or otherwise resist their employers

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[2] Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930,* 116. Indeed this was the defining quality of cabarets: "Despite their diversity in other matters, cabarets were distinguished from other forms of amusements by their combination of floor show and tables," 122. See also 124 and 208.

[3] Ibid., 140.

[4] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* Ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971; New York: International Publishers, 1995), 12.

even in times of decreasing prosperity was because of concessions allowing the PMC to enjoy at least surface pleasures of the ruling classes. Cabarets were an emergent space where members of the PMC could interact with the financial elite or at least think of themselves as interacting in the same type of environment and thus share in the same types of rewards as the financial elite—thereby imagining themselves on the side of the employers and not that of those more traditionally understood as laborers. Even if they could not afford to go to Europe, they could take part in the European-styled nightlife in the heart of the entertainment district in the economic capital of the country. This certainly was not a simple straightforward proposition and assuredly did not work in a top-down fashion only. Hierarchies legitimize power and since the hierarchies were definitely changing, power within New York circles and among New York classes was taking on a different shape too. Thus, Nathan was right about three things: first, the status quo was indeed threatened; second, there was much more going on than getting entertainment for the price of champagne; and finally, cabarets did not survive solely on the combination of food and entertainment for long. However, instead of disappearing, cabarets were rejuvenated by a new fad that swept through New York nightlife, a fad fostered by cabaret promoters and one which even more radically changed the entertainment environment: the dance craze.

Dancing Audiences

In *Steppin' Out*, Erenberg traces the changes in leisure time activities from society events and lobster palaces to cabarets. Focusing primarily on the gender roles and expectations of the wealthy social elite of what he calls in shorthand "Fifth Avenue," Erenberg considers the denizens of Broadway (employers and employees within the entertainment

industry) and the professional managerial class (though he does not use that term) only as they interacted with and influenced (or were influenced by) the New York monied classes and their changing social mores.[5] Of importance here, Erenberg explores in depth the phenomenon known as the dance craze which altered the entertainment industry in New York and elsewhere starting in 1912 and continuing in various forms for the next five years—and only then curtailed somewhat by the war more than by any waning interest in dancing.

Dancing at this time was part and parcel of the trend toward intimacy in cabarets. As I discussed in the second chapter, cabarets provided entertainment in a more intimate environment than the large Broadway auditoriums, and dancing in cabarets took that intimacy a large step further. Not only were the barriers of the orchestra pit and footlights which separated the audience from performer removed in the cabaret, but the opportunity to dance and watch other audience members dance often on the same floor where the singers sang and exhibition dancers performed further broke down the barrier between audience and performer. This intimacy was a significant shift away from the comparatively passive "see and be seen" of Thorstein Veblen's conspicuous consumption and also a significant shift from the relaxed, socializing theatre-going of the tired businessman. Now, instead, social interaction was even more literally about performing: people wanted to be seen dancing and to watch others dance.

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[5] Erenberg instead uses such labels as "carriage trade," 41, the "well to do," 46, and simply as "business men and their wives," 46. Offering his own explanation for conspicuous consumption, he points out that as "the numbers of the wealthy increased, the merely well-to-do were overshadowed, and in response they too adopted a more materialistic style of life," 42.

Erenberg argues that the dance craze was about the desire for an "action environment," which he describes as a rebellion against Victorian focus on home and hearth and a redefinition of the good life to encompass activity and experience. From watching exhibition dancers performing what amounted to a vaudeville turn with dances "cleaned up" from working class dance halls and other "joints" (most famously from those on San Francisco's Barbary Coast), to dancing in the afternoon at cafés and in the evening at cabarets, dancing moved from a passive activity to one of participatory action.[6] Eventually, popular exhibition dancers Irene and Vernon Castle, with the blessing of some members of New York society, opened a dance school to provide the young of the social and financial elite with instruction in suitably restrained versions of the tango and any number of other dances from the Texas Tommy to the Turkey Trot.[7] It was not just the fashion among the young, however. Journalists and scholars noted the mixed ages of the participants at afternoon tea dances in Fifth Avenue hotels as well as that of dancers in the cabarets in the evening in and around Times Square.[8] An editorial cartoon of the era even proclaimed that there were "No Gran'pas Anymore" and pictured an older man dancing with a younger female partner under the caption: "He Wears Their Clothes and Steals Their Girls."[9] So on many fronts the dance craze was a great equalizer. Age, gender, and class worked in new and different ways on the dance

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[6] Erenberg, 75. He puts the cabaret in New York starting in 1911.

[7] Ibid., 160-161.

[8] Ibid., 114.

[9] *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* Promotion, Ziegfeld Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin (hereafter cited as HRC).

floors—of course within certain limits—and the PMC could participate on equal footing, so to speak, in this fashion just as their employers did.

Restaurateurs and other entrepreneurs were making money with the dance craze, and Ziegfeld's own audience members were going out for late night suppers and dancing after his shows. Ziegfeld tried to garner some of that business by opening his own cabaret—a real one this time—on the roof of the New Amsterdam Theatre.[10] New Amsterdam historian Mary C. Henderson writes,

> Ziegfeld turned his attention to the roof theatre at the behest of owners Marc Klaw and Abe Erlanger soon after opening the *Follies of 1913* downstairs. Ziegfeld envisioned a club for dining and the current rage of ballroom dancing, a particular passion of his own. He removed the seats, installed a dance floor flanked by orchestra boxes, and added tables to the main level, stage, and balcony. The reincarnated supper club, named the Danse de Follies, opened in 1914. It was a success….[11]

However, success was far from assured, as Erenberg's chart of New York cabarets makes clear. Not only did the Folies Bergere fold quickly, as I discussed in the second chapter, but many other cafes and cabarets had relatively short life spans. After all, capitalizing on a fad can be difficult since it is by definition short-lived. Furthermore, the mighty Theatre Syndicate itself had yet to make a real go of anything in this New Amsterdam roof theatre space. Ziegfeld's own attempt in 1911 to add a cabaret-like event to the end of the *Follies* had made very little impact, especially since the performance space was the

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[10] Ziegfeld no doubt also had to stay ahead of the competition; just as the Shubert revues were getting better and more competitive, Ziegfeld added something different (in this case activities in the roof-top theatre) to garner more attention.

[11] Mary C. Henderson, *The New Amsterdam: The Biography of a Broadway Theatre* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 61. Unfortunately Henderson narrates these business decisions as something like manifest destiny: "It was not until the great producer Florenz Ziegfeld arrived on the scene in 1913, nearly a decade after the theatre's debut, that the potential of the rooftop theatre was fulfilled," 45.

same as that of the *Follies* making the cabaret portion of the entertainment seem much like another act tacked on to the end of the revue proper.

Fortunately for Ziegfeld, the space on the New Amsterdam roof and the dance craze changed the impact of his next attempt at a cabaret; structural differences made using the roof of the New Amsterdam different than using the roof of the New York Theatre. Unlike the Jardin de Paris, the *Follies*' original roof garden home, the New Amsterdam's Aerial Gardens was not built piecemeal for roof-garden variety shows and, instead, was a well-equipped performance space in its own right. As Henderson describes, "Completely enclosed, this two-story playhouse accommodated a 34-foot-wide stage, full proscenium, orchestra pit, orchestra-level seating for 480 audience members, and an additional 200 seats in a U-shaped balcony. Dressing and prop rooms, stage elevators, and stage lighting made it possible to mount elaborate productions independent of the main theatre."[12] It was this space that Ziegfeld used to join in the dance craze with the newly renamed roof, the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies.

The Ziegfeld Danse de Follies opened the same evening as the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1914*, simultaneously creating a captured audience and affiliating the new venture as closely as possible with Ziegfeld's most well-known product. It was advertised in the June 1, 1914, *New York Tribune* with "Ziegfeld Follies" in white letters against a black background, under which was printed "Immediately Following The Performance of 'The Follies' Will Open" then "Ziegfeld" in large bold black letters with "Danse de Follies" white against black background almost as large as the "Ziegfeld Follies" lettering above. The brand name was here emphasized, and the implication of this ad was that the

[12] Ibid., 43.

Ziegfeld experience was not completed by attending the *Follies*; to get the full Ziegfeld experience, one now had to go to the roof afterwards as well. While no price was listed for the *Ziegfeld Follies*, admission to the Danse de Follies was listed as one dollar.[13] This put the price of the Danse de Follies as roughly equivalent to the price of attending the *Ziegfeld Follies* itself, in effect doubling the cost of an evening at the New Amsterdam Theatre and reinforcing the elite status of the location by excluding any *Follies* audience members for whom the *Follies* ticket itself was a large expenditure. The elite nature of the attendees, in turn, was part of the draw. Erenberg explains, "For the ordinary professional or businessman out with his wife, the after-theatre suppers allowed him to observe the theatrical figures at play."[14]

Those people who could afford to attend were acknowledged in the *New York Tribune*'s review of the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies. After the review of the *Ziegfeld Follies* there was a small line, as if to partially divide the column, followed by

> After the final curtain fell and shut out the last glimpse of the 'Follies of 1914' for the evening, everybody…you can imagine who would attend the opening trooped up to the new Ziegfeld Palais de Danse [sic] on the roof of the New Amsterdam. When some of the show chorus came up in costume, hard working folk left, the rest are no doubt still dancing.[15]

From this description, several groups of people appear to have been attendees at the first night of the Danse de Follies: most were considered "first-nighters" and of this crowd there were some who were "hard working folk" while others had the leisure of being able to stay and dance till dawn with chorus members. The former no doubt included the

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[13] *New York Tribune,* 1 June 1914, 16.

[14] Erenberg, 52.

[15] "Lots of Fun In 'Ziegfeld's Follies' [sic]" *New York Tribune*, 2 June 1914, 9.

professional managerial class while the latter consisted at least in part the fashionable male elites of what Erenberg classifies as the Broadway and Fifth Avenue sets.

While it is difficult—and historiographically problematic—to gage the crowd an establishment draws based on those there at the opening gala, a billboard advertising this new Ziegfeld venture indicated at least how the producer wanted the daily crowd of patrons imagined. On this billboard, well-dressed couples in tuxedos and fashionable gowns dance in what appears to be a very large ballroom decorated with trellises and plants while an orchestra plays. Small tables of two or four sit around the dance floor while food and drinks are served to them.[16] Notably, no one appears to be in attendance alone, signaling social acceptability and countering any notion of men dancing solely with the Ziegfeld chorus despite the indication of such activity in the *Tribune* review. This billboard then offered a graphic representation of how Ziegfeld wanted to present the "Ziegfeld culture" of this space: a wealthy, established crowd of unquestionable taste enjoying themselves in a well-appointed environment reminiscent of the restaurants in Fifth Avenue hotels.

Ziegfeld reinforced this visual promotion with the text of his Sunday newspaper advertisements. Here descriptions of the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies initially claimed the space was "Fashion's Rendezvous" and "The World's Most Beautiful Dancing Place" and in so doing promoted the fashion and beauty of the people and the place while emphasizing the possibility of "rendezvous," here understood as a French-themed, world-class opportunity to interact with such beauty and fashion. The next Sunday's advertisement increased the stakes considerably, proclaiming that "Never In All The

[16] Henderson, 62.

Palaces Of Europe Has Such Magnificence Been Displayed As In This Exquisite Danseland In The Air."[17] Europe—and, more specifically, European aristocracy—was the touchstone here that Ziegfeld wanted considered in relationship to his new venture, not the competition from other establishments up and down Broadway even though they were referencing much the same indicators of power and luxury.[18]

As I discussed in the previous chapter, one of the trends Lawrence Levine traces in the separation between highbrow culture and lowbrow culture in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the disciplining of the audience. Not only were lines rather strictly drawn relegating anything distinctly physical, sensual or bodily to the realm of the lowbrow—as Bourdieu discusses—but physical behavior and interaction among those attending highbrow performances gradually were limited strictly to applause of varying degrees of enthusiasm. Appreciating art was a status designator and part of maintaining that status meant that something deemed art was to be considered with the mind, not experienced physically. As I point out in the introduction to this dissertation, I take issue with Levine just as he did with previous historians: the situation remained much more open to change than he concluded. In the dance craze in spaces such as the Danse de Follies, we have a very specific instance of that openness. Indeed, it appears that just at the point when conductors and museum directors and the like had achieved success in controlling the codes of behavior in their "sacralized" spaces, a new space opened in which status-conscious audience members could come and go as they pleased, talk as

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[17] *New York Tribune*, 14 June 1914, sec. III, p. 6.

[18] Erenberg, 76: "With the expensive French and European décor of the lobster palaces, respectable and prosperous urbanites found that they could enjoy more risqué entertainment and dancing in public just as the lower classes did but without the vice associations of the early dives."

they pleased, and interact very physically by dancing the night away. Such opportunity for interaction threw the status-designators of the hierarchy into some disarray, and other ways of distinguishing one's actions had to be determined. Erenberg writes:

> If status was no longer intimately associated with womanly restraint, how could dancers preserve their sense of social well-being now that women and men expressed themselves with their bodies? By connecting the dance to aristocratic imagery and performing it in expensive and luxuriously decorated cabarets, the dance public could distinguish itself from the lower classes and their women from the demeaning activities of their social inferiors. Expensive settings and glamorous dress thus compensated for the fear that sensuality would disturb their social status. Moreover, the notion of upper-class refinement precluded, by definition, an overly sensualized style of dance."[19]

In such a context, Ziegfeld's cabaret environment and publicity references to European aristocracy served to provide an opportunity for distinction. Publicity for the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies assured upper-class theatre-goers of a safe space to participate in the dance phenomenon, to interact physically, while preserving—and perhaps even enhancing—one's social status.

Magic in the Name: **Brand as Social Credential**

Creating this fashionably safe place was one of Ziegfeld's continuing string of marketing successes. As I discuss in the first chapter, a "brand" does not necessarily signal quality, though it is certainly discussed as though it does. Rather, the brand more accurately designates standardization—i.e. one bar of Ivory soap will be much like, if not indistinguishable from another bar of Ivory soap. While many aspects of the *Ziegfeld Follies* were standardized—the format, the showgirls, etc.—in the case of Ziegfeld's expanding number of enterprises, I argue, what was standardized was the guarantee of

[19] Erenberg, 162. Some even argued that these dances had European origins; for example, see the Castles' claim that the tango was either French or Spanish instead of Argentine on page 163.

social acceptability. We see this at work with the "Ziegfeld" label on the *Follies* from one year to the next and on the newly designated "Ziegfeld" cabaret, the Danse de Follies.

"Ziegfeld" labeling increased rapidly at this point as the producer added additional products/productions to his business. For example, shortly after the opening of the Ziegfeld Dance de Follies, in the Sunday, June 21, 1914, *New York Tribune* Hector Turnbull reported the following:

> Speaking of Florenz Ziegfeld, that indefatigable tangoer…let us introduce you to his latest scheme for encouraging the graceful art. It is in the form of an expensively engraved announcement:
>
> "Mr. Florenz Ziegfeld, jr., desires to announce that, in compliance with numerous requests, he is organizing the Ziegfeld Tango Club, the membership of which will be strictly limited to one hundred.
>
> "The privileges of club members will include the exclusive use of the Ostend lounge, promenade and private buffet at the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies.
>
> "The membership fee will be $100 and will entitle the subscriber to admission, with ladies, to the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies at all times during the season, and also to first choice of tables on the ballroom floor.
>
> "The invitation to join this club is sent only to an exclusive list.
>
> "Applications for membership, accompanied by check, will be acted upon in the order of their receipt.
>
> "Address Florenz Ziegfeld, jr., Ziegfeld Danse de Follies, atop New Amsterdam Theatre, New York City.
>
> "The Ziegfeld Tango Club will give weekly dances after the regular closing of the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies. Afternoon teas, open only to members of the club, and ladies, will also be inaugurated."[20]

Most notably, this "expensively engraved" press release mentioned "Ziegfeld Tango Club" twice, Ziegfeld's full name three times, and "Ziegfeld Danse de Follies" four times, for a total of nine repetitions of "Ziegfeld" in this relatively short passage in the Theatre section of the Sunday newspaper. Equally significant was the way that

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[20] Hector Turnbull, "Plays and Players" *New York Tribune*, 21 June 1914, sec. III, p. 8.

"Ziegfeld" was repeatedly associated with a culture of exclusivity, expense and privilege. This announcement, then, was an invitation to be a member of an inner circle within this Ziegfeld culture.

At the same time, however, this invitation/announcement demonstrated the underlying contradictions inherent within such branding: this exclusivity was used as a marketing ploy. As such, despite the proclaimed "strictly limited" size of the membership by select invitation only, this invitation was published in its entirety in a newspaper and membership was really offered on a first-come basis as long as the fee was paid. Here is what we see at work in the Ziegfeld Tango Club invitation: the extension of the "Ziegfeld" brand name from the *Ziegfeld Follies* to the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies and then to the Ziegfeld Tango Club, moving from a theatrical production to a dance club, in which people who attended the production can socialize and enjoy themselves with each other, to an exclusive membership circle within the dance club—with each step enhancing the luxury, exclusivity and privilege connected with the name "Ziegfeld."

Cultural theorist John Frow writes, "the brand name is so structured as to designate a rich singularity, coherent, simple, and integral, which evokes a world of beauty, harmony, energy, clarity, desire, freedom, precision…anything except a world of profit calculations and revenue streams."[21] It was, as I have argued in the previous chapters, in this masked world of "profit calculations and revenue streams" that many of Ziegfeld's talents lay. Indeed, the tango club was just one of many ways Ziegfeld capitalized on the associations he built up surrounding his last name, enticing the

[21] John Frow, "Signature and Brand," *High Pop: Making Culture into Popular Entertainment*, Ed. Jim Collins (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2002), 67.

professional managerial class along with those Erenberg describes as the aristocracies of Fifth Avenue and Broadway to spend more time and more money in the wonderful world of Ziegfeld.

Legal side-stepping further enhanced the sense of privilege within Ziegfeld culture. Erenberg explains the impetus behind such clubs as the Ziegfeld Tango Club:

> The stress on sociability in the audience led to the invention of the nightclub, later to become synonymous with the term *cabaret*. Unlike the theatre, cabarets were dependent on accommodating after-theatre crowds and late-night customers still bent on enjoying themselves. In order to allow patrons to remain undisturbed by the 2:00 A.M. curfew laws and police harassment, promoters began buying charters of defunct private social organizations in the fall of 1914 and turned special rooms of their establishments into so-called clubs.[22]

The Ziegfeld Tango Club was thus likely an attempt both to further capitalize on the dance craze and avoid issues with city curfews, all while creating demand for other products/ productions and environments associated with the name Ziegfeld. Erenberg comments that a "club's pretense of membership fostered the illusion that the cabaret was a friendly environment for exclusive comradeship."[23] This "exclusive comradeship" was further advanced in the case of the Ziegfeld Tango Club by granting the limited male membership access to the dance club earlier in the day and later in the evening as well as exclusive use of the Ostend Lounge, one of the many additional spaces in the New Amsterdam Theatre complex.

As evidenced in promotional claims such as "There's Magic in the Name!" and the Tango Club press release cited above, both from 1914, Ziegfeld's promotional efforts often focused attention on his name and these references worked to build up the

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[22] Erenberg, 129. For more information on the curfew laws, see page 77.

[23] Ibid., 130.

mystique, the luxury, the exclusivity surrounding the name "Ziegfeld."[24] Quite certainly, Ziegfeld would not have used the term "brand name" to describe these business practices, but it is not a stretch to think of the creation and promotion of the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies and the Ziegfeld Tango Club as a brand extension—a way to profit from a brand identity by using it to label additional products. While Ziegfeld increasingly used his name as a brand name for his annual musical revues, the *Ziegfeld Follies*, it was only at this point, starting in 1914 in particular, that the name "Ziegfeld" began working as what would now be recognized as a brand name. Specifically, it is only when a brand name is applied to additional products—or in this case, productions—that what was merely a name or a label comes into its own as a brand name. Explaining this nature of brand extension, in "Signature and Brand," Frow writes:

> The brand is thus something like a set of meanings and values attached to a standardized product and generating desire – perhaps a historically quite new kind of desire, extending the love of luxury objects to the world of serially produced goods. But to think of the brand as being "attached" to products is misleading: the brand is in principle reducible neither to a product nor to a corporation. Although at a certain stage in its life the brand name may function as a "strict form of designation," it is only when it loses this function that it becomes a brand in the full sense of the word.[25]

Rarely have theatrical productions been discussed in such terms, but I argue that this explanation of brand-functioning has much to tell us about Ziegfeld's producing efforts and successes. As Andrew Erdman and others have demonstrated, vaudeville was just

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[24] *New York Tribune*, 28 June 1914, sec. III, p. 9.

[25] Frow, 63-64. Here Frow explains, "[o]riginating in medieval guild practices of quality assurance and regulation of liability (sixteenth-century whisky producers, for example, shipped their product in barrels branded with their name), the brand evolved towards the end of the nineteenth century into a corporate asset with a central role in the marketing of mass-produced packaged commodities."

such a "standardized" "serially produced good," and at seven years and counting, Ziegfeld's version of vaudeville could be considered the same, albeit in what would be considered a luxury version.[26] Furthermore it was when "Ziegfeld" designated the luxury and other qualities, as in the Tango Club promotion, rather than strictly designating the *Follies* or the producer himself, that the name served as a brand name. In other words, only in extending does the brand fully function as a brand; and it is in brand extension, then, that "[t]he brand thus acquires a phantasmatic life of its own, floating free of the products it subsumes."[27] It is not a coincidence, then, that at this time "Ziegfeld" (and variations such as "Ziegfeldy" and "Ziegfeldian") began to be used as an adjective.[28]

Essentially this is when and how the name Ziegfeld began to designate something other than the particular producer and his annual revue series to this New York audience, and Ziegfeld's name was particularly adaptable for these purposes. Frow argues that a "brand is a corporate rather than a personal signature: it is a *quasi-signature*, attached not to a singular object (as in the case of the signature appended to specialized designer one-offs that the French call a *griffe*) but to a product range distinguished from other product ranges."[29] As an actual name attached to a real person (as opposed to a corporate fiction like "Betty Crocker"), the slippage was particularly easy between Ziegfeld's authorial signature and the designation of the brand. Frow writes:

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[26] Andrew Erdman, "Blue Vaudeville: Sex, Morals, and the Mass-Marketing of Amusement, 1895-1915" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2001), 93-94.

[27] Frow, 64-65.

[28] "Lots of Fun In 'Ziegfeld's Follies' [sic]," *New York Tribune*, 2 June 1914, 9, and "'Follies' Have Beauty Galore," *New York Tribune*, 13 June 1916, 9.

[29] Frow, 63.

> Both the aesthetics of the signature and the aesthetics of the brand are ideologies; they are regimes of marketing and authorization which draw in rather similar ways on an imaginary of the unique person or of personality; brands have a 'personality' because they make use of strategies of personalization (the use of characters, celebrities, direct address) to create something like a signature-effect; signatures stand as metonyms of an originating author or artist, even though the making of any work of art involves an extended number of participants (editors, publishers, proofreaders, printers, paintmakers, curators…) and a complex commercial apparatus. Where the brand most significantly differs from the signature is in its more intensive management of the integrity of the brand, and in its use of the intensive semiotic work of advertising and publicity to regulate market demand.[30]

Tom Gunning's consideration of the role of an author in creating films at this time further illuminates Ziegfeld's own position. Gunning writes, "the auteur approach deflected attention away from investigation of actual production practices and other historical issues in pursuit of an author's signature…The author as producer is also a product, constrained by the means of production available to him or her and the host of social relations which it is the historian's task to describe."[31] Taken together, these two scholars help explain the appeal of Ziegfeld's name serving as a signature, a personal guarantee of status and fashion. Of course the "Ziegfeld" label only seemed to be a personal signature, masking the corporation, the collaboration of the many people who financed and produced those events identified with that name. Thus, in Gunning's and Frow's terms, Ziegfeld was now both a producer and a product; his name signified both himself—his own signature—and his brand.

This slippage continued and became even more complex as the productions labeled with the Ziegfeld name increased. As competition became more successful and

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[30] Ibid., 70 – 71.

[31] Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (1991; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 49.

more direct, Ziegfeld responded by further extending his brand with the new revues, the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolics* and the *9 O'Clock Revue*. To counter any depersonalizing repercussions of spreading his name so widely, Ziegfeld intensified the promotion of his controlling artistic touch, working to create the impression that he did everything for these shows and simultaneously working to mask the real "revenue flows" associated with these additional productions. An article in the *Newark Star Eagle* in 1917, took the bait, noting that

> Mr. Ziegfeld does everything himself in producing 'The Follies.' He has an army of skilled helpers, but his is the master mind that not only conceives and creates, but passes upon the most trivial details…. Not only does the untiring Ziegfeld purchase everything himself from the most bewildering costume to the smallest "prop," but he is responsible for every color scheme; he suggests or passes upon every scene sketch. He engages every member of the company from principal singers, dancers and comedians to chorus girls. He directs every rehearsal and eliminates and interpolates with an absolutely free hand. In fact, he personally puts on "the whole show."[32]

Such claims not only countered the credits given in advertisements and programs for the *Follies* to other men—even important men like Joseph Urban and Ned Wayburn—but were almost laughable given that Ziegfeld was producing the *Follies*, the *Midnight Frolic* (twice a year), the *Nine O'Clock Revue* and was working on the *Century Girl* at this time as well. It was not a matter of people being hoodwinked into thinking something specific about Ziegfeld; rather it was a matter of encouraging people to believe something that they were inclined to believe in the first place. The magic in Ziegfeld's name had much to do with validating the status people placed on his controlling artistic touch which they believed involved in every aspect of the shows they placed so much value in attending—financially, socially, and culturally.

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[32] Robinson Locke Scrapbook, vol. 91, p. 47, NYPLPA.

Performance and the Cabaret

Despite the superlatives in the advertisements for the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies, Ziegfeld began making adjustments and additions to his cabaret almost immediately. In addition to the Ziegfeld Tango Club, he incorporated competitions and promotions, and one of the most prominent and successful of these promotions was Polo Cup Night. There was an actual polo match going on in New York this particular week in June 1914 between teams representing the United States and England. Newspapers covered the event extensively in articles, editorial cartoons, and even society columns since much of the "polo set" came back into town for the event.[33] Such a crowd and such buzz no doubt were appealing to Ziegfeld. Indeed, Ziegfeld used this Polo Cup event to begin to bridge the gap between the dancing world on the roof of the New Amsterdam and the world of the *Follies* down below. The June 12, 1914, *New York Tribune* "Theatrical Notes" announced that "A special ensemble number called the 'Polo Match' will be introduced in the 'Ziegfeld Follies' at the New Amsterdam Theatre Saturday night. The entire chorus is to be employed in the presentation of the novelty, which has been created by Leon Errol. The number will also be given later in the evening in the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies, in the Aerial Gardens atop the New Amsterdam Theatre."[34] The success of the experiment was reflected in its repetition several days later in the cabaret space: this repeat "Polo Night" at the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies was advertised as "The Polo Game and Polo Dance by the Beauties of 'The Follies' will be repeated to-night, same as last

[33] See, for example, *New York Tribune*, 16 June 1914, 8. An ad for the polo match is on page 16 in the midst of all the theatre ads.

[34] "Theatrical Notes," *New York Tribune*, 12 June 1914, 9.

Sat. night."[35] Whether or not many of the polo set attended the *Follies* or the Danse de Follies to see the number, all this publicity implied a direct connection between those considered the polo set on the social hierarchy and Ziegfeld's enterprises on the cultural hierarchy. The elevated status of the one implied an elevated status of the other. Thus, Ziegfeld capitalized on the excitement surrounding this match while also experimenting with performances in his cabaret. This promotional event likewise reinforced the connections between Ziegfeld's two enterprises while maintaining his brand image of exclusivity and privilege.

The changes on the roof continued as the year progressed. Henderson describes Ziegfeld as "not satisfied" with his activities in the roof theatre, but the polo-themed events from the summer of 1914 along with talks with comedian/director Leon Errol to produce a show for the roof space demonstrate that Ziegfeld was constantly experimenting from the beginning rather than changing the Danse de Follies due to dissatisfaction.[36] In fact, Ziegfeld and his Syndicate backers probably were worried more about the competition than anything else. For example, in early 1915 the very popular dancers Vernon and Irene Castle were performing in "Watch Your Step" in the New Amsterdam's ground floor auditorium, but then were leaving the New Amsterdam to go to their own cabaret, "Castles In The Air," which operated from eleven until two

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[35] *New York Tribune*, 16 June 1914, 7. Also see the advertisement on page 16.

[36] *New York Tribune*, 8 June 1914, 9. Certainly the timing of these announcements could have been spread out so as to include more in each day's paper, and much of the information provided in these "Theatrical Notes" could have been decided on prior to the Danse de Follies' opening, but it seems clear both that Ziegfeld wanted to keep the happenings at his new establishment in the public eye even as he tinkered with the formula to maximize that space.

nightly.[37] They presumably were taking some of the New Amsterdam business with them. It was this type of threat to his dance club that Ziegfeld needed to combat.

While cabarets in New York started by combining food and drink with variety performance, only to be taken over largely by dancing, Ziegfeld's innovation at this point was to add professional productions back into the cabaret experience. He accomplished this by doing what he did with the *Follies* in the first place: he repackaged the variety acts into a new revue, this time a midnight revue. Erenberg agrees with most of Ziegfeld's publicity at the time in claiming that the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* was the first midnight revue, but in fact the Folies Beregere in 1911 contained a "Midnight Revuette." [38] Both the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* and this Midnight Revuette were directed by Ned Wayburn, the director-choreographer recently recruited by Ziegfeld from the Shuberts, so the claim to originality was no doubt the provenance of Ziegfeld's publicity machine. What was important, however, was the popularity and status attained by Ziegfeld's particular late night production: "A sumptuous cabaret, serving superb food, dancing, and elaborate chorus girl productions to the best of the carriage trade, the Frolic set a model of revue entertainment."[39]

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[37] See, for example, the advertisement for "Watch Your Step" in the *New York Tribune*, 2 January 1915, 18, and that for "Castles in the Air" in the *New York Tribune* Sunday, 3 January 1915, sec. III, p. 4.

[38] Ziegfeld Follies, Scrapbook, NYPLP: "The First Cabaret in America" at the Folies Bergere on September 1, 1911: "Henry B. Harris and Jesse L. Lasky Present for the First Time on Any Stage, Ned Wayburn's Midnight Revuette." See also, for example, "New Ziegfeld 'Midnight Frolic' on Roof," *New York Tribune,* 23 January 1916, sec. III-IV, p. 4.

[39] Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1988. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 207.

With the help of designer Joseph Urban, Ziegfeld made some substantial changes to the rooftop space before continuing to incorporate performance into the dancing with the *Midnight Frolic*. Urban's highbrow pedigree promoted so frequently, however, stood in stark contrast to his relatively lowbrow, burlesque-inspired variation on the runway installed in the New Amsterdam roof theatre. The very idea of this glass promenade caught the attention of the public and made the front row especially desirable, as depicted in a *Tribune* cartoon in which men from all corners of the room were drawn stretching their necks to catch a glimpse of the chorus from underneath. Ziegfeld himself played on this inherent contradiction by promoting the runway's luxury and expense as a "crystal promenade" while simultaneously acknowledging in vaudeville-like terms that it was "The Greatest Novelty That Has Ever Startled New York."[40]

Playing on the same titillating impulse, this first *Midnight Frolic* had an additional title, "Nothing But Girls," and both titles served as publicity. The first title brought in the brand name of Ziegfeld, and the second emphasized the type of show. Ziegfeld Danse de Follies was retained as the name of the location, with the result that Ziegfeld had his name in the advertisements at least twice. Seats for this first *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* were sold for one dollar (the same price as that for the Danse de Follies) with reserved seats (in particular those under the "crystal promenade") for two dollars. In his announcement under "New Productions," Ziegfeld hedged his bets by ending the piece with assurances to the Ziegfeld Danse de Follies patrons that "The 'Midnight Frolic' will not interfere in any way with the usual dancing programme, which will be

[40] *New York Tribune*, 6 January 1915, 16.

continued as usual from 9:30 p.m."[41] When the *Tribune* review appeared on January seventh, the subtitle "And Also Proves That the Dance Craze Is Not on the Wane" indicated further motivation for Ziegfeld's changes to the Danse de Follies formula. Clearly, some must have thought the dance craze was ending, and this added novelty—a well-produced show, complete with "Ziegfeld girls" performing on a glass balcony—would have helped Ziegfeld sustain public attention and attendance.

Significantly, the *Tribune* critic noted, among other credits, that "Joseph Urban designed the stage settings. Tango Jim Brady engaged the first table and wore pearls."[42] Indeed these were the two most distinguishing features of the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic*: the designer and the audience. Notably, the critic prefaced Urban's credit with "this is important." Just as significant, however, was the sequencing of these credits, thereby metonymically linking them: the credit for the impressive scenic effects was followed immediately by commentary on the impressiveness of those in the audience. The critic thus seemed to give credit to the show for garnering such an "A list" audience starting with Brady, who Erenberg describes as the most conspicuous consumer of the time. Erenberg considers Brady representative (though in an extreme form) of "other well-to-do men of the age." He was a "celebrated exponent of the expense account and personal advertising, [who] consciously used his huge body, his diamonds, and his actress acquaintances to advertise his prosperous position in the community….Diamond Jim

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[41] *New York Tribune*, 3 January 1915, sec. III, p. 4-5. Ziegfeld was developing a visual style for his brand. Here the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* ad was visually reminiscent of the *Ziegfeld Follies* ads—a dark background with bold letters in white on an angle from bottom left to top right. It was both eye-catching and served to connect this new show visually with its successful kin.

[42] "Ziegfeld Gives a Midnight Frolic," *New York Tribune*, 7 January 1915, 9.

stood as a symbol of the man who could conspicuously consume more than others."[43] Diamond Jim's publicly acknowledged presence signified that this new Ziegfeld production was yet another place where consumption could be conspicuous. It also indicated the success of Ziegfeld's venue as a cabaret: slippage between the performance on the stage and that in the audience was fundamental to the intimate environment desired in such an establishment.

The *Tribune* critic continued his review by reporting on prominent audience members' responses. While seeming to provide information on the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic, in actuality the critic was providing much more information about those in attendance:

> After combing the entire audience for a verdict the general opinion appeared to be that 'Flo' had 'put it over' and succeeded in contributing something entirely new and pleasing to the list of Broadway attractions that keep good people from their sleep o' nights. Ethel Barrymore said it was 'beautiful.' Rosizka Dolly 'adored' it. Bernard Granville couldn't praise it enough, and Valli Valli danced every number. Eleanor Christy never displayed her shoulder straps to better advantage. All the others were quite unanimous in their expressions of commendation."[44]

The name dropping here was not incidental; the critic was not limiting his review to what the entertainment itself specifically included, but was indicating rather clearly that a large part of the entertainment was the audience itself—and indeed referred to this New Amsterdam establishment as the "Forty-second Street Country Club."[45] Reinforcing this sense of a country club, Erenberg notes, "By 1916, with the influx of so many out-of-

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[43] Erenberg, 49-50.

[44] "Ziegfeld Gives a Midnight Frolic," *New York Tribune*, 7 January 1915, 9.

[45] Ibid.

towners, society folk even began frequenting their own special places," and the Amsterdam roof was one of the top such special places.[46]

Along with fostering the sense of exclusivity among the audience members, Ziegfeld enhanced the sense of community and continuity between the performers and the audience. Erenberg writes, "To facilitate the interaction, choreographers in every revue created gimmick numbers to bring the audience and the chorus girl together in a shared and intimate exchange."[47] Indeed, Erenberg adds, "As in other cafés, audience participation [in the Frolic] figured importantly. Patrons applauded with little wooden hammers, snapped balloons, blew noisemakers, raced with pogo sticks, and talked from table to table by telephone."[48] Here again is a dramatic shift from the behavior acceptable from people in the presence of high art and that in the New Amsterdam. While people were starting to discuss Ziegfeld enterprises in terms of art as I discussed in the previous chapter, what is more important here is that socially, the *Ziegfeld Follies* and the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* were beneath no one. And the same people who would clap politely at even the most mediocre of operas were beating the tables with toy hammers, blowing whistles, and popping balloons very publicly in a venue not far away—and spending good money for the privilege. Indeed, the popularity of the venture was such that a regular pattern emerged with a new edition of the *Midnight Frolic* each six months.

The purported legions of tired businessmen provided Ziegfeld with an opportunity to both extend his brand further and recoup his growing expenses in the rooftop space.

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[46] Erenberg, 139.

[47] Ibid., 126 – 127.

[48] Ibid., 207.

To keep up with rising and anticipated production costs, Ziegfeld added an earlier version of the *Frolic* and timed it so as to not compete directly with the *Follies*. Henderson describes the development of this additional show as follows: "The schedule demanded a constant flow of fresh faces, new routines and costumes, and innovative scenery and lighting effects. Expenses mounted, so Ziegfeld staged a second floor show called the *Ziegfeld 9 O'Clock Revue* to increase revenues."[49] And revenues were an issue: other cabaret revues, especially those in restaurants, cost much less than that of *Ziegfeld's Midnight Frolic*—if indeed Ziegfeld's cost as much as he said it did—primarily because of a smaller chorus (eight women versus twenty-four).[50] This additional show enabled Ziegfeld to make more money off the sets and costumes of the *Frolic* by offering the equivalent of a matinee of his midnight cabaret revue, and thus to appeal to a wider audience by making the timing more accessible for an earlier crowd.

The nine o'clock show was advertised quite differently than the *Follies* or the *Midnight Frolic*. While images of showgirls were still prominent, in at least one case the text accompanying the photos of these women read:

> Some evening when you wish to enjoy the best musical show in town – on the basic lines of the Ziegfeld FOLLIES, (but in informal surroundings [A New Idea] See Atop New Amsterdam Theatre The ZIEGFELD 9 O'CLOCK REVUE
> At the economical price of but $2. per person plus war tax (excepting front row). Refreshments may be ordered – OPTIONAL – but not obligatory. DANCING During Intermission….
> There Is More Feminine Beauty On The Roof Of The New Amsterdam Than There Is Under The Roofs Of All Other Theatres In New York[51]

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[49] Henderson, 63.

[50] Erenberg, 216.

[51] Henderson, 66.

"Informal surroundings," "economical" prices and "optional" additional costs presented a very different image than the image of Ziegfeld culture that the bulk of his advertising since 1907 had sought to create. It was a Ziegfeld outlet store, if you will, for the very tired or less successful businessman.

Perhaps to head off any concern about the standardized nature of the rapidly increasing number of productions bearing his name, emphasis on Ziegfeld's personal involvement increased in press releases during this period. In the *Newark Star Eagle* article cited above, Ziegfeld was described as the "man who creates, originates and builds his tower of creative products higher and higher, with each succeeding year, is a master craftsman, in musical comedy, as in any other field of productive activities. He must inevitably be a man of unique, forceful personality and wholly original methods."[52] The trend was picked up on by critics; an example of such appeared in the review of the winter 1916 *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic*:

> The third in Florenz Ziegfeld's series of personally conducted "Midnight Frolics" was produced on the New Amsterdam Roof at a point equidistant between extremely late Monday night and an early hour Tuesday morning. In round numbers, it is a swell show. It contains everything, from a slack-wire act to Ethel Barrymore in a gorgeous—no, that must be changed. Miss Barrymore was present at the opening, but it is not yet certain that the management has contracted for her nightly appearance.[53]

Here the review covered the now familiar ground of the show's audience and the interaction with it as a big part of the show as many of the other reviews had. Also here, and connected to the gorgeous audience and gorgeous shows, Ziegfeld's "personally conducted" involvement with the *Frolic* was emphasized and the implication was that

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[52] Robinson Locke Scrapbook, v. 91, p. 47, NYPLPA.

[53] "Ziegfeld Frolic Brisk and Zippy," *New York Tribune*, 26 January 1916, 9.

Ziegfeld was responsible for both—indeed the distinction between the two was decidedly minimized.

The significance of the slippage between the show on stage and the one in the audience cannot be overstated. The audience was there to see the audience as much as it was to see what was choreographed for its entertainment. And Ziegfeld's personal touch somehow guaranteed that the audience would be worth seeing as much as it guaranteed that the show would be worth seeing. As showgirl Eleanor Dana O'Connell remembered,

> You'd be surprised by all the people I met. Wall Street bankers, lawyers, all the prominent people in New York society—just because I was a Ziegfeld girl. The audience was always filled with celebrities. When I looked out from the stage, I got the feeling that the front rows were filled with penguins because all the men were wearing dinner jackets. It was very elegant. When I worked on the roof, that was another elegant crowd. The Prince of Wales one night, Jack Dempsey the next.[54]

There was quite a flux in the social hierarchy if a prince and a boxer together equalled an elegant crowd—and all these celebrities joined together with members of the PMC to create the real draw: a Ziegfeld audience. While the celebrities received more of the ink in the press, the PMC was a very significant part of the Ziegfeld audience at least as early as 1909 when the *Tribune* critic called attention to the "flower of the several professions" present in the audience.[55] After all, it was the PMC who had the most at stake at being seen rubbing shoulders with the celebrities and other elites; it was through this interaction that they could believe themselves at least close to the top of this most visible social hierarchy.

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[54] Cited in Henderson, 77.

[55] "'Follies of 1909' a Success," *New York Tribune*, 15 June 1909, 7.

It was part of a tradition, then, when the *New York Tribune* critic wrote of the January 1916 *Midnight* show

> At all events, the third Frolic differs in no great way from its predecessors—which is to say, that it is a zippy, snappy, tuneful, handsomely gowned and carefully staged entertainment, and that it moves with a dash that is not always to be found in the shows that begin three and one-half hours earlier. Like its predecessors, to witness it gives one the feeling that George Jean Nathan can say what he likes, but this is the life. It isn't every night that one has a chance to see Ethel Barrymore laugh at a Ford joke, and "Diamond Jim" entertain with his reputed lavishness, and Herb Swope get out of his seat to puncture a balloon with a cigarette. They are occurrences to treasure in the memory….[56]

According to this critic, the details that make the evening memorable had very little to do with the staged show, and instead had everything to do with the audience. Some idea of celebrity as an alternate aristocracy was at work here, indicating that this kind of privileged position was not necessarily about solidifying the distinction of or differences from old money. Rather the audience interaction at the Ziegfeld cabaret shows served more like a bridge between the PMC and the various elites. Note that Nathan's indictment of cabaret culture was the touchstone in this review. This critic dismissed Nathan's concerns implying that Nathan had missed the point: instead of being embarrassed by what was taking place at other tables as Nathan was, this writer indicated that being privy to such contact offered an excitement, a sense of vitality, and was worth every penny of the ticket.

Theatre Lizards and Critics

Acclaim was not universal, however, and there were detractors of the exclusive, privileged display surrounding Ziegfeld's productions. One such critic, newspaper columnist Alan Dale wrote,

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[56] "Ziegfeld Frolic Brisk and Zippy" *New York Tribune* 26 January 1916, 9.

> The Ziegfeld Follies have the endorsement of the 'elite' whoever they may be. Those first-nighters who in the case of the drama, are alluded to as 'frozen faces,' fight for admission. There is no dramatic opening in New York that can rival such a 'show' as the Follies, as an attraction for theatre-lizards. It is 'smart;' it is the 'proper thing;' it is even swagger. When you are there, you feel that you are 'in it;' you are doing your duty to yourself, and your family, and your prestige—and of course you are willing to pay more for all that, than you would be for a wonderful play, wonderfully acted.[57]

For Dale, the "theatre-lizards" were more concerned with prestige than art and often attended plays to which they responded with "frozen faces." Ironically, this lack of expression, according to Bourdieu, was how they had been taught to respond to "art." The *Ziegfeld Follies* and the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* elicited a very different response, however, one that was clearly an "endorsement" of this type of entertainment. Not only was Ziegfeld's audience as seen by Dale, and those who shared his perspective, one that was wasteful, used slang, and gave priority to fashion, but also this audience valued the prestige associated with legitimate theatre yet could not appreciate a "wonderful play, wonderfully acted." Dale would have his readers believe that this audience's lack of enthusiasm for the type of theatre valued by Dale spoke to its lack of taste and class. In fact, however, the dominating presence of members of elite social circles and that of the PMC meant that the hierarchies valued by Dale were losing hold of their significance.

A *Vanity Fair* article provided a very different interpretation of the popularity of Ziegfeld's productions. In "Musical Comedy, and the Drier Drama," Louis Sherwin wrote that "musical comedy is the highest form of all American achievements in the theatre; that it is not only the most popular but the most beautiful and artistic thing that

[57] Robinson Locke Scrapbook, v. 91, p. 46, NYPLPA.

we do."[58] He then mentioned his preference for Urban, Irving Berlin, Fanny Brice, Bert Williams, and claimed that "Flo Ziegfeld is a greater showman than Granville Barker, and possesses a keener sense of beauty." Here while making some apologies to the established highbrow, he stated his desire for an updated hierarchy. He then took aim at the critics—like Dale—who, he implied, perpetuated the old hierarchy:

> Consider how easy it is to be accepted as one of the ominous creatures known as 'thinking critics.' If you would shine in *their* ranks, all you have to do is to prate bitterly about the Tired Business Man, sigh cynically when you hear of the popularity of the Midnight Follies [sic], sneer at Charles Dillingham, and behold! every solemn numbskull in America will become your disciple…Any dramatic who could not sit down at five minutes' notice and write five thousand well-chosen words upon the decadence of American musical comedy—due to the Tired Business Man—though, as the late Charles Frohman pointed out, in this woman-ridden country it is the T. B. M.'s wife who always chooses the plays for her husband to see—is not worth his salt as a regular dramatic critic.[59]

Sherwin continued,

> Now, I don't know whether the joke is on the T. B. M. or the critic or both. But to any man with half an eye it must be obvious that the T. B. M.'s favorite diversion has become not only the most popular but the most artistic thing in our amusement life. While in our plays we are content with dramatizations of the most puerile sort of magazine fiction, and our opera houses are a good ten years behind the times, our musical comedies are not only our supreme achievement, but so far beyond those of any other country that any comparison between them in ridiculous.[60]

He added that such theatre is an "institution that has reached a high standard of perfection. For sheer visual beauty nothing on the stage—save the Russian ballet—has approached such shows as the last two Ziegfeld Follies, 'Chin Chin,' 'The Midnight

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[58] Louis Sherwin, "Musical Comedy, and the Drier Drama," *Vanity Fair*, February 1917, Robinson Locke Scrapbook vol. 91, p. 46, NYPLPA.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

Frolic,' and 'The Century Girl.'"[61] Four of these five shows were Ziegfeld produced revues (*Chin Chin* was the only exception), and their mention here indicated something more than impressive production values: it signified that Ziegfeld's brand identity was recognizable and the brand's extensions were valued on equal footing with the original product. As evident in Sherwin's argument, the designs, production values, and performers associated with Ziegfeld were seen as part of an aesthetic whole and not a collage of disparate elements assembled by a variety impresario. We have already seen that what Ziegfeld sold to his privileged audiences with these name-branded products was a quality guarantee of social acceptability, and even of social enhancement. What Sherwin suggested here, though, was even more radical than the notion of a vaudeville (however disguised) with social prestige; Ziegfeld's products were part of a changed cultural hierarchy in which art could be present and acknowledged in forms not valued by the traditional cultural gate-keepers. The theatre lizards of the professional managerial class found art in the middle registers of the theatrical hierarchies, mixed it with activity and social interaction, and left defenders of the cultural status quo looking quite limited and almost irrelevant.

[61] Ibid.

Conclusion:

Taste, Class and the Business of Theatre History

Louis Sherwin's *Vanity Fair* article placing Florenz Ziegfeld at the top of a new cultural hierarchy was published a few months before the tenth anniversary edition of the *Ziegfeld Follies*. Much had changed from 1907 to 1917, but of course this is only part of the story of the *Ziegfeld Follies*. Indeed, popular and scholarly opinions agree that Ziegfeld was only just hitting his stride in 1917 and that the next five or six years that followed saw the best editions of the series. For my purposes, however, the two most important Ziegfeld-related events that happened in the following decades occurred in 1926 and after Ziegfeld's death in 1932. First, in 1926 Ziegfeld experienced the negative side of turning one's name into a brand name. His revue that year began its run under the title *No Foolin'* apparently because he had lost temporarily the legal rights to use the name *Ziegfeld Follies*. Richard and Paulette Ziegfeld offer this intriguing glimpse into the situation:

> Over the summer, on July 16, 1926, Marc Klaw and Abe Erlanger had finally decided how to divide their business and dropped litigation after six years of bitter wrangling. The new arrangement had Ziegfeld and Erlanger dividing Klaw's 25 percent; thereafter, Ziegfeld drew 62½ percent and Erlanger 37½ percent on any show in which they invested as partners. The other important outcome of the event was that Ziegfeld regained the right to use the *Ziegfeld Follies* title. Thus, *No Foolin'* finished its tour as the *Ziegfeld Follies*.[1]

Clearly, there is more research to be done here—both into this lawsuit and into the dissolution of the Syndicate (including the story of how Ziegfeld went from salaried

[1] Richard Ziegfeld and Pauline Ziegfeld, *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 131.

employee to two-thirds majority partner)—but as it is, this case confirms the evolution of Ziegfeld's name from producer to title to brand that I explored especially in the first and fourth chapters. Here, "Ziegfeld" was legal property to which someone—not necessarily Ziegfeld himself—had rights.

This commodification of the Ziegfeld name was brought to its logical conclusion after Florenz Ziegfeld's death in 1932. When Ziegfeld died, he left his wife, actress Billie Burke, with little but his name, his brand name. She then exchanged that symbolic capital for financial capital by selling the Ziegfeld brand name to the Shubert brothers, Ziegfeld's long time rivals. The editions of the *Ziegfeld Follies* produced after 1932, including the films, were thus Shubert productions despite the name.

PMC and Genre

In addition to further research on the Ziegfeld Follies, this dissertation invites the consideration of class especially in its relationship to academia. In the last chapter I explore how Ziegfeld built onto the brand recognition of the *Ziegfeld Follies,* as discussed in Chapter One, and capitalized on the shows' increased cultural capital, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three. He did this by extending his brand to other entertainment ventures and thereby created and sold what I call a Ziegfeld-brand culture of exclusivity and privilege. Problematically, it is the uncritical uptake of this brand image that pervades many popular and scholarly discussions of Ziegfeld's theatrical endeavors to this day.

In *Distinction* Pierre Bourdieu writes "[t]aste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by

the distinctions they make…"[2] While this passage from Bourdieu first struck me as something from Alice's looking glass, in exploring some of the class issues that emerged in the course of researching and writing about the *Ziegfeld Follies*, I came to find Bourdieu's ideas such as this connection between taste and class incredibly useful. In a nutshell, Bourdieu argues that class is intrinsically implicated in notions of taste and distinction: the need to establish and maintain class distinctions works to naturalize taste, making taste appear as though it is a matter of breeding rather than a construct. This idea has not only helped me to understand the branding, marketing, and popularity of the *Ziegfeld Follies*, but has also given me new perspective on some of the obstacles we theatre scholars face in regard to issues of class and taste in the archives and in the classrooms. We are, after all, the classifiers in these locations, and theatre / theatre history is what we are classifying. These are the two areas I want to consider here: implications of the relationship between taste and academia (those doing the classifying) and between taste and genre (the categories of classification).

To begin with, I am curious about our role in perpetuating taste distinctions, and thus class distinctions, in our writings and in our classrooms. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu persuasively traces the role of the educational system in maintaining taste hierarchies, which in turn are perpetuated in such a way as to legitimize class differences. In *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*, John Frow extends and complicates Bourdieu's argument by acknowledging the potentially compromised role of the academic as both a product of and proponent of the very educational systems implicated in the maintenance of

[2] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 6.

class/taste distinctions.[3] What do Bourdieu's and, more immediately, Frow's arguments mean to us as practitioners of theatre and historiography? I argue that our position is even more fraught than most other academics/scholars/historians in that theatre comes to us already full of hierarchies: highbrow, lowbrow, middlebrow, legitimate, commercial, art, boulevard, etc.—all loaded distinctions which emerged from specific cultural values held in specific historical contexts and perpetuated today as more or less naturalized descriptors. How do we discover, understand, "document," and narrate the prejudices of society/theatre during the moment we are researching? Who were the theatre practitioners, the audience members, and those excluded from both sets by differing tastes as manifested in ticket prices, publishing practices, social notions of acceptability, among others?

Even beyond the challenges of answering these questions, potentially more difficult is accepting Frow's challenge to explore our own role in perpetuating taste distinctions. As explorers of portions of theatres past, our biases—shaped by the taste biases of our own historical moment—play in this seemingly cyclical process. Further complicating our choice of subject and our treatment of that subject are issues we face as academics (in Bourdieu's terms, a dominated group within the dominant class); we cannot help but consider publishability; we cannot help but consider what will communicate to search committees, to tenure and promotion committees. And then there are the fraught issues of the canon and what we as theatre historians teach the next generation of theatre audiences, theatre practitioners and theatre historians.

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[3] John Frow, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

One of the difficulties I found in studying the rise of the PMC is that we academics fall into that category as well.[4] By pointing out that "symbolic and real capital are not equivalent, and this means that there is a real question about the class location of intellectuals" Frow identifies a problem in Bourdieu's argument about class and the educational system.[5] Frow writes:

> One of the reasons why the correlation of high culture with the dominant social class doesn't work is because of the specific mediating role played by the intelligentsia (and the fact that so much of high culture is tied to the educational institutions rather than directly to a class). I take up this question from a more explicitly economic and sociological perspective…analyzing the development of systems of production of knowledge in the twentieth century and trying to situate the class of intellectuals within a more general professional-managerial class, of 'knowledge class'….[6]

So there I was studying the PMC as a historical entity, and what I learned was that I was the PMC. Suddenly, instead of looking at the way the PMC used taste and class in the decisions they made about theatre at the beginning of the last century, I was thinking about the way my colleagues and I used taste and class in the decisions we make about theatre now at the beginning of this century.

Genre is one of the ways we classify (and are classified by the classifications we make). Fundamental to my research is the distinction made between vaudeville and revues, and, later, between cabarets and revues. These are questions of genre—at times a seemingly empirical / ontological categorization or, at least, an acknowledgedly flawed

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[4] Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996). In addition, for a summary of university professors as members of the PMC, see Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 188.

[5] Frow, 40.

[6] Ibid., 14.

but useful shorthand perpetuated in our theatre textbooks and classrooms (not to mention newspapers, magazines, awards, etc.). I am certainly not arguing against the concept or use of genre at all, for genres are historical constructs constituted through standardized mechanisms of cultural production, distribution and reception. Rather I am interested in questioning how genre is implicated in issues of taste and class, and teaching / encouraging students to learn about the contexts of the different genre terms used in theatre studies. Certainly much of the scholarship exploring the connections between musical theatre with middlebrow culture takes this relationship into consideration. What interests me is how genre designations can move a product/ production between "brow" categories. For instance, Ziegfeld's insistence on and repetition of "revue" in his marketing as the most appropriate category for his *Follies* worked to distinguish his shows as something different, something higher than variety.

What would it mean to explore hierarchies rather than to reinscribe them? What would it mean to teach our students that vaudeville appeared on Broadway under different guises? Further, what would it mean to make explicit that to invoke "vaudeville" or "Broadway," especially to imply that they were something mutually exclusive, is to indicate class-based categories from the period, or, in other words, to perpetuate the received cultural hierarchy? What would it mean to write theatre histories and teach theatre histories with class in the foreground rather than the background? Finally, what would it mean to consider business practices and political economy as integral parts of theatre history? With this dissertation, I have attempted to do so with the result, I hope, of connecting our American theatrical history to our larger social history, to the enrichment of both.

Selected Bibliography

Two archives proved invaluable to my research: the Ziegfeld Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin and the Billy Rose Theatre Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. At the latter, the unique Robinson Locke Scrapbooks were particularly important. Furthermore, as I mentioned in the Introduction, I returned to three contemporary publications time and time again to find advertisements and see commentary on the *Ziegfeld Follies*, especially as situated in its original context. These publications were the *New York Tribune*, *Variety*, and *The Theatre: Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Dramatic and Musical Art*, and all three are included in the collection of the New York Public Library. In addition to these resources, the following writings were essential to my research.

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